

CATECHIST CHAT: CHALLENGER GAME

The game is called "Challenger." It works best if you give the kids an overview of the subject matter and then use the game to reinforce and provide more details. For simplicity's sake and to plow through the material, I'd usually start by handing out a blank Study Question sheet with 20 questions, and a dry, fact-filled handout that provides the answers. You could do this game using the section review questions in a textbook just as easily. **I think it works best if you focus initially on "just the facts" and then come back via another activity to say, "okay, what's the significance of all this?"**

You could do this first part a few ways - use the information sheet for your own reference as you deliver the answers to the Study Questions via lecture, let them work in teams to answer the questions - up to you. This part's pretty boring. You could spice it up with lasers, but the point is to initially expose them to the information so that they can play the game.

Next, **put them in mixed-ability groups of three.** You can have a couple of pairs, but what you really want are groups of three. **These are their Study Teams.** Give each group a manila envelope that contains three things:

1. an answer key
2. the study questions, cut into individual strips (one per strip), and
3. the Challenger rules

The purpose of the Study Teams is to teach/reinforce the material. Give the kids about 10-15 minutes in these groups. **Their goal is to make sure that their fellow Study Team members really, really know the material.** I like this part because you can walk around the room, answering questions, listening in on their conversations. Something about the tactile aspect of having the questions on individual strips instead of one big worksheet makes them participate more actively.

While they're in their Study Teams, make up new Challenger Groups. **A Challenger Group is composed of three people of similar ability from three different Study Teams.** I find it's easiest to write the kids' names on the board while they're in their study teams and then quickly make up the Challenger Groups - because, if I make them up ahead of time, it will turn out that several kids will be absent and I'll have to redo them. So, for example, if my study teams were:

Red Team: RedGenius, RedProdigy, and RedNovice

Blue Team: BlueGenius, BlueProdigy, and BlueNovice

Green Team: GreenGenius, GreenProdigy, and GreenNovice (Going for the nerdiest team names of all time, here).

Then the Challenger groups would be:

RedGenius versus BlueGenius versus GreenGenius

RedProdigy versus BlueProdigy versus GreenProdigy

RedNovice versus BlueNovice versus GreenNovice

See?

So, after the Study Teams have had 10-15 minutes to prepare, announce that it's time to move to Challenger Teams. Then, give the Challenger Teams 10-15 minutes to go through the questions. Here are the rules:

HOW TO PLAY "CHALLENGER"

- ◆ There are three roles within the group. Each player should choose one of the following to begin:
- **CONTESTANT:** This student draws a question from the envelope, reads it aloud to the group, and gives the answer he/she believes is correct.
- **CHECKER:** This student uses the answer booklet to check the answer and tell the group if it is correct.
- **CHALLENGER:** This student may answer the question if the "Contestant" responds incorrectly.
- ◆ The rules are as follows: The Contestant keeps the strip of paper if he/she is correct. If not, the Challenger may answer and keep the strip of paper. If neither one is correct, the Checker reads aloud the correct answer and PUTS THE STRIP BACK IN THE ENVELOPE. The question will be drawn again later in the game.
- ◆ After each question, students rotate roles in a clockwise direction.
- ◆ Keep track of the number of slips each student earns as the game progresses.

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And that's how it goes. At the end of the 10-15 minute game period, **tally up how many points each individual student earned, and then announce which Study Team earned the most points (by adding up the members' individual points)**. I then reward the top Study Team with something like getting to skip a question on a quiz or candy, whatever motivates them.

If you have kids in two-person Study Teams, you need to make it a fair competition against the three-person Study Teams. What I do is average the two students' scores and multiply that by 3. Same if you have a two-person Challenger Group. They'll go through the questions more quickly, making it easier for them to earn more points relative to kids in 3-person groups. So I multiply each person's tally by 2/3.

The explanation was lengthy, but the only real prep work is setting up the questions and answers on strips and cutting them up. If you have a Teacher's Edition and a Section Review, it's even easier. I like to run these off on different colors of cardstock, so that if there's a question strip found on the floor afterwards, I can easily know which envelope it came from - and the cardstock makes them more durable.

Catechist Chat will be an ongoing series of posts for teachers in religious education programs. It is based on my personal experience and not on any statistical evidence of the effectiveness of my advice. Caveat lector, which is Latin for "your mileage may vary."

Visit www.scrutinies.blogspot.com to read other entries in the series, and be sure to follow along at <http://facebook.com/catechistchat> for more lesson plans and ideas!

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