

Making Faithful Choices About Curriculum

(A 7-Hour Workshop Originally Composed for EduCare* 2001
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Indiana-Kentucky Conference, UCC)

Goal – To provide tools for evaluating and selecting curriculum for many educational settings. (The aim of this model is to educate those who are responsible for resource and curriculum selection. It is not designed to be used as presented in local church settings, but provides tools and processes which can be used as by educators and/or redesigned to fit congregational needs.)

As group gathers

Give out church Christian Education survey, “Christian Education and Your Church” sheets for participants to beginning filling out. (*Handout A*)
As soon as all are present, lay aside and begin.

Introductions

Name
Church (with one “identifying” or unique aspect of church).
Position/responsibility.
Why you came to this event.
What you expect from this workshop (*list on newsprint*).

Objectives for “Making Faithful Choices About Curriculum” – go over and adjust as needed by the participants’ expectations (*already on newsprint*):

1. Discover where Christian education is present at participants’ churches and what kinds of resources are used.
2. Define “**curriculum.**”
3. Review factors that impact (or should impact) curriculum decisions, including who makes curriculum decisions.
4. Experience identifying criteria for selecting curriculum for one church setting.
5. Critique several different Sunday school curricula.
6. Experience selecting curriculum for a particular setting.
7. Identify several other kinds of educational resources in addition to printed curriculum.
8. (From participants – work in presentation where suggestions fit)

Review/assess where Christian education is present at participants’ churches and what kinds of resources are used [Objective 1]:

1. Have participants complete and then review information on “Christian Education and Your Church” sheets.
2. List settings & resources as a compilation (newsprint or chalkboard)
3. Identify where resources are most often used – and the intentional process of selecting them.
Try to expand idea of settings where CE takes place within the church (and at home).

Define “curriculum” [Objective 2]

Present & discuss ideas in “Elements of Curriculum” (*page 3.5.1 from Partners in Education notebook – have diagram already on newsprint*)

Review factors that (should) impact curriculum decisions, including who makes curriculum decisions [Objective 3]:

1. First discuss what is normally done – what should be done.
2. Experience a process for theologizing for curriculum choice
(*Handout B*) (*lots of newsprint, markers & tape*)
Evaluate what happened in this process of identifying theological criteria for a congregation to consider in selecting curriculum. Answer questions about using this model in local churches. Provide a copy of the model for each.
3. Introduce other criteria that congregations should examine:
(Use criteria ranking sheet – Handout C. Except for the first, these are in no particular order.)

Theological stance (already done)

Biblical orientation (way of studying scripture)

Biblical content

Relationship to lectionary

Worship content (including sacraments)

Particular themes included in curriculum (i.e. covenant, creation, justice)

Relation to seasons of church year

Cycles – how often repeated, whether curriculum can be used a second time

A variety of settings in which can be used

Groupings and how flexible, (also intergenerational possibilities)

Cost

Teacher preparation needed (“teacher friendly”)

Specific pieces (leader, learner, maps/posters, music, other resources)

Memory work included (Bible, prayers, Statement of Faith, etc.)

Creative and interpretative opportunities (including choices of activities)

Denominational content or denomination supported (which influences several other criteria)

Image of faith community/church

Inclusive in all aspects (language, race, ethnicity, economic, etc.), affirming of individuals

Church’s mission and relation to world outside of church

Peace, justice, environmental issues

Educationally appropriate (according to levels and faith learning stages, including adults)

Attractive to teachers and students

As you introduce the various criteria, refer to (*Handout D*) “**Questions for Analysis of Materials for Teaching and Learning**” as they relate to criteria on ranking sheet.

Also distribute appropriate charts on stages of faith (children and adults) (*Handouts E*)

Experience identifying criteria for selecting curriculum for one church setting [Objective 4]

Exercises:

1. Have participants individually rank criteria for their church setting. (*Handout C*)
2. Small groups of three or four: Pretend each group comprises a church by deciding on general size, setting and nature of church (or design a “role play description for each group). Then each group negotiates what are the most important criteria for its curriculum selection.
3. Discussion: How did they reconcile differences? What would influence teachers? Pastors? Superintendent? C.E. Committee?
Have groups share (if not too many) what 2-3 criteria they thought most important and why.

