MADE IN HIS IMAGE

Safe Environment Curriculum
Kindergarten

Diocese of Steubenville
INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

MADE IN HIS IMAGE is focused on the fundamental belief that each person is made in the Image of God and therefore deserves to be respected. The curriculum is rooted in a Catholic understanding of the human person (including human sexuality) as taught by the Magisterium. Educators using these materials must form themselves according to the principles taught by the Church.¹

MADE IN HIS IMAGE proceeds from the conviction that parents are key to the safety of children and youth. When children are younger, parents are called to take on a very active role in providing a safe environment for their children, in discerning risks involved in any given situation or relationship, and in assisting their children in discerning the various challenges they are presented with as they grow and develop. As children mature and proceed into adolescents the role of parents, although different, is still essential. While attempting to offer insights and information to adolescents, MADE IN HIS IMAGE also seeks to promote the sacred relationship between parents and their children, encouraging both parents and children to develop, maintain and deepen communication between them. MADE IN HIS IMAGE is intended to supplement the education provided by parents, and to assist parents in their task of educating and protecting the children entrusted to their care.

MADE IN HIS IMAGE follows a set pattern and strategy:

1. Information for Parents

Each lesson is proceeded by a letter sent home to the parents.² Intending to respect their role as primary educators and protectors of their children, this letter informs parents about the topics being addressed, providing the scope of the content covered, and offering them the opportunity to withhold their children from this instruction if they so wish. Explaining that classroom activities are only intended to serve as a supplement to the primary education in this area that takes place at home,³ the letter also serves as an invitation to parents to embrace their role as primary educators and protectors of their children by providing additional information and resources that they can use to instruct their children, and engage them in dialogue in this delicate area.

¹ See Guiding Principles from Church Documents for Addressing Sexuality and Sexual Abuse from the Diocese of Steubenville Safe Environment Program.
² "It is clear that the assistance of others must be given first and foremost to parents rather than to their children" (The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, 145).
³ See Guiding Principles from Church Documents, 48.
2. Prayer and Catechesis

Each lesson begins with prayer which is followed by a catechetical lesson that seeks to instill in the students a greater sense of God’s love for them, and the inviolable dignity that each and every person enjoys since they are made in the image of God. MADE IN HIS IMAGE is, in essence, a catechesis on the Church’s vision of human dignity with very practical implications about the choices that we make.

3. Moral Formation

Each lesson seeks to assist students in understanding the importance of making good choices, as well as the consequences that follow from the decisions that we make. Students learn the basic concept that virtuous living leads to freedom whereas sin leads to unhappiness.

4. Safety Information

Following the discussion on making choices, and flowing from it, students engage in activities that seek to instill basic safety guidelines in them. They are encouraged to make choices that protect their safety and the safety of others, and to reach out for help when they have experienced abusive behavior or feel unsafe.

5. Health Friendships and Relationships (Grades 4 – 12)

Formation in healthy friendships and relationships is an integral component of MADE IN HIS IMAGE. Students explore the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships in order to become aware of negative (and possibly harmful) influences in their lives, and to promote healthy relationships that will assist them in living according to God’s design.

6. Communication

Each lesson concludes with a reflection on the role of parents. Students are challenged to see their parents as gifts from God, and to recognize that they play a vital role in keeping them safe and helping them to become who God has created them to be. Students are encouraged to work to develop and maintain open lines of communication with their parents.

MADE IN HIS IMAGE was written and illustrated by Joseph and Christine Schmidt.

4 “In accomplishing her mission the Church has the duty and the right to take care of the moral education of the baptised” (Educational Guidance in Human Love, 108).
5 “Children, adolescents and young people should be taught how to enter into healthy relationships with God, with their parents, their brothers and sisters, with their companions of the same or the opposite sex, and with adults.” (The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, 53).
Ten action steps for keeping children safe.

1. **Spend time** with your children; develop open and honest lines of communication.

   Many argue that the greatest defense against child abuse is the healthy relationship between parent and child itself. Simple information is not enough. Children need the ongoing guidance of their parents to assimilate and apply the information they have learned, as well as to process and deal with the various situations they will encounter in their lives.

2. **Teach** your children that they are loved by God, have infinite value, and they deserve to be respected. Model respect in the way you speak and act. Visibly live out your faith.

   Children learn behavior patterns mostly by example. When parents model civil and respectful behavior by their own words and actions, children learn the proper way to treat other people, and the way they themselves should be treated by others.

3. Teach your children safety rules that you want them to follow.

   Don’t simply rely on safety programs or classroom lessons in school or youth programs. Parents need to make safety rules part of their family life. A failure in this subject is more serious than a letter on a report card.

