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THE GRACELINK CURRICULUM



The new Sabbath School curriculum for children is a result of careful market research conducted among children’s leaders across the United States and Canada (1995), which was later confirmed by research in other parts of the world. These leaders told us they wanted an “Adventist” curriculum, Bible-based and doctrinally specific. They specifically wanted lessons that actively engaged children in the learning process, that taught the concept of grace, and that led to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

When Church administrators learned that the religious education of a growing number of Adventist children was being entrusted to non-Adventist publishers’ materials, they voted to find the necessary resources to develop something new. In 1996, the GC World Curriculum Committee accepted a proposal for a new curriculum.

The twelve years curriculum for children from birth through 14 includes 624 lessons. The development of the core curriculum and dynamics was contracted to the John Hancock Center for Youth Ministry at La Sierra University, headed by Dr. Bailey Gillespie and Stuart Tyner. The General Conference Sabbath School department, under the direction of Dr. Patricia Habada, identified and supervised specialists representing every world division to write the new lessons and program activities. Both the Review and Herald and Pacific Press Publishing Associations fully committed their resources to produce brand new, four-color artwork for each age level, which they made available to all world divisions without charge.

A new generation of Adventists now has the opportunity to focus on the four aspects of a growing Christian experience—Grace, Worship, Community and Service. Children will be constantly challenged to apply Bible teachings to everyday life. Teachers and parents can feel confident that children will celebrate the distinctive Adventist teachings in a positive, inclusive learning environment that encourages their active role as members of their Church and responsible citizens of their world.

Goals and Mission



The mission of the GraceLink curriculum is to:

Help children joyfully experience God's grace and respond by

- Showing love to God (worship)
- Showing love to family and friends (community)
- Serving others in their world (service)

as productive members of God's family now and always.

The goals of GraceLink are to:

- Foster a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- Instill a grace orientation
- Ground children in the Word of God
- Instill moral responsibility
- Welcome diversity
- Involve children in unselfish service
- Stimulate a natural and winsome witness
- Encourage high self regard as sons and daughters of God

Philosophy



Four dynamics of a growing Christian experience provide the framework for GraceLink. These dynamics are:

Grace: Jesus Loves Me. He has taken the initiative to pay the price for my sins and offer me eternal life as His child, fully empowered to grow into His likeness.

Worship: I Love Jesus. I turn my entire life over to Him in gratitude for what He has done for me. Not only do I pray and worship Him, I also obey His commands because I know He wants what is best for me.

Community: We Love One Another. God calls us to love and honor our biological and our church families. We accept our place among them, and we respect everyone else's role and inclusion.

Service: Jesus Loves You, Too. True joy comes from serving others, and from taking the good news of Jesus' love to the whole world.

Division Cycles Scope & Sequence



BEGINNER: The Beginner curriculum consists of a two-year cycle recommended for use from birth to age two. This creates the possibility of some repetition. However, due to developmental and cognitive changes, the lesson will mean something entirely different at age 22 months than at 2 months. Instead of studying a new story each week, the Beginners study one story per month.

KINDERGARTEN: Kindergarten children also have a two-year cycle of lessons recommended for use from ages 3 to 5. Once again, 5-year-olds will not mind hearing again a story they studied at age 3.

Primary: The Primary division has a four-year cycle, recommended for children ages 6 to 10. Parents are expected to study with younger children. Some of the daily study questions will be too difficult for younger children and may be omitted by the parents. Because the Sabbath School time is activity-based, everyone in class can be involved.

Junior: The Junior division also has a four-year cycle. It is recommended that churches cycle through the complete four-year sequence—whether the Junior division is split into two groups—Juniors and Earliteens*—whether Juniors and Earliteens meet together.

* *Real-Time Faith* is a new set of materials specifically for Earliteens (ages 12 to 14) when they meet separately from Juniors.



Sabbath School Format



A. Introduce the lesson on Sabbath. The children review and apply the principles studied, with the help of their parents and Bible study guides, during the week. In this way, the lessons learned in Sabbath School become a vital part of the child's growing faith experience. Memory verses, which are also learned in Sabbath School, are reviewed and reinforced during the following week, connected in the child's mind with the interesting learning activities they have already experienced.

B. Focus the entire Sabbath School time on one message. Each

Message relates to one of the four dynamics of a growing faith experience: grace (God loves me), worship (I love God), community (we love each other), and service (God loves you, too).

C. Reach each child in the way he/she learns best. Each teaching plan is based on the natural learning sequence. By following this sequence, students will be connected with the message for the week in a way that will capture each one's attention and imagination.

D. Give students active learning experiences so they can more readily internalize the truth presented. These experiences are to be followed by *debriefing* sessions in which questions are asked which lead the children to reflect on what they experienced, interpret the experience, and apply that information to their lives.

E. Involve the adult Sabbath School staff in new and flexible ways:

- One adult can manage a small Sabbath School.
- A larger Sabbath School can be managed by one leader/teacher, with other adult volunteers to facilitate the small group interaction.



Total Hour Learning and the Natural Learning Sequence



With GraceLink, the entire Sabbath School hour is devoted to the lesson. The four segments include: 1. readiness activities; 2. the Bible lesson; 3. applying the lesson; and 4. sharing the lesson.

Readiness Activities. These activities are designed to give children hands-on experience. They introduce the point of the lesson in a creative and fun way, helping to connect the child's thoughts and emotions with the point of the lesson. At least 2-3 activities are suggested for each lesson.

- **Debriefing.** After each activity the children are given an opportunity to say how the activity made them feel and allow them to draw the spiritual meaning out of both the activity and the Bible story to which it is tied.

Leaders and teachers should ask three important types of debriefing questions:

- Reflective—how do you feel about what we just did?
- Interpretative—what does it mean to you?
- Applicable—what are you going to do about it?

The Bible Lesson. This is the time for children to be involved in experiencing the Bible story. The Bible is used to help children learn the main lesson, learn the memory verse, and listen to God's word.

Applying The Lesson. This is the opportunity for children to look at the lesson and examining it to see what God is trying to tell them. They then learn to apply the lesson to their daily lives..

Sharing The Lesson. This is the time for children to respond to the lesson. They can plan a group response project, teach someone else what they have learned, or make something to share the memory verse.



Diagram of the Learning Cycle

