

Kidmin Tips

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Elevating the Status of Children's Ministry

There are times when you're made to feel that working in children's ministry is of less importance than working in other areas of ministry in the church. I'm sure you've heard comments similar to these:

"Oh, this is Debbie. She plans activities to keep the children happy while we're in church."

"I know you reserved the room a couple of months ago, but you'll have to find another place to hold your children's activity. The welcome team has an event, and they forgot to reserve the room."

Why is it that children's ministry is so often viewed as less important than ministry to teens or adults? Why is it that we're most often called "directors of children's ministry" and not "children's pastors"? Why do our job descriptions include lines like "Substitute when volunteers are absent," instead of "Develop and equip a team of volunteer ministry leaders to disciple and mentor children in our church and community"?

As part of my PhD studies, I conducted a survey of the levels of education and training of children's pastors and directors of children's ministry at their time of hire. The results of the survey were both shocking and sad. For example, at their time of hire at their current church, participants had training in the following areas:

Category	Average number of participants with training (%); N = 60
Evangelism to children	36.7
Leading a child to Christ	51.7
Counseling children	23.3
Curriculum evaluation	35.0
Curriculum writing	18.3
Goals of Christian education	35.0
Discipleship	45.0
Creative teaching	50.0
Leadership styles	55.0
Recruiting volunteers	41.7
Identifying signs of abuse	50.0

Source: Sourgen, D.L. (2013). *You just need to love children: Education and training levels of children's pastors in the United States*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Trinity Theological Seminary, Newburg, IN.

Why do I think it's shocking and sad that participants showed such low levels of education and training in these areas? Because all this is important to achieve the ultimate goal of Christian education: to make disciples. If only 50 percent of children's pastors and directors know how to lead a child to Christ, how are we going to start the process of discipleship?

Please hear this: You don't need to have a PhD to be a children's ministry director! (I'm just weird.) A love for children, a passion to share Christ and the willingness to serve are vital tools in God's hands, and God will use you to extend His kingdom. I do believe, however, that equipping yourself with some education and training will only enhance your effectiveness. More than that, you'll raise the value of children's ministry in the church as others come to see that it's much more than recruiting volunteers, choosing curriculum and planning programs and events (as important as these tasks are).

No matter what education or training you had when you started out in your ministry, you can add to that! Over the next 7 weeks, I'll dive into the goals of children's ministry and what everyone involved in children's ministry—whatever their title—should know in order to achieve those goals.

And, by the way, I must tell you that I'm a "director" and not a "pastor," and my job description has the line "Substitute when volunteers are absent." So I'm right there with you in changing my own church's perception of my role and the value of children's ministry generally. I hope you'll join me on this journey of learning!

-Debbie Sourgen is the director of children's ministry at [Monte Vista Presbyterian Church](#) in Newbury Park, CA. Debbie completed her PhD in Pastoral Ministry with a concentration on Christian Education through Trinity Theological Seminary, IN. She has lived in the United States for 6 years, moving to California from Johannesburg, South Africa, where she founded iVangeli Curriculum, a Sunday School curriculum for South African churches, in partnership with Gospel Light Worldwide.