

THE 3D SUNDAY SCHOOL

A Two-Hour Conference for Children's Sunday School Teachers

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PURPOSE

To lead Children's Sunday School teachers to discover the three dimensions of children's Sunday school: Invite, Discover, and Connect.

PREPARATION

1. Arrange chairs in three equal groups facing the focal wall. Limit the size of each group to seven conferees. If you expect more than 21, consider doubling the assignments and have six groups.
2. Purchase three large gift bags.
3. Cut out four, 12-by-12-by-12-inch triangles from same colored heavy weight paper. Write *3D* on one of the triangles (make sure this triangle is pointing down), *Invite* on one, *Discover* on one, and *Connect* on the fourth triangle. Place the "3D" triangle on the focal wall. (You will add a triangle to the focal wall and eventually have a large 24-by-24-by-24-inch triangle at the end of the session.) Procedure step 1.
4. From three different colors of heavy weight paper cut out 12-by-12-by-12-inch triangles. On one triangle write *Reach*, on another write *Teach*, and on the third one write *Minister*. Cut each triangle into 7-8 pieces and place in three different zip-lock bags. Place one puzzle in each of the large gift bags. Procedure step 1.
5. On three-by-five-inch cards, print one of the following words: *Reach*, *Teach*, or *Minister*. Make one card for each conferee expected. Be sure to have equal numbers of each word. Tape these cards under or on the back of each chair. Procedure step 1.
6. On three-by-three-inch construction paper squares, write the letters of the following words: *INVITE*, *DISCOVER*, and *CONNECT*. Place each set of letters in a zip-lock bag. Place one zip-lock bag in each of the large gift bags. Procedure step 2.
7. Place a tear sheet and marker in each large gift bag. Procedure Step 3.
8. Write the following words on three-by-five-inch cards: *Friends*, *Relatives*, *Schoolmates*, *Neighbors*, *People Search*, *Surveys*, *Block Parties*, *Game Day*, *VBS*, *Worship Attendees not enrolled in SS*, *Fall Festivals*, *Summer Activities*. Hide these cards around the room. Procedure step 4.
9. Place three blank three-by-five-inch cards in each gift bag. Procedure Step 4.
10. Gather six to nine items as suggested in procedure step 5. Place two to three items in a small gift bag. Place one small gift bag in each of the larger gift bags. Possible items might include: a toy car, a toy phone, a postcard, a baseball, a newspaper, a balloon, a *Parentlife*, or a children's devotion magazine (*More*, *Adventure*, *Bible Express*). Think outside the norm and challenge conferees to be creative. Procedure step 5.
11. Write the following words on separate word strips: *Search*, *Discover*, *Personalize*, *Struggle*, *Believe*, and *Obey*. Attach these word strips to the focal wall. Make copies of handout 1. Procedure Step 6.
12. Prepare a Learning Approach Mind Map. On a piece of construction paper, write in large letters *Learning Approach*. Attach two-by-ten-inch strips of construction paper like spokes. On each "spoke" write one of the learning approaches discussed on handout 2. Attach this mind map to the left or right of the focal wall. Procedure step 7.
13. Gather and place one stack of "super sticky" notes in each gift bag.
14. In separate grocery bags, place the following items: Art: plastic hanger, yarn, scissors, and chenille sticks; Music: rhythm sticks or 10-inch dowel rods; Drama: no supplies needed; Games: a foam ball; Research: several translations of the Bible; Creative Writing: paper and pencil. It might be helpful to place simple written instructions for cinquains, haikus, or simple diamond poems in the creative writing bag. Write instructions (procedure step 8) on separate index cards and attach to the appropriate bags with clothes pins. Place these bags to the side. Procedure step 8.
15. Make copies of handout 3. Procedure step 9.
16. Prepare three posters with *Connect with Kids* on the top of each poster. Write one of the follow terms on each of the posters: *Pray for Kids*, *Fellowship with Kids*, *Minister to Kids*. Down the right side, number the posters, 1-12. Procedure step 10.
17. Make copies of handout 4, Procedure step 10.
18. Place one completed gift bag in each group.
19. Make copies of attachment 1 on heavy-weight paper. Cut out as many triangles as you expect conferees. (Option: glue a small magnet strip on the back of each triangle.) Procedure step 11.

PROCEDURES

Introduction (10 min.)

1. Introductory Activity (5 min.) As conferees enter the room, direct them to be seated in one of the three groups of chairs you have prepared. At the appointed time for the conference to begin, direct conferees to retrieve from their group's gift bag the puzzle. Instruct the conferees to work together to put their group's puzzle together. Inform them that when assembled correctly, each triangle will have an important task of Children's Sunday School leaders. When all groups are finished, ask them to share their word. Explain that Children's Sunday School teachers have used these words as a basic job description for many years.

