



THE ENCOURAGER

Help for Sunday School Teachers—Dedicated to those who take the Word of Life to Children Everywhere

Are we Communicating?

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Rachel had an idea. It was a good one. Here it is—first of all—in its trial form.

Here are some of my ideas regarding SS outings. A number of months ago I had been feeling burdened about doing extra activities with the SS - to communicate with them that we care about them as kids, not just candidates for the Gospel. I know for myself, that when I started teaching I had planned to have my class over on a regular basis - but that has not happened. So... I started to think about what the barriers were to doing that and how it could be made easier. I think the barriers are often 1) time gets away on you and before you know it months have gone by without doing anything; 2) it's a lot of work to arrange an outing, especially if you're only doing it for a few kids; 3) it can also be hard to work with the kids in class and then to also do something outside the class setting.

So here's what I was thinking - what if we planned regular outings with the kids (for example—bimonthly or every 3 months, etc. during the school months) and came up with a sign-up schedule so that not everyone would have to be involved in each activity.

I suggest that we split the SS up into groups, by age / grade. Example: Primary (K-Gr.3), Junior (Gr. 4-8), and Senior (High School), etc. - this is just a suggestion of the groups. Each "group" could then be assigned a week (eg. 1st Friday of the month for group 1) when they would know that their group would have a special activity planned.

It could also be partially an award for attendance (eg. they would have to come out a minimum of 3 times since the last event to qualify for coming out) - this might help our numbers since they seem to be going down a little.

Due to the numbers in our SS it's not likely that there would ever be more than 15 in a group - I figure that ~3 people could handle a group that size. I thought then, that we could rotate (by sign up schedule) who did each group and when they did it. That way, we would get to develop relationships with kids other than the ones in our class. It would also be much less of a time commitment for each person. As well, if someone had a challenging class, they wouldn't always be facing the burden alone of dealing with those kids.

I was also thinking of involving others in the assembly who were interested, maybe some of the older kids - I know some would like to be involved and this might be a good way to get them started in SS work.

As far as what the "activity" would involve, I was thinking of a pretty simple format - dinner (eg. pizza, KFC), short devotional, then an activity. I figure if ~3 people were sharing the cost of the food it wouldn't be too costly. As far as what activities to do that would depend on the group but it could include: skating, tobogganing, board games, group games, crafts, cooking class, etc. - I know we have lots of people with lots of great ideas for this type of thing - I'm sure if we brainstormed, we could come up with a long list of possible activities.

Another suggestion for an activity would be to keep track of attendance (maybe via the bulletin board) and for those kids that came 75% of the time over a certain period, we would have a whole group reward (eg. African Lion Safari).

So what we actually HAVE done is have an outing once a month. One month is with the primary grades, and the next is junior and senior together. We decide beforehand what the activity is going to be, then put up a sign up sheet for drivers and people to get food (there are about 7 spots on the list to fill). We don't always do supper, but always have a fairly hefty snack at some point in the evening/day. Meals have been hotdogs, pizza, chicken nuggets, pancakes, etc. After trying several outings with frustrating organizational skills, we also have put one person in charge of the outing to organize EVERYTHING. The event is already known, but making sure all the children have rides, and food is covered are the main things the organizer does. We've had lots of glitches, and especially the older teachers have been frustrated with not knowing what is going on, however it seems to get better each time. One glitch has been not making announcements to the whole assembly to let everyone know what the plans are. Some people aren't involved in teaching, but supply rides to Sunday school, and there has been some confusion over that. As far as how the kids qualify, it is by having 50% attendance from the date of the previous outing - this hopefully covers any children who spend 1/2 their time at another parents.

Some outings we have done (or planned to) are: corn maze, bowling, games night, making gingerbread houses, Christmas caroling to the elderly, crafts, gym night, Maple syrup festival, progressive dinner and a bonfire. We usually stop for the summer months while we are in open Sunday School.