

Sunday School Curriculum Overview

By Debbie Kolacki of
PRC – Practical Resources for Churches
www.prcli.org



Introduction

With the internet and downloadable resources there are more Sunday school curriculum choices than ever, so this booklet doesn't cover every one that is out there. Curricula such as [*The Story for Kids*](#) from Zondervan, which only cover a limited time period, are not included. Curricula are constantly changing, so please let us know of any updates to information in this booklet that you're aware of.

Although there are short-term resources which are sometimes called curriculum, for the most part we'll be looking at material which is available for two or more years for various age levels.

Specific prices for curricula aren't included as these can be complicated depending on whether a church orders all the bells and whistles that accompany the basic resources. In addition, some curriculum is priced according to church size.

If you have any specific questions about curriculum, I would be happy to try and answer them. Just e-mail me at debbie@prcli.org.

Printed curriculum

For children to become disciples of Jesus, it takes more than head-learning. Besides teaching children about the Bible and being a Christian, you'll want your children and youth to learn to pray and use other spiritual practices, worship with the congregation, be involved in mission and service projects, and practice faith at home with their families. Some curricula may offer suggestions for incorporating these into the faith life of your children or you may have to work on these things yourself.



The term "curriculum" can be used in a broad sense to include everything involved in the learning process, but when the term is used it's usually referring to printed curriculum which includes such things as teacher and student books as well as other items such as posters, DVDs, music CDs, and take-home sheets. Printed materials may also be offered online for download.

Almost every Sunday school publisher offers downloadable samples or video clips of its curricula so you can get a good idea of how they work. Be sure to look at the content of the curriculum and don't get distracted by colorful artwork. Try to actually use a sample lesson of the curriculum you're considering or at least go through it and

imagine using it with your class. Ask yourself if it would work in your church. For instance, a curriculum may have a lot of fun activities but if they require breaking kids into teams of 4 and you only have 3-5 students in your class then those activities won't work for you. Also, ask yourself what the children are actually learning from the lesson, not just how much fun the activities are. Finally, does it emphasize the things that are important in your church, such as loving and helping others, sharing the gospel, or accepting Jesus as your savior?

Why purchase a curriculum?

Nowadays, many churches have tightened their belts and cut their budgets, and these cuts often affect the amount allocated for Sunday school curriculum. If you're a Christian Ed Director or Sunday School Superintendent, you may have to make a case for purchasing your curriculum.

There is so much free curriculum out there, that it's tempting to just Google "free Sunday school curriculum" and use what comes up. However, there is a wide range in the quality of these curricula, and they may not line up with your church's theology and priorities. Many of the free curricula are evangelical and/or conservative in their viewpoints, as opposed to a mainline viewpoint. The differences can be subtle and different aspects of Christian faith will be emphasized. For instance, an evangelical curriculum may have more of an emphasis on obeying God's rules, the one true God, and personal salvation. A mainline or liberal curriculum might focus more on God's love and forgiveness and showing love for others. It's not that one position is better than another, it's just that someone sending their child to a church's Sunday school expects that they'll be learning what that church teaches and emphasizes. So, if you're going with a free curriculum, you need to know your church's basic beliefs and make your choice based on those beliefs. I once had someone from an Episcopal Church who wanted to use a VBS curriculum which taught that the world was created in seven literal days. The theme was fun and there were some great activities, but the creationist viewpoint is not compatible with what the Episcopal Church teaches about creation and science.

A Sunday school looking to save money might consider creating their own curriculum. However, this is not as easy as some might think and, to do it well, requires much time and effort. Let's look at some things that go into creating a Sunday school curriculum.



What goes into putting together a curriculum?

In an [article by Karen DeBoer](#), one of the curriculum writers for Faith Alive Resources (the publisher for the Christian Reformed Church of North America and the Reformed Church in America), she describes what goes into creating the curriculum called [Dwell](#).