Share that we will use our time together to discover ways we can do an even better job of reaching, teaching, and ministering. Have the conferees retrieve the three-by-five-inch card placed on their chairs and regroup themselves in common term groups. (Option: If you are not sure how many conferees you will have, count conferees and distribute reach, teach, and minister cards while conferees are working their team puzzles.)

2. Unscramble Word Tiles (5 min.) After groups have settled, direct groups to retrieve from their group's gift bag the zip-lock bag with letter tiles. Direct groups to work together to unscramble the letters to form a key terms for a 3D Children's Sunday School.

Share that reach = invite; teach = discover; and minister = connect. Reach, teach and minister are assignments for teachers. Invite, discover and connect are assignments for teacher and for boys and girls. Say: **As we work through our time together consider ways we can help kids invite, discover, and connect.**

Invite (35 min.): Add the "Invite" triangle to the top of the 3D triangle on the focal wall, creating a diamond.

3. Why Invite? (10 min.) Direct each group to brainstorm the benefits of children attending Sunday School. Groups should record their thoughts on the tear sheets provided; after three or four minutes, call for one of the groups to report. Ask the other two groups to listen carefully and compare the first reporting groups ideas with their group's ideas. All three groups should strike through any duplications. Ask the second group to report remaining ideas again striking through any duplicated ideas. Finally, instruct the third group to report their remaining ideas.

4. Who to Invite Scavenger Hunt (15 min.) Instruct conferees to group themselves in groups of three. Say: **Around the room you will find cards with places we can find children to invite to Sunday School.** Guide groups to lock arms and search around the room collecting as many suggestions/ideas as they can in one minute. (Note: If you are teaching a very small group of conferees, allow individuals to search alone. For very large groups you will need to add additional ideas.)

As conferees complete the hunt, direct them to return to their seats. As groups share their finding, lead in discussing each idea and tape those ideas to the focal wall.

Direct the conferees to remove the three blank three-by-five-inch cards from their group's gift bag. Inform the groups that they will have one minute to think of three additional ideas/ways or places to find children to invite to Sunday School. After one minute, allow groups to share. Add each idea to the focal wall.

Remind conferees that 80–90 percent of people surveyed say they first came to the church they currently attend because someone invited them. Very few children simply decide to come to church. We must invite them and their families.

5. How do you invite them? (10 min.) Instruct groups to look in their gift bags and find a smaller gift bag. Ask the groups to look at these items and decide ways to use these items to invite kids to Sunday School (example: baseball might imply that boys and girls can invite friends on their sports teams.)

Discover (45 min.): Add the "Discover" triangle to the other two triangles on the focal wall.

6. Personal Discovery (10 min.) Say: **Before we can help children discover God's Word, we must first discover for ourselves the Bible truths we plan to teach.** Emphasize the importance of teaching children from the overflow of what God has already taught you. Distribute "Discovering the Truth" (handout 1). Explain that the six words you have placed on the focal wall go in the blanks on the handout. Encourage conferees to work together to decide which words go best in which blanks. After a few minutes, share the correct answers and lead in a brief discussion.

- Search the Truth. (What did God say in this Bible passage?)
- Discover the Truth. (What truth is the Holy Spirit teaching me?)
- Personalize the Truth. (What is the Holy Spirit teaching me about the way I think, feel or live?)
- Struggle with the Truth. (What struggle is in my heart?)
- Believe the Truth. (What do I need to change; mind, values, the way I live?)
- Obey the Truth. (Will I obey the Holy Spirits leadership?)

7. Helping Kids Discover Bible Truths the Way God Made Them—Mind Map (10 min.) Ask conferees to find the "sticky notes" you placed in their large gift bag. Ask the conferees to write down on separate sticky notes things kids enjoy doing. (For large groups allow conferees to work in the three seating teams) Allow conferees two minutes to complete this assignment. Direct attention to the focal wall where you have placed the Learning Approaches Mind Map (Prep. step 12). Distribute handout 2 and lead a brief overview of the Eight Learning Approaches.

Ask conferees to share the different things they thought about that kids enjoy doing. Direct the conferees to place their ideas on the mind map at an appropriate learning approach. (Note: some conferees may have thought of some of the same things. This is an excellent opportunity to stress that many activities can be enjoyed by several of the learning approaches. Example: swimming is a physical activity but a reflective learner might also enjoy the opportunity to swim and reflect while a natural learner would enjoy being in a lake or ocean.)

