

# GUIDELINES FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL EVALUATION

by Richard E. Allison

*Evaluation* is asking the question, "Is God well served by what we are doing?"<sup>1</sup>

Usually this is asked either in a formative or a summative way. The former sees evaluation as integral to the process. The latter sees it as independent from the process and determines how effective something has been after it has been completed. It is judgmental in intent and raises defenses and closes down relationships. The formative method focuses on describing what is and, therefore, has the possibility of opening up joint exploration and sharing. It keeps us moving.

Formative evaluation declares that the participant is the primary source of information. It requires the thought forms of the participants. It avoids putting words in their mouths. Pre-evaluation is often employed to determine the categories. The problem one must contend with in formative evaluation is the tendency for respondents to be overly affirming.

In the Sunday school it is usually too threatening to evaluate persons who are volunteers. There are some exceptions to this as when they assist in design, develop ownership and in a sense request it.

Formative evaluation is continuous or at least a part of the loop. It is not something which is done at the conclusion. It serves to surface needs and/or to give new direction.

What follows is an experience in formative evaluation for the Sunday school to be completed by the nurture commission or Christian education committee of the congregation. It consists of five parts derived from church growth literature and covers the following areas.

1. Leadership
2. Planning
3. Personnel
4. Focus
5. Outreach

## *Pastoral Leadership*<sup>2</sup>

The pastor is the key person for growth in the local church. This does not mean that a pastor can make a church grow. A pastor must have the vision and earn the right to lead and the congregation must be willing to support him. Together they can accomplish great things.

1-1 Describe the leadership style of the pastor.<sup>3</sup>

1-2 List ways the pastor supports the work of the Sunday school.<sup>4</sup>

1-3 How can the relationship between the pastor and the Sunday school be improved?

### ***Adequate Planning***

The first requirement for adequate planning is to know what you want to accomplish. To identify your purpose for Sunday school will be your most difficult and most important task. Next comes the establishment of goals. Goals help us to:

1. Look forward
2. Work together
3. Measure progress
4. Celebrate accomplishments

2-1 Identify your Sunday school audience and list their needs and expectations.

2-2 What is it that you want to accomplish in Sunday school?<sup>5</sup>

2-3 What learning settings do you provide to accomplish these goals?<sup>6</sup>

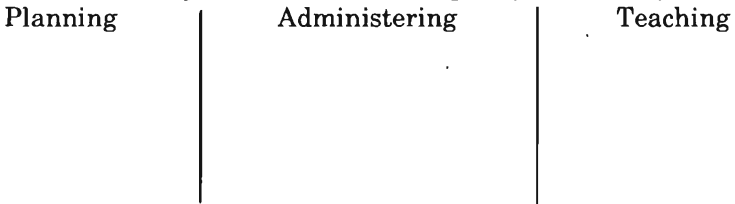
2-4 How do you evaluate the quality of your learning experiences?

2-5 What percent of the total church budget goes for Sunday school?

***Caring Personnel***<sup>7</sup>

Just as the planning for a growing Sunday school is dependent upon pastoral leadership so the implementing of the plan is dependent upon a mobilized laity.

3-1 What are the positions of leadership in your Sunday School?



3-2 How are leadership needs identified?

3-3 Describe the process for selecting and recruiting educational leadership for your congregation.<sup>8</sup>

3-4 What type of training is provided for these persons?<sup>9</sup>

3-5 How are they supported and encouraged in their respective roles?<sup>10</sup>

3-6 How does the congregation express its appreciation to the staff and celebrate their service?

3-7 How adequate are your present procedures?

### ***Learner Focus***

Learner focus means that our primary concern is people. Transformation is the goal. (Luke 6:40)

4-1 How are persons helped to grow as Christians in their relation to:  
God  
Self  
Others  
The world

4-2 What educational materials are used in the Sunday School?

4-3 What theory of learning do you practice?

4-4 How do you identify the learning needs of persons in your Sunday school?

4-5 What facilities and equipment are available?<sup>11</sup>

4-6 How is your Sunday school supportive of Christian family life?

4-7 How do you develop an appreciation for your own Christian tradition?

### ***Planned Outreach***

Sunday school has declined in nearly all denominations in the decade of the seventies. Forty million persons were enrolled in Sunday school in 1970. In the next decade, enrollment dropped to 31.5 million. This is a twenty four per cent decadal decline. Over half of U.S. denominations reported church membership growth in the decade of the seventies. Only nine registered any growth in their Sunday school for the same period.<sup>12</sup>

5-1 How has the attendance of your Sunday school increased or declined in the decade of the seventies?

5-2 After charting on a line graph your Sunday school and worship attendance for 1970-1980, identify any sharp changes in attendance and determine the reasons for these changes.<sup>13</sup>

5-3 Determine how the members of your committee were led to attend Sunday school.<sup>14</sup>

5-4 What is your plan for locating and reaching prospective members for your Sunday school?<sup>15</sup>

5-5 How do you contact visitors and follow-up absentees?

5-6 What is your plan for assimilating new persons?<sup>16</sup>

5-7 What new learning settings have you initiated in the past year?

### ***Conclusion***

6-1 At what points is your Sunday school strong?

6-2 What are the weaknesses of your Sunday school?

6-3 What do you want to change?

6-4 What do you plan to accomplish in one year?

6-5 What do you plan to accomplish in five years?

6-6 What is your Sunday school membership goal for this decade?

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Richard G. Hutcheson, Jr., *Wheel Within The Wheel: Confronting The Management Crisis Of The Pluralistic Church*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), p. 205.

<sup>2</sup>C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*, (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1976), p. 55.

<sup>3</sup>This can be ascertained by employing any one of several instruments such as:

- a. "Style of Leadership Questionnaire," available from Fuller Evangelistic Association, P.O. Box 989, Pasadena, CA 91102
- b. "Personal Profile System", available from Fuller Evangelistic Association
- c. "Style of Leadership Questionnaire", from the March 1976 issue of *Faith At Work*.
- d. "Choosing Your Leadership Style", found in the book *Organization And Leadership In the Local Church* by Kenneth K. Kilinski and Jerry C. Wofford, pp. 69-78.

<sup>4</sup>Judy Meyers, ed., *Process '80*. (Evanston, IL: Board Of Christian Education Baptist General Conference, 1979), pp. 22, 24.



<sup>5</sup>Consult Appendix A for a form to use.

<sup>6</sup>Consult Appendix B for a form to use.

<sup>7</sup>Meyers, pp. 43-54.

<sup>8</sup>Lowell E. Brown, *Sunday School Standards*, (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light Publications, 1980), p. 29.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 16, 106, 109.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>12</sup>Charles Arn, Donald McGavran, Win Arn, *Growth: A New Vision For The Sunday School*, (Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press, 1980), p. 29.

<sup>13</sup>Consult Appendix C for a form to use.

<sup>14</sup>Arn, McGavran, Arn, p. 70.

<sup>15</sup>"Community Analysis" is available from Fuller Evangelistic Association.

<sup>16</sup>Arn, McGavran, Arn, pp. 94-114.

## Appendix A

A goal is a statement of results to be achieved. It consists of the following:

1. An action verb.
2. A single, measurable, key result.
3. A date or time period within which the result is to be achieved.
4. A maximum investment (time/money).

### *Components Of An Objective*

What?	Who?
By When?	To What Extent?

## Appendix B

	Basic Ongoing	Basic Occasional	Elective Ongoing	Elective Occasional
Early Childhood				
Childhood				
Youth				
Early Adults				
Middle Adults				
Late Adults				
Singles				
Family Enrichment				
Other				