- The editorial team along with a theologian spend an average of one hour writing the Focus Statement and Faith Nurture Goals for every session.
- The Scope and Sequence (which stories are told and when they are told to which age) is meticulously planned by a team of educators and theologians.
- The content and images in the curriculum are as inclusive as possible. Each session is reviewed by a multicultural panel of reviewers along with a person experienced in working with people with disabilities.
- Every children's curriculum editor not only volunteers in children's ministry in their local church but also allocates time to stay informed on current research in children's spirituality, brain development, and trends in church education.
- Family faith nurture is a priority and the curriculum includes resources and ideas to equip and encourage families to live their faith at home.
- Editorial staff regularly reviewed curriculum from other Christian publishers and attended conferences from Orange, Willow Creek, the Association for Presbyterian Church Educators, Faith Forward, Faith At Home, the Children and Spirituality Conference, etc.

The 18 page document [“Elements of a Core Curriculum for Children”](#) is from Deep Blue, the curriculum of the United Methodist Church. It includes a purpose statement for a core curriculum and general objectives for children and the adults who work with them. It identifies some of the specific knowledge, skills, relationships, experiences, attitudes, and values children need in order to experience God's grace and recognize themselves as children of God. Age level learning and experiences are listed, along with Bible stories and verses every child should experience, the language of faith children should know, as well as images, symbols, and current discipleship issues that children should be familiar with.

So, if you are creating your own curriculum, you should be considering these aspects of curriculum as well.



Questions to ask

How many students? One room or multiple grades?

First you have to determine how many students you'll have and whether you'll have them all together or break them into different age groups.

What is our budget?

If your budget is limited, you'll want to look at low-cost and no-cost options; sometimes these require more work on your part. You might also decide to go with a particular curriculum but opt out of buying all the separate components.

What are the needs of our teachers?

If you have inexperienced teachers, then ease-of-use will be an important consideration for you. If they're not very tech-savvy, then going with a downloadable curriculum may mean that someone else may have to download and print the material for them.

Do we want to use a traditional curriculum, a lectionary curriculum, a rotation model, or something else?

Deciding on what type of curriculum you want to go with is important. Each type has its advantages and disadvantages, so you'll have to weigh this in making a selection that fits your unique Sunday school.

What are our learning goals?

Your learning goals will affect your curriculum selection. For instance, if you want your students to have a strong understanding of both the Old and New Testaments, then you probably won't want to use a lectionary curriculum which focuses primarily on the Gospels.

What is our church's theological perspective?

It's also important to be aware of your church's theological perspective. For instance, a curriculum from an evangelical publisher might emphasize the belief that only Christians go to heaven and encourage your students to lead their friends to Christ. Other curricula from more theologically liberal publishers might emphasize social justice issues rather than evangelism.



Age level groupings

Curriculum resources are usually for a particular age level; these groupings vary among the different publishers. Some curricula include older age groups such as middle school, high school, and adults. Some include younger age groups such as nursery, toddlers, and preschool.

The age groupings may not always work in your Sunday school. For example, having 5th and 6th grade together may mean that you are combining elementary and middle school students, if middle school starts at 6th grade in your part of the country. Many curricula include flexible age groupings and terms such as “early elementary” and “middle elementary” as opposed to specific grade levels.

We are also seeing a trend towards greater flexibility in age groups in many of the curricula being offered, as well as more resources for intergenerational lessons.



Types of curriculum

There are many types of curriculum and some types overlap. Types of curriculum include:

- One room or multi-graded
- Classroom/traditional/thematic
- Lectionary
- Large group/small group
- Montessori/worship-centered
- Rotation model/learning centers
- Whole church
- Self-created

One room or multi-graded

If you have a very small Sunday school, you will probably want to go with a one room or multi-graded curriculum. This is also called multi-age or broadly graded curriculum. It's set up so that there are activities for children of all different ages. There are usually activities to do as a group as well as activities for specific ages. There may also be tips for having children of different ages work together. The One Room Sunday School curriculum is ecumenical and is for ages 3-12. Some curricula that have resources for various age levels also publish a multi-graded version of their curriculum.



Some other multi-age curricula or curricula that include multi-age components are:

- [Feasting on the Word](#)
- [Growing in Grace and Gratitude](#)
- [Shine: Living in God's Light](#)
- [Seasons of the Spirit](#)
- [Spark All Kids](#)
- [Whirl All Kids](#)

Classroom, traditional, thematic

The next type of curriculum is called classroom, traditional, or sometimes thematic. Most often, Old Testament stories are covered in the fall and New Testament stories are covered in the winter and spring. Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost stories are covered at the appropriate times. Sometimes this type of curriculum is based on themes such as "The Promised Land" or "The Reign of God." It generally includes a Bible story with a variety of reinforcement activities. This kind of curriculum may be dated or undated.