8. Teaching Methods that help Kids Discover (25 min.) Say: **Children are very active. God made them to move. We are successful in Sunday School when we join God and provide active learning experiences that guide boys and girls to discover Bible truths.** Divide the three groups in halves to make six groups. Assign each of the six groups one of the following assignments:

- **Art:** Using the material provided, create a mobile that reinforces today's memory verse, John 3:16.
- **Music:** Using the items provided, create a music activity that reinforces today's memory verse, John 3:16.
- **Drama:** Using today's memory verse, John 3:16, create a pantomime.
- **Games:** Using the item provided, create a game that reinforces today's memory verse, John 3:16.
- **Research:** Use the Bibles to answer the following research questions regarding John 3:16. (What testament in the Book of John found?)

Who wrote the Book of John? How many chapters are in the Book of John? Who is saying these words? Who is the “one and only son?” Read and compare the verse in several translations.)

- **Creative Writing:** Using today’s memory verse, John 3:16, write a simple poem.

After five minutes, call time. Guide each group to share their assignment and the results of their work. Say: **Activities for the sake of activity is not the goal of a 3D Sunday School. We use active teaching methods to introduce and reinforce Bible truths and life application.** Encourage conferees to always make that connection as they guide kids to discover God’s Word in Sunday School. (Note: for small groups choose two or three methods for conferees to participate and be prepared to share the other methods suggested.) If time permits, ask conferees to identify which learning approach their active method might fit.

Connect (25 min.): Add the “Connect” triangle to the other three triangles on the focal wall, this should complete your 24-inch triangle.

9. Creating an Environment for Kids and their families to Connect (10 min.) Distribute a copy of “How Do We Measure Up?” (handout 3) to each conferee. As you review each statement, direct conferees to check the statements that are true to their church and classrooms. After all statements have been read and discussed, direct the conferees to add the number of checks and shade in the same number of boxes (from the bottom up) on the “Environment Thermometer.” Help conferees see where they might make improvements that would encourage children and their families to connect with Sunday School.

10. Connect with Kids and families through “Connect with Kids Groups” (15 min.) Share that the best environment for kids is an environment created by loving relationships. Distribute “Connect with Kids” (handout 4). Explain the importance of connecting with kids and their families. Share that when we use the suggested teacher/child ratio in our Sunday School departments and make connect group assignment, each teacher should have no more than six kids to “connect” with—a doable objective.

Share three ways to assign connect groups: geographically, attendance patterns, and ministry needs. Taking these three factors into consideration will help teachers as they build relationships with their connect group.

Give each group one of the three “Connect with Kids” posters you have prepared. Inform the groups that they will have two minutes to brainstorm four ideas that relate to the connect idea on their poster. After two minutes, groups should exchange posters. Groups will then have two minutes to add four additional ideas. After two minutes pass the posters again and have groups add the final four ideas. When each group has added four ideas to each poster, review the ideas listed. Ask for clarification and any additional ideas that might come to mind.

Wrap it Up (5 min.)

11. Prayer Triplets. (5 min.) Instruct conferees to get in groups of three. Distribute the prayer triangles you have prepared. Ask each member of the group to write their first name on one side of each of the three triangles. Ask conferees to covenant to pray for the three people on their triangle during the coming weeks and months that each person would accept the challenge to Invite, Discover, and Connect with the kids in their Sunday School class. Close with a prayer of commitment.

Discovering the Truth!



As you do your personal Bible study, ask yourself these questions:

1. _____ the Truth—*What did God say in this Bible passage?*
2. _____ the Truth—*What truth is the Holy Spirit teaching me?*
3. _____ the Truth—*What is the Holy Spirit teaching me about the way I think, feel, or live?*
4. _____ with the Truth—*What struggle is in my heart?*
5. _____ the Truth—*What do I need to change? (mind, values, the way I live?)*
6. _____ the Truth—*Will I obey the Holy Spirit's leadership?*

Learning Approaches

Children come to us with many God-given preferences. There are at least eight learning approaches that you may see in the children you teach. Many children are strong in more than one approach, but all possess varying abilities in most areas. Therefore, provide a variety of approaches to learning the same Bible truth during a session. In this way, you will be guiding children to learn in the way God created them to “go.”