4. Use “teachable moments” to reinforce and apply safety rules.

   Take passing opportunities to challenge your children to apply your safety rules. On a shopping trip to the mall, you might ask: “What would you do if we got separated in the mall?” or “What would you do if that man over there asked you to help him carry his shopping bags?” etc.

5. **Talk** to your children about the choices they face day to day. Offer them guidance as they try to make various decisions. Help them to process their thoughts and feelings.

   Patiently talking about day to day choices with your children will help them to develop good thinking skills, as well as enhance your relationship. Children are not equipped to deal with all the dangers surrounding them in our often unsafe world. They need trusted adults (especially parents) who can help them navigate through the difficulties of growing up. This is crucial when faced with potentially abuse situations.

   “There is no foolproof profile of an abuser or his strategies. Education cannot adequately prepare children for the variety of locations, strategies and approaches used by offenders. The danger of sexual abuse is far too pervasive to expect that children can be taught through child-empowerment programs to recognize and protect themselves from offenders. This is particularly obvious when considering that too often parents are disarmed by the benign appearance of the offender and failing to recognize the danger to their children, invite the offender into their home.”

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6. **Listen** to your children. **Pay attention** to their behaviors and attitudes. Be vigilant about anything suspicious that might point to a problem.

   In the vast majority of sexual abuse cases, the sexual offender is not a stranger, but rather someone who is known to the victim and the victim’s family. And whether the offender is a family friend, a relative, a teacher, or some other person, they often will try many tactics (including lies, manipulation, and force) to keep the abuse secret. Parents need to be vigilant.

   “Look and listen to small cues and clues indicating something may be troubling your children, because children are not always comfortable disclosing disturbing events or feelings. This may be because they are concerned about your reaction to their problems. If your children do confide problems to you, strive to remain calm, noncritical, and nonjudgmental. Listen compassionately to their concern, and work with them to get the help they need to resolve the problem.”

7. **Be involved** in your child’s life. Know their teachers, coaches, and other adults that work with them. Know their friends. Know where they spend their time. Be vigilant and cautious about the people in your child’s life, without being paranoid or overbearing.

   Let’s face it. Children (and teens) often will make foolish mistakes. They will put themselves in situations where they can get hurt. And they can often be deceived by people that want to manipulate, use and hurt them. When it comes to safety, there is no substitute for the careful vigilance of loving parents.

8. Be vigilant with your children’s **media use**. Be sure your children know safety rules for using the internet, texting, social networking, playing video games, etc.

   The tools, devices, and services for media use have increased dramatically in recent years. While this is positive in many ways, these new methods of getting connected also pose many new threats, especially to the young. Statistics about exposure to pornography, outright sexual solicitation and cyberbullying demonstrate the need to be vigilant. The reality is that **the internet is the biggest threat facing your child right now – and the access your child has to the internet is staggering**. Parents need to be educated and vigilant when it comes to internet safety. The good news is that great resources are available for parents. [Netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org) is an excellent source to become familiar with the risks associated with various media devices and sources, as well as the steps parents can take to ensure the safety of their children.

   Another danger that is often overlooked by parents is **video games**. Video and computer games are everywhere. Many of them involve innocent entertainment and learning. But a great number (and more than you might think) involve **extremely graphic displays of violence and sexuality**. In many of the most popular games the players are often encouraged (and even rewarded in the game) for brutal displays of violence, even sexual violence. Parents are strongly encouraged to learn about the dangers of video games and monitor their child’s exposure to them. [Plugged In](http://www.pluggedin.com) is an excellent source for reviews from a Christian perspective of a great variety of games, movies, music and more.

9. Don’t be afraid to **ask for help** when you need it! Teach your children that it’s okay to ask for help.

10. Don’t forget to **pray!**

    Pray alone and pray together. Ask the Lord to protect your children. Ask Him to strengthen your faith and the faith of your family. Ask Him to teach you to be a good parent, and to make your marriage and family healthy and holy. **Don’t underestimate the power of God’s grace!**

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8 [http://www.internetsafety101.org/Pornographystatistics.htm](http://www.internetsafety101.org/Pornographystatistics.htm)
THEME:
“God made us in love. We need to act in ways pleasing to Him. God gives us special people in our lives (parents/guardians) to help us be happy and safe.”

1. PRAYER: Our Father

2. CATECHESIS: God and Us

**Objectives**

- The students will recognize that God made each of them and they are special in God’s eyes.
- The students will recognize that they should be treated with love and respect because they are made in the very image of God.
- The students will come to a deeper understanding of God’s love for them.

