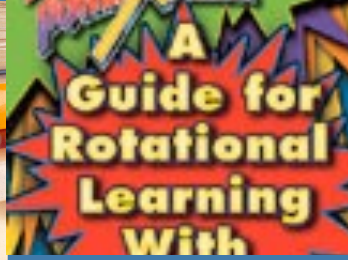
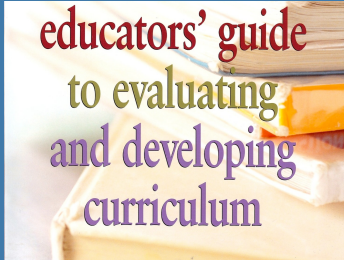


Exploring Curriculum Resources



Super Saturday

March 13, 2021

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Exploring Curriculum Resources for the Pandemic and Beyond

Workshop Description

Do the materials you use in your congregation tend to fall short of your expectations? That's because the creators of the resources don't not know your parishioners like you do. This workshop will provide guidance in evaluating, selecting, and adapting curriculum materials to meet your congregation's needs, both during and after the pandemic.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this workshop, the participants will be able to:

- assess the key elements of an effective faith formation program in their churches;
- identify the faith formation assumptions made by their congregations;
- evaluate and select curriculum materials based on the appropriateness for their congregational culture; and
- adapt existing materials for the needs of their congregations.

Curriculum Resources: Four Models

Faith formation curriculum materials are published in abundance, and the publishing companies are more interested in selling you their materials than whether or not they are appropriate for use in your particular congregation. Below are descriptions of four teaching models within which most curriculum resources can be categorized. Which model (or adaptation of a model) will meet the needs and goals for your congregation's faith-forming ministry?

Bible Story-Based Curriculum Resources

These curriculum materials cover quarterly Bible story themes over a 3- or 4-year cycle. Each Sunday, children, youth, and adults study Bible stories that follow the theme of the unit. This may or may not be the same story in each age level, as the focus is placed on the choice of Bible stories that are developmentally appropriate for each age group. This style of curriculum generally functions separately from the service of worship, but can be intentionally connected with some effort. [Examples: *Shine* (Mennonite), *Deep Blue Kids* (Methodist)]

Lectionary-Based Curriculum Resources

The Revised Common Lectionary is a listing of scripture readings for each Sunday which covers much of the Bible over the course of three years. Lectionary curriculum materials allow worshippers and students of all ages to experience the same scripture(s), at their own developmental level, at the same time the Bible passage that is the focus for worship is the same one being studied in Sunday School and Bible Study. Church members of all ages can share their Sunday learnings together after church, at committee meetings, at home, and with friends and neighbors of other Christian denominations throughout the week. [Examples: *Seasons of the Spirit*, *Feasting On the Word* (Presbyterian), *The Best of Whole People of God Online*]

Workshop Rotation

This approach uses a variety of media that presents information through transformation. Students rotate each week from workshop to workshop, focusing on a single Bible story for several weeks in lab-style settings such as computer, video, drama, art, puppets, food, Bible skills & games, music, and the like. Classroom space is transformed into theaters, computer labs, replicas of ancient biblical sites, etc. as students learn by doing. [Example: *Big Blue* (Methodist), *Spark Rotation* from *Sparkhouse* (Lutheran), *WoRM* (rotation.org)]

The Montessori Approach

Montessori classrooms provide a prepared environment where children are free to respond to their natural tendency to make meaning. Within a framework of order, the children progress at their own pace and rhythm, according to their individual capabilities. The adult presents the seasonal or topical theme/story, after which the children move about the classroom in a systematic fashion, choosing the learning and art centers from which they wish to learn and respond. [Example: *Godly Play* (Episcopal); *Children, Worship, & Wonder* (Disciples of Christ); *Spirit Play* (Unitarian Universalist)]

Six Key Elements to Consider When Selecting Curriculum Materials

Key 1: Purpose or goal for Christian education in the church

Be brief and clear. If it is helpful, use this rubric as a guide:

The purpose of Christian education at _____ Church is to [do what]
[for whom] [by what means] [as you meet your goal].

Key 2: What the Bible is and how you use it in your educational ministry

Is the Bible is literal and without error, or does it tell the work of God in the words of human beings and reflect the culture of those who wrote it, or something in between?

Is Bible study the only appropriate subject for Christian education or can any subject be studied from a biblical perspective or something in between?

Should study of the Bible teach moral and behavioral concepts or allow learners the opportunity to interpret Scripture or something in between?

Key 3: Settings for educational ministry (classes, groups, events) in your congregation

Are there any settings you would consider adding or disbanding after reviewing the needs and number of participants?

Key 4: Content to be taught in your educational ministry

Which model of teaching will serve your congregation best?