Lectionary

Lectionary curriculum follows the Revised Common Lectionary, the three-year cycle of scripture readings which many churches follow. There are four readings for each Sunday: an Old Testament reading, a Psalm, a reading from one of the four gospels, and another New Testament reading. There is some variation, but most lectionary curricula base their lessons on the gospel readings. One advantage to this type of curriculum is that the lessons usually coincide with the theme of the worship service, so if the children go into the service there is consistency in what they're learning, and the adults and children are learning the same things. There are disadvantages to this type of curriculum as well. The lectionary readings weren't chosen with children in mind, so sometimes the stories may not be very child friendly. Also, since the focus of this curriculum is primarily on gospel stories, the children get very limited exposure to the

Old Testament and the other parts of the New Testament. Sunday schools that decide on a lectionary curriculum may want to use another curriculum for the fall that focuses on the Old Testament and then switch to the lectionary curriculum for Advent and the rest of the year. Some popular lectionary curricula are [Seasons of the Spirit](#) and [Spark Lectionary](#).

Narrative Lectionary

In 2010 the Narrative Lectionary was created by two professors from Luther Seminary. It's a four-year cycle of readings from September through May each year which begins with Old Testament stories in the fall and then switches to the New Testament for the rest of the year. Information about the Narrative Lectionary can be found on the [working preacher website](#). A downloadable curriculum called [Living the Word](#) which follows the Narrative Lectionary is available from Spirit and Truth Publishing.

Large group/small group

Another type of curriculum is called large group, small group. All the children are together for the first part of Sunday school; usually this is an energetic, worship focused time with one leader. Then the children break into smaller groups for age appropriate activities.

This type of curriculum is a good choice when you have limited teachers or have people that are willing to teach but don't want to spend time preparing lessons. Deep Blue has a [Large Group/Small Group curriculum option](#) for elementary age children; it is only available as a download.

Montessori/worship-centered

The Montessori or worship-centered type of curriculum was originally geared towards very young children but now is being used with older children, and even adults. It focuses on experiential learning, using silence, wonder, and personal response. A storyteller/teacher shares the Bible story using hands on material and then engages the children in creative activities.

[Godly Play](#) and the [Catechesis of the Good Shepherd](#) are two examples of this type of curriculum.

The [Beulah Land curriculum](#) comes from the Episcopal Church and is meant to be used with the Beulah Land felt storytelling materials. It's for children 3 to 10 and includes hymns, wondering questions, art activities, and suggestions for imaginative and dramatic play for 39 stories.

Rotation model/learning centers

Rotation model curriculum, sometimes called Workshop Rotation Model©, is very different from other curricula. Major Bible stories or themes are taught for 4-5 weeks through multi-media workshops such as art, computers, video, food, and drama. Groups of children rotate to a different workshop each week, which is led by the same teacher. There are printed and downloadable curricula available, but many churches create their own, using websites such as rotation.org. Churches that offer the rotation model often have elaborately decorated and equipped rooms.

Learning centers can be done in a manner similar to the rotation model where separate learning center areas are available for the children to visit. This can be done for the entire Sunday school or for only one grade level where the learning centers are all in one classroom.

Whole church

A whole church curriculum may be traditional or lectionary; materials are available for all age groups and all study the same Bible stories each week. There may be additional resources such as intergenerational worship services or workshops. Three whole church curricula are [Seasons of the Spirit](#), [Best of Whole People of God Online](#), and [Faith Weaver Now](#).

Self-created

Many Sunday schools are starting to create their own curriculum, usually by using online resources, which are often free. Curriculum can also be created using books and other resources.



Denominational curriculum

Consider looking at your denomination's curriculum first as this will be the closest to the theology of your church. If your denomination doesn't publish its own curriculum, they may suggest curricula on their website.

Mainline denominational curriculum

If you're a mainline Protestant denomination and don't want to use your own denomination's curriculum you should probably consider another mainline denomination's curriculum first.

Here's a list of mainline denominations that publish Sunday school curriculum.

