

“Wildly Successful” = Consistency
Deb Selkow, Director of Religious Education

When the Religious Education Committee (REC) met for its annual visioning retreat this Spring we talked about what we need in order to create a “wildly successful” RE year in 2009-10. We agreed that one area where we could be more successful is in creating a more consistent teaching and learning experience for our children and our teachers.

Children learn best when there is predictability in their classroom, when they know the teacher, the teacher’s rules and expectations, and when the teacher knows them. I am convinced that the optimal learning situation is for each class to have one lead teacher for the entire year. In many churches that is the norm, and in this church it was the norm for many years. However, I also know that few if any adults from this congregation are willing to commit to teaching every Sunday. In the 10 years that I have been your DRE we have experimented with different scheduling models to try to give the classes as much teacher consistency as possible and still meet the needs of the generous adults who volunteer to teach. Now it is time to try something a little different.

Beginning in September each RE class from Grade 1 through Grade 6 will be taught by 3 lead teachers. Each year we offer 24 weeks of curriculum, which means that each lead teacher will teach 8 weeks, though the weeks need not be consecutive. The three teachers can decide among themselves how to arrange the schedule; but they will be the 3 main adults that children will see as their classroom teachers. They will establish the classroom rituals and rules and will be responsible for sharing ideas and energy with each other as well as making sure the class progresses in the desired direction.

Our safe congregation policy dictates that we always have 2 teachers in any classroom, and we have decided to ask all parents and any other volunteers who raise their hands to rotate through the position of assistant teacher in each class. Because we operate our RE program as a cooperative venture, we feel it is reasonable to ask parents to assist within this rotation.

It’s almost May and we have one month to recruit 18 lead teachers for next year. If you are interested in being a lead teacher, please contact me this week at debselkow@gmail.com. As always, I will work closely with you to review curriculum and to talk about your classes. Consistency has many advantages for teachers as well as for children, and I am confident that lead teachers will enjoy the additional comfort they will find in getting to know their class well and in having a major impact on the year’s direction.

We are determined to continue growing our collection of dedicated teachers so that people who are lead teachers one year feel comfortable taking another year off and just assisting. We particularly encourage those of you who have not taught before to consider assisting several weeks in order to discover how much fun it is to teach. Class coordinators will contact parents this Spring to identify those who wish to serve as assistants for more than one week at a time. In early September we will publish the assistant teacher schedule for each class, and we will ask assistant teachers to take responsibility for swapping dates if you are unable to assist on the day you are assigned.

All of us share responsibility for growing our children; they are quite literally our future. And this congregation has a history of strongly supporting the Religious Education program. I hope

that many of you will join the REC in our quest to create a “wildly successful year” in 2009-2010. Consistency matters for all of us. Are you ready to step up and step closer by becoming a lead teacher?