Every person, from the first moment of his life in the womb, has an inviolable dignity, because from all eternity God willed, loved, created, and redeemed that person and destined him for eternal happiness. If human dignity were based solely on the successes and accomplishments of individuals, then those who are weak, sick, or helpless would have no dignity. Christians believe that human dignity is, in the first place, the result of God’s respect for us. He looks at every person and loves him as though he were the only creature in the world. (YOUCAT, #280)

**Teaching the Lesson** (NOTE: The text printed in **bold** can be read to the students.)

- Do you all know that God made each and every one of you? God made you, and He made me, and He made every single person in the world!
- The Bible tells us something important about how God made us. It says that God made us in His image and likeness. That sounds a little hard to understand, but that is just a fancy way of saying that God made us a little bit like Himself. We can think with our minds, love with our hearts, and make decisions. And best of all, we have a soul that will live forever! God wants us to live forever with Him in Heaven.
- Since we are made in God’s image, we have a very special relationship with Him. In the prayer we just said, the Our Father, we call God our Father. Have you ever thought about that? God is our Father who loves us even more than we can imagine.
- Since we are made in the image of God, we have a very special relationship with God. God loves each of you in a very special way. Because you are made in the image of God, you deserve to be respected by others.
- No one has the right to hurt you or to touch you in ways that make you feel bad.
- No one should ever touch your private parts (you know, those parts of your body covered by a swimsuit), or say mean things to you.
- No one should make you do things that you know are wrong.
- These things do NOT respect you as a child of God!
- If anyone has ever done bad things to you, it is NOT YOUR FAULT! Be sure to talk to your mom or dad, or another trusted adult, about this as soon as you can.
3. MORAL FORMATION: Making Good Choices

Objectives

✓ The students will recite the Golden Rule.
✓ The students will recognize that we should always act in ways pleasing to God.
✓ The students will discover that we need to do what is right in order to be happy.
✓ The students will identify actions that fulfill or violate the Golden Rule.

Teaching the Lesson (NOTE: The text printed in bold can be read to the students.)

☐ Since God lives in you and loves you so much you are very special! The people in your lives should treat you with love and kindness.
☐ And, since God made every person in His image, you need to treat other people with love and kindness too!
☐ Every single person God made is special and deserves love and kindness. People can be very different. Some are still very tiny babies. Some are very old and sick. Some people are healthy. Some can’t walk, or see, or hear. But no matter what, every person is special and loved by God.
☐ Jesus taught us about this when He told us to love our neighbor as ourselves. This is called the Golden Rule. It means that you should treat others the way we want to be treated. If I want people to be kind to me, I should also be kind to them.
☐ God loves us so much, and He wants us to be happy. That’s why He gave us the Golden Rule, and the other rules we have from the Bible and from the Church. Our parents give us rules too. All of these rules help us to know the right things to do so that we can be happy, because we are never happy when we do things that are wrong.
☐ Rules keep us safe and help us to be happy. When we love others the way God wants us to we treat them with love, kindness and patience. Now we’re going to do an activity about that.

⇒ ACTIVITY: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF – SEE PAGE 11
4. SAFETY INFORMATION: Promoting Safe Choices

Objectives

- The students will recognize that making good choices helps to keep them safe.
- The students will review basic safety rules.

Teaching the Lesson (NOTE: The text printed in bold can be read to the students.)

- We talked about how obeying rules can help us to be happy. Now let’s think about how making good choices and following rules can keep us safe too.
- When we disobey the rules our parents have for us we often get hurt. Rules are meant to keep either our bodies or souls safe. They keep us from getting hurt, and they keep us from going away from God’s love.

⇒ DISCUSSION: RULES KEEP US SAFE

- What are some rules that you have to follow that keep you safe? Write their answers on the board. If the students don’t say it themselves, be sure to include some basic safety rules such as not going anywhere without your parents’ permission, not letting anyone touch or see your private parts, etc.
- After you have finished the discussion, give each student a copy of the activity sheet. Discuss the sheet when finished.

⇒ ACTIVITY: SAFE OR UNSAFE? – SEE PAGE 12

5. COMMUNICATION: Fostering Communication with Parents and Guardians

Objectives

- The students will recognize that God has put special people in their lives to love them, teach them and keep them safe.
- The students will recognize the importance of strengthening their relationship with their parents or guardians by talking to them about the things that happen to them on a day to day basis.
- The students will realize the importance of telling their parents if anything happens to them that makes them feel uncomfortable or scared.

Teaching the Lesson (NOTE: The text printed in bold can be read to the students.)