Critique several different curricula [Objective 5]

Brief introductions of:

Whole People of God (Handouts F)

Bible Quest (Handouts G & H)

Other Sunday school curricula you have selected to present/review

Special series for adults (i.e. Kerygma, Educational Ministries)

Extra books for adult small group study

If desired: Have each participant choose one level from one curriculum and survey the contents in relation to the criteria previous identified.

Experience selecting curriculum for a particular setting [Objective 6]:

Participants are free to spend time with any curricula and tentatively make a choice for their setting, noting how it fits their criteria. (*Handout J*)

Together share any tentative conclusions and evaluate this experience.

Identify other kinds of educational resources [Objective 7] such as:

Vacation Bible School – especially creative programs such as Marketplace, Honeycomb, Habitat for Humanity

Videos

Seasonal materials

Godly Play

Mission materials – Church World Service, Heifer Project

Rotation Model

Software

Share information about resource centers in area

Allow time for participants to look at any of above.

Closing sharing: learning, new insights, challenges . . .

Prayer and/or song

*EDU-CARE is an annual conference designed to give congregational leaders an in-depth workshop on a specific topic. In its 25th year, it is sponsored by Christian Churches (DOC) in Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois-Wisconsin; the Church of the Brethren: North & South Central Indiana, Michigan, and Southern Ohio Districts; United Church of Christ: Indiana-Kentucky & Michigan Conferences; American Baptist Churches of Greater Indianapolis, Indiana-Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and the Great Rivers Region (Illinois-Missouri).

Christian Education and Your Church

In preparation for your church's meeting with a Conference "Partner in Education," it would be helpful for your education committee and/or a group of people appropriate for the consultation to complete the information below. This will enable the Partner to prepare more appropriately and will help your church review all dimensions of your present program and resources.

Return to: _____

Church Profile

Church's Name _____ Membership _____

Address _____

Pastor(s) _____

Staff person responsible for Christian Education _____

Do you have a Christian Ed. Committee or Board? Yes ___ No ___ Elected ___ Appointed ___

Number of members on Committee/Board _____ Church current expense budget _____

Christian Education Budget _____ Is Sunday School included in C.E. budget? _____

Check (x) the following that presently happen at your church

Vacation Bible School	Adult Bible Study	Children's Church
Confirmation classes	Adult Re-confirmation	Membership classes
Short-term study groups	Family Retreats	Youth groups
Stewardship education events	Mission education events	Seasonal studies
Children's Sunday School	Adult Sunday School	Youth Sunday School
Intergenerational learning opportunities		Teacher training
Other _____		

Administration and Resources

Does your church have a mission statement? _____ For Christian Education? _____

Who makes decisions or sets policies for Christian Education? _____

Who decides what Sunday School curriculum is to be used? _____

Where does the money for Christian Education come from? Church budget? _____

Sunday school offering? _____ Other _____

Does your church have a Library? Yes ___ No ___ Who maintains it? _____

Does your church use resources (persons/printed material/videos) from the Conference? _____

Does your church use the Congregational Resource Center at Christian Theological Seminary? _____

No ___ Occasionally ___ Often ___ Do you know where your CRC video catalog is? _____

Please fill in the following information about your Sunday school

Name of class No. of students Age of students No. of teachers Curriculum

Do you have teacher meetings or teacher training events? Yes___ No___ How often_____

What time does your Sunday School meet? _____ What time(s) is worship? _____

Miscellaneous Questions

How many people went to church camp last year? _____

How many Bible study groups do you have? _____ Who leads Bible study? _____

When do they meet? _____

Who is responsible for Confirmation instruction? _____

What adults besides the pastor are involved in Confirmation? _____

List any "Support Groups" your church sponsors: _____

A Process for Theologizing and Selecting Curriculum Emphases

To enable persons in a congregation to participate in the selection of appropriate curriculum resources from a theological perspective, it is helpful to determine what is important to parents, youth, teachers, Church School officers, Church Boards/Committees, and other members of a congregation. The Christian Education Committee/Board might sponsor an event similar to the following one described. Invite members of a congregation for a session during which they will be invited to share their expectations for the educational substance of curricula resources.

*Preparation: Place newsprint sheets around the walls with the headings: **God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, Church, Self, World, Scripture**. Add **Age 7** at the top of each. Have additional newsprint sheets with these same headings already printed – one set for each age for which you wish to consider appropriate knowledge or concepts to be grasped. Suggested additional ages are 14, 21, 40, and 60 (at least one for children, youth and one for adults). Provide a marker for each person.*

Appropriate greeting and introduction of goal.