- **Episcopal Church**
- **Lutheran Church ELCA**
- **Presbyterian Church USA**
- **Reformed Church of America**
- **United Methodist Church**

Episcopal Church

ECC and ECY

The Episcopal Church stopped publishing its [Episcopal Children's Curriculum](#) and [Episcopal Curriculum for Youth](#) in printed form a few years ago but has made it available for free as a digital download on the website of the Virginia Theological Seminary. The Episcopal Curriculum for Children includes these four units for every year of the curriculum: Old Testament, New Testament, Sacraments, and the Church. Every year also has material on the major events of the Church Year, including All Saints and Pentecost. The youth curriculum is thematic.

Godly Play

[Godly Play](#) is a Montessori/worship-centered curriculum which started as a resource for younger children but is now used with all ages. It is available in printed and digital forms.

Lesson Plans that Work

[Lesson Plans that Work](#) is a free, lectionary-based online curriculum with three levels: younger children, older children, and adults.

Seedlings

[Seedlings](#) is a four-year curriculum for small churches.

Weaving God's Promises

[Weaving God's Promises](#) is a three-year downloadable Episcopal curriculum available in versions for children and middle-school youth.

Lutheran Church ELCA

Sparkhouse

Spark: Activate Faith

Sparkhouse is the ecumenical branch of 1517 Media (Augsburg Fortress). They offer their [Spark: Activate Faith](#) curriculum in four versions: classroom, lectionary, rotation, and All Kids (one room). Spark Bibles and Bible Storybooks are available and there is also Spark Online, which allows you to set up a customized Spark website for your church as well as access curriculum and lesson planning resources. There is also Spark Family, a magazine with activities to help families fit faith into everyday life.

Holy Moly

[Holy Moly](#) is a curriculum for grades K-4 which includes animated Bible story videos.

Whirl

[Whirl](#) is a DVD-based curriculum for grades PreK-6 which is available in two versions: classroom and lectionary. One of the goals of Whirl is to connect kids to church life. Children learn about the church year and watch a video with animated characters who model what it's like for kids to go through the questions and challenges of living out their faith. Whirl also has its own Bible and Bible storybook, as well as leaflets to use at home as well as in Sunday school. There is also a version for one room Sunday schools.

Connect

[Connect](#) is for grades 5-6 and also uses videos which the publisher says blends "witty, slap-stick humor with solid theology, in a way that's accessible to preteens."



Presbyterian Church USA

Follow Me: Biblical Practices for Faithful Living

[Follow Me](#) is a thirty-six-unit curriculum written for people of all ages, with resources for ages 3-5, ages 6-10, youth, and adult. It's based on practices Jesus did and taught us to do as faithful followers. The curriculum examines where these practices are found in the Bible and how they have been used in Christian faith then and now. A Congregational Guide is available which provides materials to connect the practice with congregational worship and life. You can download a 96-page [Follow Me Sample Book](#).

Growing in God's Love

[Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible Curriculum](#) is an ecumenical curriculum which consists of 35 units and was inspired by *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*. It is meant to be a multiage curriculum for K-5 but can be used in intergenerational settings.

Growing in Grace & Gratitude

The Presbyterian Church USA offers a curriculum called [Growing in Grace and Gratitude](#) which has options for children ages 3-5, 5-7, 8-10 and Multi-age (ages 5-10). The Bible stories reveal God's grace and the sessions "foster hospitality for all children, including those with special needs." Audio versions of the Bible stories are available, and the curriculum is available in print or downloadable formats. There is also an interactive e-book for families to use at home.

Faith Questions

[These studies](#) are based on faith questions asked by youth and are intended for older youth. Movie, music, media, and other technologies are suggested throughout the curriculum to supplement the lessons.

Feasting on the Word

Also, from the PCUSA publisher is [Feasting on the Word](#), an ecumenical, downloadable lectionary curriculum accompanied by printed color packs. It is also available in a printed format. It is for Kindergarten children through adults and incorporates features of the Feasting on the Word commentaries. It's available as a Total Church Plan or as Individual Age Levels.



Reformed Church of America

Faith Alive Christian Resources is the publisher for the Reformed Church of America. They offer three Sunday school curricula.

Dwell

[Dwell](#) is a story-based curriculum for preschool to Grade 8 which is available in printed or digital forms.

Kid Connection

[Kid Connection](#) is for children in Kindergarten-Grade 6. It's a four-year program and is designed to meet the needs of small Sunday schools.