- God gives each of you special people in your life that love you so much. Most of you have a mom and dad that takes care of you; some of you have a grandparent or an aunt or uncle, or another person that loves you and takes care of you. These are special people given to you by God. They make you feel special. You always feel safe when you are with them.
It’s very important to talk to these people about the things in your life. You should share with them the things that make you happy, and the things that make you sad. You should tell them about anything that makes you feel scared, and when you feel hurt.

God gives you special people in your life to help you to be happy and safe.

⇒ ACTIVITY: LET’S TALK – SEE PAGE 13

6. REVIEW

- Read the theme for the lesson to the students.
- Review the key points from each section.

7. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ACTIVITY: THE PATH TO JESUS – SEE PAGE 15
- HANDOUT: SAFETY TIPS FOR CHILDREN – SEE PAGE 16
- INTERNET AND MEDIA SAFETY:
  - The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has produced an excellent resource for internet and media safety: [www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org). A variety of FREE resources are provided for students, parents and educators.
One day, when Jesus had been working hard all day and was very tired, some children wanted to come hug Him and be blessed. The Apostles said, "Jesus is tired. Go away!" But Jesus said, "No, don't make them go away. Let the children come to me." And He gave them big hugs and blessed each of them. (Adapted from Mark 10:13-16)

Jesus loves me and all children!
LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

Read the sentences below. Think about whether you would feel happy or sad to be treated this way. Then draw a happy or sad face in each circle to show how you would feel.

1. You mom makes your favorite breakfast.  
2. Someone calls you names.  
3. You make a mistake at school and one of the students says something mean to you.  
4. Your friend lets you play with his new video game.  
5. Someone tells you they really like your new shoes.  
6. Someone touches you in a way that makes you uncomfortable.  
7. Your teacher tells you that she likes how hard you are working to write your letters neatly.  
8. A neighbor kid hits you or shoves you.

Color the little sign below. Then cut it out and put it on your fridge at home.

I deserve to be respected and I should treat others with respect.
SAFE OR UNSAFE?

Circle the pictures that show the children acting safely. Put an X on the pictures that show the children acting in ways that are NOT safe.
Sometimes I feel scared.

I should tell my parents, or someone who takes care of me.
Sometimes I feel confused.

Sometimes I feel mad.

But no matter how I feel ...

Sometimes I feel sad.
THE PATH TO JESUS

We make many choices every day. Our good choices lead us closer to Jesus, but our bad choices lead us away from Jesus. Help the explorer find the path that leads to Jesus by taking the path of good choices.
KNOW THE RULES...

SAFETY TIPS for children

1. Always **CHECK FIRST** with your parents, guardians, or the trusted adult in charge before you go anywhere or do anything. Be sure to **CHECK IN** regularly with your parents, guardians, or a trusted adult when you're not with them.

2. Always **TAKE A FRIEND** with you when playing or going anywhere. It's safer and more fun.

3. Don't be tricked by people who offer you special treats or gifts. Never accept anything from anyone without your parents' or guardians' permission.

4. Stay **SAFER** when you're home alone by keeping the door locked; not opening the door for or talking to anyone who stops by unless the person is a trusted family friend or relative, you feel comfortable being alone with that person, and the visit has been preapproved by your parents or guardians; and never telling anyone who calls that you're home by yourself. Have a neighbor or trusted adult you are able to call if you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused or there's an emergency.

5. Never go into a public restroom by yourself.

6. Never go alone to malls, movies, video arcades, or parks. Take a friend with you, and always **CHECK FIRST** with your parents or guardians to make sure it's okay.

7. Don't panic if you feel lost. Identify the safest place to go or person to ask for help in reuniting you with your parents or guardians. Safe helpers could be a uniformed law-enforcement or security officer, store salesperson with a nametag, person with a nametag who is working at the information booth, or mother with children. Never search for your parents or guardians on your own, and never go with anyone who is trying to reunite you with them.

8. Be careful when you play. Stay away from pools, canals, and other bodies of water unless you are with a trusted adult. Don't play near busy streets or deserted areas, and never take shortcuts unless you have your parents' or guardians' permission.

9. Don't wear clothes or carry items with your name on the outside, and don't be confused just because a person you don't know calls out your name.

10. Don't get into a vehicle or go near a vehicle with anyone in it unless you are with your parents, guardians, or a trusted adult. Never take a ride from anyone without **CHECKING FIRST** with your parents or guardians.

11. Be careful playing or riding your bicycle as it gets dark. Sometimes it is difficult for people driving to see you. Wear reflectors and protective clothing if your parents or guardians say you may play outside after dark.

12. Don't be afraid to say **NO** and **GET AWAY** from any situation making you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused. **TRUST YOUR FEELINGS**, and be sure to **TELL** a trusted adult if anything happens to make you feel this way.