Invite everyone present to write down expectations for the first round: “By the age of seven (7), I want persons to know this about ... (those categories).” A phrase or few words on each by each is sufficient.

Additional sheets can be put up for the other ages chosen at the same time, or discussion can take place after each round.

Discussion after each round takes longer, so procedure may depend upon the number of participants. The advantage of discussing one at a time, particularly for children, is that inappropriate expectations according to faith development/stages of faith may be listed and noted as inappropriate. The advantage of doing them altogether is that one can see the overall development of understanding of each concept.)

Share responses and impressions about the newsprint contributions. Appoint a scribe to take notes on a newsprint chart as people respond. Note:

- Similarities and differences on each sheet
- Opposing viewpoints listed
- Items someone feels inappropriate (either theologically or age-appropriate)
- Items agreed upon and affirmed.

Invite persons to return to the newsprint sheets and star or check one (1) item in each age group theological category (each sheet) that they think is most important.

Re-assemble and close the workshop with prayer for the Christian Education Committee as it does its task of selecting curriculum resources. Ask for God’s blessing on students, teachers, parents, and the congregation, that they be faithful in their educational ministry.

Ruby J. Schroeder, June 1995

Criteria for Selecting Curriculum

Rank in order of importance:

- _____ Theological stance
- _____ Biblical orientation (way of studying scripture)
- _____ Biblical content
- _____ Relationship to Lectionary
- _____ Worship content (including sacraments)
- _____ Particular themes included in curriculum (i.e. covenant, creation, justice)
- _____ Some lessons related to seasons of church year
- _____ A variety of settings in which can be used
- _____ Age/grade groupings & how flexible (also intergenerational possibilities)
- _____ Cost
- _____ Teacher preparation needed (“teacher friendly”)
- _____ Specific pieces (leader, learner, maps/posters, music, other resources)
- _____ Memory work included (Biblical, prayers, Statement of Faith, etc.)
- _____ Activities - creative and interpretative opportunities (including choices)
- _____ Denominational content (or denomination supported)
- _____ Image of faith community/church
- _____ Inclusive in all aspects (language, race, ethnicity, economic, etc.)
- _____ Affirming of individuals
- _____ Relates to church’s mission and world outside of church
- _____ Includes peace, justice, environmental issues
- _____ Educationally appropriate
- _____ Attractive to teachers and students

Curriculum Evaluation Form			
Criteria	Curriculum & Level	Curriculum & Level	Curriculum & Level

Handouts

Handout A - **Christian Education and Your Church**

This is a form that the Partners in Indiana-Kentucky use to get information about a local church before a consultation visit.

Handout B – **“A Process for Theologizing and Selecting Curriculum Emphases”**

This is a process developed by Ruby Schroeder, retired professor of Christian Education at Eden Seminary, now an IKC “Partner.” The workshop is designed for 1½ to 2 hours, and may need to be shortened in the context of the whole curriculum selection model. However, in a local church setting, this compromises participation in the process and thus the depth and breath of results.

Handout C – **“Criteria for Selecting Curriculum”**

Handout D – **“Questions for Analysis of Materials for Teaching and Learning”**

Pages 3.4.2, 3.4.3, 3.4.4 in Partners in Education notebook. Taken from JED material as noted on page 3.4.4.

Handouts E – A variety of charts showing stages of faith from Fowler, Kohlberg, Ericson, a chart from Jubilee curriculum, etc. Participants could choose what they wanted.

Handouts F – Part of page 6.14.2 **“Features of the Whole People of God”** in Partners’ notebook. **“The Way We Learn”** page 52-Unit 3 Worship Resources, Multi-Age Activity Sheet, December 31, 2000 from Whole People of God.

Handouts G – **“Bible Quest: A Bible Story Curriculum for all Ages”** - page 7.2.1 from Partners’ notebook, plus **“Our Many Intelligences”** (handouts 1 & 2) from Bible Quest section in notebook.

Handout H – **“Curriculum Comparisons, 2000-2001 – Bible Quest and Whole People of God.”** On pages 3.7.1, 3.7.2, 3.7.3 from notebook.

Handout J – Blank chart: **“Curriculum Evaluation Form”** for use evaluating several curricula.