1. **VERBAL APPROACH.** Prefers activities that use language to express ideas and interact with others.
2. **LOGICAL APPROACH.** Prefers activities that use reasoning and logic to solve problems.
3. **VISUAL APPROACH.** Prefers activities that allow the child to express ideas through drawing and pictures.
4. **PHYSICAL APPROACH.** Prefers activities that require physical movement and coordination.
5. **MUSICAL APPROACH.** Prefers activities that involve music, rhythm and beat.
6. **RELATIONAL APPROACH.** Prefers activities that involve interaction with others.
7. **REFLECTIVE APPROACH.** Prefers activities that require the child to journal ideas and thoughts.
8. **NATURAL APPROACH.** Prefers activities that involve nature.

How Does Our Environment Measure Up?

- ☐ There is adequate signage helping visitors know how to enter the church for Sunday School.
- ☐ There is a “Welcome Center” where first-time visitors come and are escorted to Sunday School.
- ☐ Hallways and classrooms are clean, attractive and well marked for directions.
- ☐ Sunday School leadership understands the importance of greeting each child by name and welcoming visitors and their families at the door.
- ☐ Sunday School leadership arrives prepared and before the first child.
- ☐ Consideration has been given to a proper teacher/child ratio: 1/6.
- ☐ Consideration has been given for proper room size (25 square feet per child and teacher).
- ☐ The furniture is the right size for the children and is clean and repaired as needed.
- ☐ Wall displays are colorful and appealing. Posters, pictures, and other teaching aids are hung at the eye level of the children.
- ☐ There are locations for large and small group learning experiences.
- ☐ The room is physically comfortable with regards to temperature.
- ☐ Children feel free to learn in a safe, loving environment.
- ☐ Relationships with children and their families are of most importance.
- ☐ Follow up contacts are made with visitors within one week of their first visit.
- ☐ All children are placed in “Connect with Kids” groups and teachers regularly pray for, fellowship with, and minister to the children and their families they are assigned.

Top Notch!

Needs Work

Oops!

Check each box to the left that apply to your Sunday School. For each box checked, shade in a box on the right (from bottom to top). How does your room measure up

Connect with Kids

Connect with Kids is a tool Sunday School teachers can use to build relationships with children and their families. The intent of **Connect with Kids** is to meet the needs of boys and girls through prayer, fellowships, and ministry. Sunday School teachers model spiritual growth and demonstrate God's love to children. Connecting in this sense is more than just a feeling of concern. Connecting is one of the ways Children's Sunday School teachers apply God's Word in their lives. **Connect with Kids** includes praying for, fellowshiping with, and ministering to boys and girls and their families.

Ways to Connect with Kids

Pray for Kids

*Nothing is more important than praying for the children you teach. Knowing how to specifically pray for the children in your **Connect with Kids** group will require building relationships with them and their families. Here are some ideas on how you can pray for kids.*

- Pray for each children on your **Connect with Kids** group daily.
- Pray for one child on your **Connect with Kids** group each day.
- Telephone each family on your **Connect with Kids** group to discover specific prayer needs.
- Develop a telephone prayer chain with your **Connect with Kids** group.
- Build relationships with each child in your **Connect with Kids** group to know specific prayer needs of each child and their family.

Fellowship with Kids

*You really don't know the children in your **Connect with Kids** group if you haven't spent time with them. There is a lot of truth in the old saying, "Kids spell love T-I-M-E." Most of us don't remember what our favorite teacher taught us, but we do remember that our favorite teacher loved us. Here are some ideas on how you can fellowship with kids:*

- Have each child and their family in your **Connect with Kids** group over for Sunday lunch.
- Sit in worship with families on your **Connect with Kids** group.
- Take your entire **Connect with Kids** group for an ice cream sundae on a Saturday afternoon.
- Share special occasions (sports games, school honors day, recitals, etc.) with those assigned to your **Connect with Kids** group.
- Attend church fellowships and programs in which your **Connect with Kids** group members will participate.

Minister to Kids

Children learn about God from loving Christian adults. As children's teachers realize the impact the love and care of an adult Christian can have on the life of a child, they will be sensitive to opportunities to show that love. Teachers can be sensitive to needs in the lives of the children and their families and minister appropriately. In addition to ministering to children and their families, workers can lead children to be involved in ministry so that they may pass on, as well as receive, God's love. Here are some practical ideas to minister to kids and their families:

- Provide assistance to the families of your **Connect with Kids** children in times of sorrow.
- Celebrate with the families of those in your **Connect with Kids** group during happy occasions.
- Be available to your **Connect with Kids** children and parents to share in confidence needs and prayer requests they might have.
- Visit in the homes of each member of your **Connect with Kids** group.
- Contact each child in your **Connect with Kids** regularly, making yourself available to minister as needed.