WE

Faith Alive also offers [WE](#), an intergenerational experience which can be used alongside any of Faith Alive children's curricula. It offers resources for the whole church to share a meal, experience part of God's story through drama or other activities, and talk and learn together around tables.

United Methodist Church/Cokesbury Kids

Celebrate Wonder

[Celebrate Wonder](#) is Cokesbury Kids' quarterly curriculum. It honors the spiritual life of children and includes experiential activities, spiritual practices, and reflection. There are three age groupings: ages 3-5, ages 6-8, and ages 9+. The components include a Leader Guide, Activity Sheets, Class Pack, Music CD, and DVD. A Bible Storybook and Family Activity Book are also available. Celebrate Wonder is offered in print and digital formats.

Deep Blue Life

[Deep Blue Life](#) is a downloadable, customizable curriculum option which focuses on living life faithfully for elementary-aged kids. The categories include Spiritual Practices, Cloud of Witnesses, God Is With Us, and Faith and Culture. You can purchase individual sessions, 13-session bundles, or the entire 52-session set.

Deep Blue Rotation Stations

[Deep Blue Rotation Stations](#) uses a rotation format where children alternate between learnings stations each week. There are more than 50 unique units for children ages 5-12 which can be downloaded.

One Room Sunday School

The [One Room Sunday School](#) curriculum comes in a kit which includes a reproducible kids' book; a Resource Pak with posters, game cards, etc.; a music CD; and a Leader's Guide. This curriculum is for children ages 3-12 and is available in print or as a download.

United Church of Christ

The United Church of Christ (UCC) doesn't publish a Sunday school curriculum.

Other denominational curriculum

Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod offers three curricula.

Enduring Faith

[Enduring Faith](#) has children "learn all about their Savior, Jesus Christ, what their Savior means for them, how to defend their faith, and how to teach the faith to others." It is for early childhood through adult.

Growing in Christ

[Growing in Christ](#) is a traditional classroom curriculum. It is for age two through adult.

Cross Explorations

[Cross Explorations](#) is a large group/small group program which encourages parents to get involved.

Mennonite Church/Church of the Brethren

Shine: Living in God's Light

The Mennonite Church and the Church of the Brethren offer [Shine: Living in God's Light](#). It is for ages 3-Grade 8 and "encourages imaginative, interactive biblical storytelling" as well as focusing on spiritual practices and peacemaking. There is also *Shine On: A Story Bible* and *Shine Together*, which can be used for teacher training. It is used by a number of other denominations including the United Church of Christ.

Current

[Current](#) is a new non-dated, digital curriculum. It includes sessions for preschoolers, elementary-aged children, youth, and adults, as well as sessions for intergenerational settings and worship resources. It is especially appropriate as a summer resource. The theme for Summer 2021 is “Seeking Justice Together.” Each summer a new 13-week quarter of Current will be published.

ProgressiveChristianity.org

A Joyful Path

Although not technically a denomination, I’ve included a curriculum published by ProgressiveChristianity.org called [A Joyful Path](#) which is referred to as a behavior-over-belief curriculum. It uses Bible stories along with other wisdom stories to help children learn how to follow the path of Jesus in today’s world. The curriculum is for children ages 6-10 and currently two years are available although a third year is expected to be added soon. It is available on DVD or as a digital download.

Teen Text

Progressive Christianity also offers curriculum for Middle School and High School students called [Teen Text](#). It is delivered electronically 12 times a year.

Southern Baptist

Lifeway is the Southern Baptist publisher and offers three Bible studies for children through adults called [Bible Studies for Life](#), [The Gospel Project](#), and [Explore the Bible](#). They also offer [Flyte](#), a preteen curriculum.

Nondenominational publishers

There are several of nondenominational publishers which offer a wide variety of curricula. It’s very important when selecting a curriculum from a nondenominational publisher to make sure it’s compatible with your church’s theology. Sometimes it’s hard to determine this if the publisher doesn’t directly state its theological position or uses terms like “Bible-based” which can mean different things to different people. Look for a statement of belief or something similar on the publisher’s website. This usually will help you to determine their theological position.

David C. Cook

David C. Cook offers a number of curricula. The theology of David C. Cook is generally conservative.

[Accent](#) is a theologically conservative curriculum using the KJV of the Bible and Baptist doctrine.

The [Action Bible Curriculum](#) is based on *The Action Bible* and is for preteens.