Key 5: Role of leaders in your educational ministry

Key 6: Role of learners in your educational ministry

Question to Ask When Choosing Curriculum Resources

- ☐ Are these curriculum materials lectionary-based or not? How will they fit into your church's Sunday morning format?
- ☐ What kind of God do the curriculum materials portray? What is God's relationship to humankind?
- ☐ How is Jesus pictured? A teacher of wise sayings and parables? A miracle worker? A magician? Is he portrayed more as Jesus of Nazareth or the Christ of faith?
- ☐ What is the Holy Spirit in these curriculum materials? How does the Holy Spirit operate today according to these materials?
- ☐ What is the role of the Church? Who is the Church? How do God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit relate to the Church? What is the role of the faith community?
- ☐ Which version of the Bible is used/recommended? Is the Bible depicted by this curriculum as inerrant? a treasure in earthen vessels? Is the Bible revered as relevant for life today? Is the Bible an "answer book?" Does it "question one's answers" as well as "answer one's questions?"
- ☐ What is a Christian? How does the Christian relate to the rest of the world?
- ☐ How should a lesson be taught? Where should it be taught? By whom? To whom?
- ☐ How does education relate to worship?
- ☐ How inclusive are these materials related to language, images of biblical figures, images of humankind? (What color is Jesus' skin?) What types of people does this curriculum include (ethnicity, economic status, gender)?
- ☐ According to these curriculum materials, teaching and learning are . . .
- ☐ How do these curriculum materials fit into your church's 6 Key Elements?
- ☐ Are there any other criteria you should consider such as its views toward peace and justice, racism, the environment, etc.?

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences



Curriculum Resource Adaptations to Consider

Adding or replacing material

Examples: adding more background information for teachers, making the art activity more complex, replacing a prayer suggestion with an original prayer, replacing or adding more questions for discussion, etc.

Changing the scope (content) and sequence (order)

Examples: reducing the number of sessions in a unit of study, changing the order of the sessions in a unit of study, etc.

Changing the session structure

Examples: Re-ordering the activities to follow a service of worship outline, swapping the opening and closing activities, etc.

Evaluating the activities in the session

Example: eliminate an activity or two, etc.

Note

While no curriculum resource will meet every educational need of your congregation, if you find that you are adapting the resource often and in multiple ways, you may consider looking for another resource that will better meet the Six Key Elements of your congregation.

The Copyright Law

Every curriculum that you purchase has gone through a process of design, writing, and editing, and it has been copyrighted by the publisher. So do not disregard the work of writers and editors or federal copyright laws when you adapt curriculum. That means you cannot copy the words of the curriculum into another document without crediting the passage. And certainly it means you cannot copy the material into another document, edit, and call it your own. Respect the time and creative skills and insights of writers by noting proper credit on your version, something to the effect of “This curriculum resource has been adapted from TITLE, published by PUBLISHER (QUARTER, YEAR) for use by YOUR CHURCH NAME, ADDRESS.” [Ferguson, 95]

Curriculum Evaluation Worksheet

* Most publishing companies offer free samples of their materials on their websites.

Name of Curriculum:

Publisher:

Denomination(s), if identified:

Age groups:

Setting (Sunday School, youth group, midweek program, etc.):

Purpose of curriculum:

View of Scripture:

Recommended or quoted version of the Bible:

Role of teacher:

Role of learner:

On the reverse side of this sheet, describe how this curriculum resource does or does not meet your each of congregation's Six Key Elements.

Resources for Choosing and Adapting Curriculum Materials (and beyond)

Books

Christian Educator's Guide to Evaluating and Developing Curriculum by Nancy Ferguson

Becoming Like a Child: The Curiosity of Maturity Beyond the Norm by Jerome W. Berryman

Faith Formation In Vital Congregations by Marian Plant

Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church by Maria Harris

Formational Children's Ministry: Shaping Children Using Story, Ritual, and Relationship by Ivy Beckwith

The Godbearing Life by Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster

Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul (second edition) edited by Felicity Kelcourse

I Wonder: Engaging a Child's Curiosity About the Bible by Elizabeth F. Caldwell

Prayers for Faithful Families by Traci Smith

Sticky Faith: Everyday ideas to build lasting faith in your kids by Dr. Kara E. Powell & Dr. Chap Clark

Sustainable Children's Ministry: From Last-Minute Scrambling to Long-Term Solutions by Mark DeVries and Annette Safstrom

Will Our Children Have Faith? (Revised Edition) by John H. Westerhoff III

Websites

Curated UCC-friendly curriculum resources and for choosing, adapting, and evaluating:

<https://www.sneucc.org/curriculum-resources>

Multiple free webinars and resources for faith formation in the church: <http://www.prci.org>

Children's book reviews with connections to scripture: <http://storypath.upsem.edu>

Evaluating curriculum materials: <http://www.buildfaith.org/how-to-evaluate-your-christian-education-curriculum/>

Godly Play: <http://www.godlyplayfoundation.org>

Workshop Rotation Model: <http://www.rotation.org>

Intergenerational ministries resources: <https://www.genonministries.org>

Faith Formation Leadership Training Program through the Southern New England Conference: <https://www.sneucc.org/certification>

Association of United Church Educators: <https://www.auce-ucc.org>