

## Communication and Planning

The strength of any program depends on how well people work together and communicate with each other.

It is helpful to have meetings with teachers *at least* once a year to discuss how the program is running, whether the program is meeting your goals, and problems that may surface as the year progresses. It is also helpful to solicit feedback regularly. You may consider meeting as a teaching staff, a parent group, or a combination of the two.

Parents may want to be involved in some decisions, such as which age group to put their child in—especially if the Sunday school is small and one or two students are “loners” in their age group.

If busy schedules prevent you from meeting in person, plan a meeting online via *Google hangouts* or *Skype*. Or keep in touch by email or form a Facebook group. Groups provide helpful tools for reminding teachers of the schedule for coming events and may be helpful for discussing shared concerns.

### Setting Up the Year

It is helpful to have a solid plan in place for the Sunday school year about a month before teaching starts. If you are managing a large program, contact group coordinators and use their help with the following:

- **Recruiting new teachers well before the year starts** so that you can incorporate them into the schedule.
- **Contacting returning teachers** to discuss their commitment for the year ahead.
- **Asking returning teachers which age groups they would like to teach** for the coming year. Some teachers prefer to move from group to group as their own children age. Some maintain a teaching interest in each age level they have children in. Some may feel more comfortable with a particular age group, e.g. teens.
- **Asking if teachers prefer to teach** for consecutive weeks (to allow for a long project, because they have seasonal commitments, may be expecting a baby, etc.) or to teach on Sundays throughout the year.
- **Setting up planning tool**, such as a *Doodle* poll, to streamline the planning.
- **If a mother is expecting a baby** during the year, be sure to schedule time off until she is ready to teach again.
- **When both a husband and wife teach**, ask whether couples prefer to teach on the same dates, or on different dates.

- **When making up the schedule, rotate teachers during Holy Supper (Communion)** weeks throughout the year so all teachers have the opportunity to take Holy Supper. This will prevent teachers feeling unduly burdened by the longer lesson period. You may also consider a relief plan so that those teaching may take Holy Supper.

When you have talked to everyone, meet with group coordinators and put together a schedule that meets the needs of individual teachers and the various age groups for which you are planning.

## Communicating About the Year Ahead

Recognizing and affirming volunteers will inspire them to invest in what they are. Once the teaching schedule and yearly lesson plans are in place, distribute the information to each teacher for the entire year. It is helpful to include *all* of the following:

- **Sunday School dates for the *entire year***, including Holy Supper (Communion) dates.
- **Schedule of teachers**
- **A listing of weekly lesson subjects and readings**
- **A list of anticipated students in the class**
- **Additional information that might be helpful**, e.g. allergies, health issues, cancellation policy in case of bad weather, emergency evacuation procedures, etc.
- **Policy for finding and reporting substitute teachers**
- It is also helpful to have some of this information repeated in your church newsletter, weekly bulletin or in a member-only area of your congregation's website.

If teachers are busy or forgetful it may especially helpful to call or email them reminding them that they are “on duty” early in the week. Look for someone who is happy to do weekly reminders—someone who doesn't volunteer as a Sunday school teacher!