[Bible-in-Life](#) is a traditional curriculum and is also offered in [The Anglican Edition](#).

[Echoes](#) supports the African American church and community.

The [Gospel Light](#) Sunday school curriculum line was recently acquired by David C. Cook.

[HeartShaper](#) takes toddlers through preteens through the Bible.

[Reformation Press](#) features comprehensive Scripture teaching with coverage of the essential tenets of the Reformed faith.

[Rio](#) is a family-friendly digital curriculum.

[Scripture Press](#) features conservative theology and doctrine and uses both the NIV and KJV translations.

[Tru](#) emphasizes spiritual formation and family-empowered ministry

Cook's [Wesley](#) curriculum has an emphasis on life application and evangelism and is doctrinally distinctive for Wesleyan/Holiness churches.

Group

Group Publishing started in 1974 with the publication of Group magazine for those in youth ministry. They now publish a number of nondenominational Sunday school curricula which feature active learning. Their statement of belief is general enough to be acceptable to most churches, but their theological position seems more evangelical than mainline.

[Be Bold](#) is a curriculum for preteens which explores questions preteens may have about faith and the Bible.

[Dig In](#) is for preschool through 6th grade and is an online curriculum with flexibility. It is adaptable for One-Room, Age-Graded, and Large-Group/Small-Group classrooms. Lessons are built online by dragging and dropping “Activity Blocks” into a Lesson Builder. Lessons start with Opening, Core Bible, and Wrap-Up Activity Blocks already added. Additional blocks to choose from include Music Video, Talk-About Video, Object Lesson, Deeper Bible, High-Energy Game, Low-Energy Game, Craft, and Take-Home. Pricing is based on average weekly attendance.

[Faithweaver Now](#) is for infant through adult and each age group explores the same Scripture each week.

[Grapple](#) is for tweens; resources include DVDs and parent pages.

Group’s [Hands-on Bible Curriculum](#) uses unique games, snacks and crafts to help kids learn about God. Gizmos to tell the story are included with the curriculum kits.

[Play-n-Worship](#) is a curriculum for toddlers and preschoolers.

[Simply Loved](#) has an option for Pre-K & K and one for Elementary (grades 1-4). It's sold in quarterly kits and claims to simplify Sunday school. Group’s Bible Memory Buddies from VBS are used in the curriculum. There are downloadable samples and a scope & sequence on the website.

Orange

Orange has three online, customizable curricula. [First Look](#) is for preschool aged children and also includes resources for babies and toddlers. [252 Basics](#) is for elementary age children, and [XP3](#) is for youth. There is an emphasis on encouraging parents to teach their children about faith and character at home. Each of the three curricula is sold through an annual license that is based on the number of children in your Sunday school. It originated at Andy Stanley’s North Point Community Church, an evangelical megachurch.

Renovare

Renovaré USA is “a Christian nonprofit that models, resources, and advocates fullness of life with God experienced, by grace, through the spiritual practices of Jesus and of the historical Church.” They offer a curriculum for children PreK-6th Grade called [Life with God](#) which emphasizes spiritual practices.

Woodlake Publishing

Woodlake Publishing states that their mission is to “retrieve, reclaim, and renew the Christian tradition of living radical and inclusive love.” Their values statement emphasizes “a spirituality of transformation rather than adherence to doctrine or belief.”

[Seasons of the Spirit](#) is one inclusive program for the whole congregation based on the Revised Common Lectionary. SeasonsENCORE has age-level resources for ages 3 through adult. SeasonsFUSION combines worship materials for clergy and other worship leaders with Christian Education materials that can be used with the entire congregation. Recently SeasonsFUSION started offering suggestions for setting up interactive stations to set up around the worship space. Congregations can use these for intergenerational activities after the worship service. You have the option of ordering the printed materials or accessing them on the web. This is a popular curriculum with many churches but tends to be expensive if you order all the components.

[Whole People of God Online](#) is an online lectionary curriculum. It includes weekly age-level lessons as well as worship resources for leaders. It also includes a set of colored pictures. Churches purchase an annual license based on average weekly worship attendance. There are intergenerational materials for certain Sundays of the church year so using this curriculum requires Sunday school to work with the worship planners.

Middle and high school curriculum suggestions

Some of the curricula already mentioned have components for youth but you might want to use something else if these aren't appropriate for your Sunday school.

