

HOW TO EVALUATE CURRICULUM GREAT COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS

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Determining what curriculum to use is an important decision for any church. The ramifications of what is selected have a direct impact on the scope and sequence of the Bible teaching at the church. It also has implications for students, teachers and families. The purpose of the following information is to provide tested guidelines to give assistance in making an objective decision.

BEFORE YOU EVALUATE

As with so many things, how you start and what questions you ask will greatly determine where you end.

- As you begin the process of evaluating, prayerfully consider forming an evaluation committee (EC). This might be an existing Christian education committee or a special group specifically created for the task. The committee needs to have a chairperson who will not necessarily do any evaluating, but will coordinate the work of the committee. You may also want to have an elder or someone from the governing board of the church as a member. This committee then assumes the responsibility of making curriculum choices or recommendations to those who will make the ultimate decision.
- At many churches the responsibility of choosing a curriculum falls to one or two individuals. As with all churches, these guidelines need to be adapted for maximum effectiveness.
- The EC should pray regularly for this important responsibility and work to communicate with the pastor, elders, teachers, parents, etc.
- The committee needs to establish the criteria and the rating system used in the evaluation. You might consider starting with the curriculum evaluation guide available from Great Commission Publications (www.gcp.org) as a basis for this criterion and rating system.
- An important duty of the EC is to narrow the number of curriculums to be evaluated to three or four. This can be done by referrals from trusted sources, the knowledge of the committee members, affiliation with a denomination, etc. Be certain to get complete samples of all the age-levels of curriculum being evaluated. Trying to evaluate more than this can overwhelm the committee with too much detail and take a very long time. The evaluation process should be able to be completed in three to six months.

THE EVALUATION PROCESS

- When entering the evaluation process it can be helpful to have a representative from each of the publishers come and explain the features and benefits of their materials.
- Use an evaluation guide and have someone evaluate the three or four selected publishers for a specific age-level. The person should study at least two lessons from each publisher as if they were planning to teach them. Have other individuals do the same assignment for the other age-levels being considered.
- It is helpful if the people doing the evaluation are experienced in teaching the age-level they are evaluating. Also, consider asking the present teachers or perspective teachers of each age-level to evaluate the materials they would use. This helps to build a consensus among the teachers as well as eliminates fear associated with possible change. Also, this shows that those making the curriculum choice want the input of those directly affected.
- Set a reasonable deadline for all the evaluations to be completed.
- It is useful to create a chart showing the score for each of the curriculums evaluated by age-level. Be certain to include a place for the total scores. If several people evaluate the same materials, plan to average the scores before entering it on the chart. The chart allows for comparison by publisher to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the various age-levels.

Sample Evaluation Summary Chart
Based On An Imaginary 1-10 Scale

<u>Publisher</u>	<u>Tod.</u>	<u>PS</u>	<u>E. El.</u>	<u>M.El.</u>	<u>U.El.</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>HS</u>	<u>Adult</u>	<u>Total</u>
#1	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	64
#2	2	4	6	8	2	4	6	8	40
#3	1	3	5	7	9	1	3	5	34

- A thorough review of the chart will show which curriculum best fits the church. If there is not a definite conclusion, review and prioritize the evaluation results. This will require an analysis of the chart as well as an analysis of the criteria and scores from the evaluation guides. For example, most churches place a higher priority on the criteria of the Bible content than on the options available for review activities. Therefore, a curriculum with a lower total score could be chosen because the individual score for the Bible content was the highest. Looking at another example, it may be determined that it would be easier for the teacher of adults to make-up for deficiencies with the materials than that of a preschool teacher. This would then help to determine which curriculum to select when the total scores were not conclusive.
- Once a prayerful decision is made, it is important to communicate it to all those who will be effected. Plan also to schedule a representative from the publishing company chosen to come and give an orientation on the materials to those who will be using them.