

The Sunday School Planning Team

The Sunday School Planning Team at Work

“Sunday School is the foundational strategy in a local church for leading people to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and for building on-mission Christians through open Bible study groups that engage people in evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, ministry, and worship.”

Formerly known as the Sunday School Council, the Sunday School Planning Team is uniquely designed to carry out the foundational strategy of the local church. Made up of leaders from different age groups in the church, the Planning Team is vitally important to the planning and implementing of the work in the Sunday School. Its primary purpose is to plan, coordinate, and evaluate the overall work of the Sunday School’s strategy, projects, and emphases. When each person effectively carries out his or her responsibility, the Bible study strategy will help the church accomplish its purpose.

Who Serves on the Sunday School Planning Team?

Traditionally, the Sunday School director is the primary leader of this group. Additionally, any leader who provides administrative leadership for a particular age group in the Sunday School should be involved. Examples would be a department or division director of a specific age group, or leader of a group or class. These leaders should be enlisted by the Sunday School director. Staff members, especially the pastor and minister of education, are members of this team. The pastor’s participation in the Sunday School Planning Team communicates its importance and priority. A recording secretary should be enlisted to take minutes of the meeting. The Sunday School secretary may fill this position, if desired.

A church that is organized by Sunday School departments will want to use department directors as the team. Larger churches may choose to use division directors to head up the team. Smaller churches could enlist one person, such as a teacher, from each age group to serve. The team should be large enough to share a variety of ideas, but small enough so that decisions can be made easily.

The Work of the Sunday School Planning Team

The three key elements of the work of the Sunday School Planning Team, to plan, coordinate, and evaluate, are all important to the development and maintenance of a balanced Sunday School program.

The planning portion of the team meetings includes both annual and monthly planning. Whereas annual planning would include all the months of the year, monthly planning is necessary to keep the plans on track, to adjust and refine them, and to keep communication open. It would include such actions as:

- Set numerical goals for outreach and growth for the Sunday School
- Develop action plans for accomplishing the goals
- Study records and reports for ideas to develop ways to improve outreach, Bible teaching, and Christian living
- Determine the best use of space, furnishings, and supplies
- Plan an annual calendar of activities
- Schedule special activities and projects for the Sunday School

- Prepare for the enlistment of leaders
- Involve leaders in appropriate training
- Act upon recommendations from the Church Leadership Team (formerly known as the Church Council)
- Develop a Sunday School budget and determine budgeted priorities
- Plan for an efficient functioning Sunday School organization
- Promote and support schedules for Sunday School workers' meetings
- Communicate the overall mission and message of Sunday School strategy to other leaders and the entire church

The planning portion can be best carried out with help from the planning section of the latest annual resource for general administration, available from Lifeway Christian Resources.

The coordinating responsibilities of the Sunday School Planning Team include actions to:

- Build a spirit of unity among all workers in the Sunday School
- Develop and use workers' covenants and job descriptions, and regularly challenge leaders to excel in their work
- Coordinate all activities involving more than one age group, department, or division
- Coordinate special emphases and projects related to the performance of church functions through the Sunday School

The evaluating responsibilities of the Sunday School Planning Team include such actions as to:

- Regularly review the work of the Sunday School as it pertains to church objectives, church goals, and Sunday School strategy and goals
- Review the overall mission and message of the Sunday School strategy
- Evaluate progress by adopting and using the general Sunday School Best Practices, formerly the Sunday School Standard
- Evaluate projects and actions immediately after completion and identify areas for improvement

The Sunday School Planning Team Meeting

Since the Sunday School can be viewed as teams of people on mission with God, then the Sunday School Planning Team meetings may be referred to as "Team Meetings." Led by the Sunday School director, these team meetings should be organized so that the meeting will run smoothly and efficiently. Copies of the agenda should be mailed to the team before the scheduled meeting. In addition, minutes of the meeting should be mailed to any absentee following the meeting. Help in planning the agenda may be found in the *Sunday School Leader* magazine, produced by LifeWay Christian Resources. Following is a suggested outline for the meeting:

- A. Prepare the Agenda

1. Inspiration
 - Present a meaningful and timely devotion
 - Select Scriptures and suggestions about leadership
 - Renew commitments
 - Prayer
2. Information
 - New ideas that can be shared with the group
 - Training information
3. Evaluation
 - Goal setting and progress reports
 - Rooms and materials
 - Evaluation of previous quarter, month and/or Sunday
4. Communication
 - Communicate upcoming events
 - Appreciation of team members
5. Preparation
 - Plan for upcoming projects
 - Schedule an annual planning retreat with the team
 - Discuss needs of the Sunday School, and how to help with those needs
6. Prayer
 - Pray for the work of the Sunday School, as well as the members and prospects. This is so important! Do not cut this short!

B. Prepare the Meeting Place

Explore different meeting places. Many times, the church is the most convenient for a meeting. But a meeting in the home conveys a more relaxed environment. In either case, make preparations for tables and materials such as notebooks, extra pencils or pens, and possibly refreshments of some sort.

C. Prepare the Materials

- Prepare and make copies of the agenda
- Review the *Sunday School Leader* magazine, which has specific articles targeted for leaders of each age group, including special education, as well as an agenda for the Sunday School Planning Team meeting
- Compile new materials for consideration and distribution

The Sunday School Planning Team's Responsibility for Success

A commitment to planning must be shared by every member of the Sunday School Planning Team for it to be successful. All members, including the church staff, must see this planning as absolutely necessary. Every team member has a personal responsibility for the success of the Sunday School Planning Team. The work of every department, every class, and every special project in Sunday School depends upon the kind of planning done by the Sunday School Planning Team. Each member, therefore, should attend every meeting, expect great results from the meetings, help to build the proper spirit into every session, and gladly accept assignments in line with his or her particular work.

Above all, the Sunday School Planning Team should be seen as the structured group assigned to plan, coordinate, and evaluate the work of the Sunday School so that the church may fulfill its mission in the new century.