Abingdon Press

Abingdon Press is connected to the United Methodist Church and offers a number of products for youth which can be used as curriculum.

[BL4Y](#), which stands for Bible Lessons for Youth, is a dated Sunday school curriculum designed for youth in grades 7-12 and covers the Bible in six years.

[Canvas](#) is for high school teens and explores the theological beliefs and foundational concepts of the faith. In five four-week studies, students learn from history, tradition, and the Bible. The studies are designed for students to lead the lessons themselves.

[Fathom](#) offers 18 4-session studies that explore the Bible book to book.

[Groove](#) is a Bible study series for teens that “invites teens to learn the essentials of their faith, own their story, and engage the world in serving Jesus.” Each topical study has four sessions and up to 48 weeks are available.

[Linc](#) is a downloadable, timely resource to help teens examine relevant faith and life issues using the latest music, movies, news, and current events.

[Spice Rack](#) is a downloadable Bible curriculum for middle school and high school students.

Group/Simply Youth Ministry

You can also look on websites such as [Group Publishing](#) for resources that can be adapted for Sunday school. The Simply Youth Ministry resources are now available through Group.

Sparkhouse

Sparkhouse, the ecumenical branch of Augsburg Fortress, the Lutheran ELCA publisher, offers some youth resources which can be used in Sunday school.

[Colaborate: Bible Study](#) is based on problem-based learning which allows students to discover for themselves the richness of the Old and New Testaments.

[Echo the Story](#) helps youth experience the biblical narrative through storytelling, creative reflection, and dialogue. It’s available in both 12-session and 36-session versions and includes DVDs, leader guides, and student sketch journals.

Their re:form series of products includes the original [re:form](#) program of 40 lessons which uses creative and sometimes funny videos to tackle questions about the Bible, creed, disciples, Jesus, other beliefs, and hot topics. Two of the questions from the program are “Who wrote the Bible, God or humans?” and “Can I be a Christian without going to church?” [Re:form Ancestors](#) also uses fun videos to help youth get to know personalities from the Old and New Testaments. [Re:form Traditions](#) has versions for the Methodist, Lutheran, and Reformed traditions which explain their history, beliefs, and practices to help youth discover how their faith tradition came to be. Each version of re:form Traditions has four sessions. All the re:form curricula include DVDs, a leader’s guide and a student anti-workbook.

[T.B.D.](#) stands for Think. Believe. Do. There are five four-week topical group studies designed for Grades 9-12.

Other suggestions for middle and high school curriculum

[Faith Lens](#) is a free, downloadable weekly Bible study for youth and young adults which links a current news story with scripture texts. It comes from the Lutheran Church ELCA.

[Making It Real & Relevant](#) is published by LeaderResources, a publisher with Episcopal roots. It's a multimedia, topical Bible study for 7th-12th graders. It's lectionary based and downloadable by annual subscription. A topical version is called [God Talks!](#) LeaderResources also publishes the [Journey to Adulthood](#) (J2A), a complete youth ministry program of spiritual formation for 6th-12th grades. It encourages relational ministry and uses Bible study, prayer, rites of passage, outreach ministries and both serious and playful activities. J2A is a downloadable resource offered to churches and schools on an annual membership basis.

[Generation Why](#) is published by Brethren Press and is a series of Bible-based explorations of issues facing youth.





Current trends in curriculum

Video use

Many current trends in curriculum show the impact of technology, such as the use of videos in the classroom as well as for teacher training. These can be on DVDs or live streamed from the web.

Additional material on websites, apps

We also see some companies offering additional material for teachers, parents, and students on their websites or through apps for mobile devices.

Downloadable and reproducible material

Another big change is the availability of material that is downloadable and reproducible. We even have curricula that are no longer being printed which have been converted to digital form so they can still be offered, either free or for a fee.

Change in fees to annual license, etc.

We are seeing more material being offered for an annual or license fee, especially for online materials; often the fee is based on worship attendance or the number of students.

Intergenerational materials

There is also an increased availability of materials for intergenerational use which connect Sunday school with the rest of the congregation.

Resources for family faith formation

We also see more material which can be used for families to continue learning together at home, due to a growing awareness that Sunday schools need to partner with families in their children's faith formation.

Revised April 2021