

Choosing Sunday School Curriculum

One Youth Worker's Tools ... Shared With You!

1. Give the people what they ask for!

Survey your youth participants and teachers. What do they like about what they are using now? Do they want more activities? Are the activities boring? Are the lessons rooted in reformed theology? Does it feel too cheesy? Do participants and teachers want a discussion model or one that engages the arts? Do they want lectionary or theme based? Are your youth biblically literate and want to engage on a deeper level, or are many of your youth reading the Bible for the first time?

2. Get some help!

Ask a couple of key leaders, teachers, and participants to form a small committee or task force to help you look through several curriculums available. Develop or find an evaluation tool to guide the study of curriculum.

3. Evaluation Tool:

Evaluate curriculum in the following categories

- Theological Evaluation
- Biblical Evaluation
- Educational Methods Evaluation
- Teacher Use Evaluation
- Practical Evaluation

*A full example of an evaluation tool with specific guiding questions can be found at the bottom of this quicksheet.

4. Who are the key players in Sunday school curriculum?

You will need to decide if you want a curriculum that is a series or one that is annually published with new lessons. Examples of series and annually published curriculum:

- Presbyterian Church (USA), Congregational Ministries Publishing
 - We Believe Younger Youth, annually published, (7th – 8th/9th grades)
 - FAQ (Faithfully Asking Questions), several 4 to 6 week series on topics, (younger youth, adaptable for all age youth)

- Sparkhouse – Connected closely to Abingdon Press, a publishing house within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (a denomination in partnership with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)); however, this is not catered to one denomination, writers represent diversity within the Christian Church.
 - Connect, annually published, (Tweens, 4th - 6th grades)
 - re:Form, 40 sessions, (all age youth, confirmation)
 - re:Form Traditions, 4 sessions, three versions to choose from Lutheran, Reformed, and Methodists, (all aged youth, confirmation)
 - re:Form Ancestors, 15 sessions from the Old Testament and 15 sessions from the New Testament, (all aged youth)
 - Echo the Story, 12 sessions, (all aged youth)
- Group – Christian Publishing, not affiliated with a denomination
 - Live Curriculum, several topics with multiple sessions, (all age youth)
- Seasons of the Spirit – Canadian publisher with writers from multiple denominations and countries including the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Lectionary based with a strong focus on art and music.
 - SeasonsENCORE, published annually and lectionary based lessons, (ages 12-14 and ages 15-18)
- Cokesbury – Methodist publisher
 - Faith Weaver – annually published, (all age youth)
 - Encounter – annually published, (Junior High/Middle School and Senior High)
 - They also have several topic-based short series, (tweens and all age youth)
- The Thoughtful Christian.com – maintained by Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, writers are from a variety of denominations.
 - Individual studies for download on Bible, theology, contemporary issues, popular culture, spirituality, and Christian living, (all age youth)
- Nooma videos by Rob Bell – Produced by Flannel, a non-profit of Christians not affiliated with any one denomination.
 - 24 short devotional films with reflection guide, (no age specified)
- Spice Rack by Mark DeVries of Ministry Architects
 - Spice Rack, order a 3 month, 6 month, or 12 month subscription of lessons annually published, (all age youth)
 - Spice Rack, order individual lessons from over 300 lessons (all age youth)
- Sticky Faith – from Fuller Youth Institute
 - Sticky Faith Every Day: 8 Weeks of Noticing God More, (not specified which age youth)
 - Sticky Faith Teen Curriculum with DVD: 10 Lessons to Nurture Faith Beyond High School, (high school youth)

5. Too many options...

First, narrow down the options for the committee or task force. Give each person on the committee or task force one to three curriculums to evaluate and report findings back to the committee.

6. Make a choice!

You need to make a choice to choose curriculum for the year or for multiple years.

- If you choose an annually produced curriculum, it is most suitable to use it for multiple years.
- If you choose a series curriculum, be sure to choose a series or multiple series that covers the year or multiple years.

That's it! With the reports and help of the committee or task force, choose curriculum that will work best for your youth Sunday school. You can choose based on the committee's advice, or you can allow the committee to vote on a curriculum together. Most likely, you will need to have the church's Session approve the new curriculum, so bring members of the committee or task force with you when presenting the new curriculum to the Session. Finally, when you implement the new curriculum, you now have a small group of leaders, teachers, and participants who know the curriculum and can share this exciting new curriculum with others in hopes of getting them involved.

7. Keep your notes.

Save the committee or task force's reports and notes on the curriculums for future use and reference. It may come in handy if the curriculum does not work out or when you need to choose new curriculum.

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