Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” Matthew 19:14

Our vision is a place where students, their families, teachers and volunteers can experience and share Christ’s love for us.

updated August 3, 2015
WELCOME

We would like to thank each of you for making the commitment to teach our children this year. Thank you for being a part of the team that can make an eternal difference.

The children, parents and staff of Valley Presbyterian Church are depending upon you, and we are here to support you. The workroom in the Welcome Center is yours to use, and we work hard to support your weekly lesson planning.

Our purpose has its roots in the Sacrament of Baptism. Congregations and Sessions have specific responsibilities related to baptism and educational ministry which flows from it.

The Book of order states, “In baptizing, a congregation accepts the obligation to act as a true household and family of God made up of loving individuals ...[who] publicly promise to continue to tell the baptized persons the good news of the Gospel, to help them know all that Christ commands, and by their fellowship, to strengthen their family ties with household of God.” (B.O. 20.04)

As believers of the new covenant (John 3:16) we know that salvation is the gift of the Holy Spirit. This gift—freely given—freely received. Sunday School should support a growing understanding of the gift and the response. Our goal is connect every lesson to the message of salvation.

We hope that this handbook answers many of your questions. If you have any other questions or need any other information please contact us at 480-991-6424 extension 160 (Tina) or 136 (Marie) or by e-mail at tinagilbreath@myvalleychurch.org mariebitticks@myvalleychurch.org

Thank you again.

In Christ,

The Children's Ministry staff

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, to the close of the age” Matthew 28:19-20
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“Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from Him." Psalm 127:3
GENERAL TEACHER/CO-TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Teachers/co-teachers will...
- Be committed followers of Christ and the teachings of the bible.
- Will keep themselves spiritually fed through bible study, community group study or worship services.
- Pray regularly for the other volunteers, staff and children in the Sunday School Program’
- Submit a background check authorization form and/or be fingerprinted prior to serving (form on p. 20-can also be completed electronically)
- Arrive in time for pre-teaching huddle (8:45 or 10am.)

“You see that his faith and his actions were working together and his faith made complete by what he did.” James 2:22

MAPS

Education Ground floor
- 404 Three- Four year olds
- 406 Kindergarten

Education Second floor
- 411 Fourth-fifth Grades (10:30 service)
- 412 Third-Fifth Grades (9:00 service)
- 412 Third Grade (10:30 service)
- 414 First- Second Grades (9:00 & 10:30)

The Family Welcome Center and Sunday School Teacher workroom are located on ground level just East of Landes Center.
ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Each teacher will be given a roster with columns for marking attendance. Please mark students who are present with a dot and students who are absent with an “A”. Please do not leave any squares blank.

At the completion of class please return the completed roster to the tray above the baskets in the workroom.

NEW STUDENTS & VISITORS

Please direct all visitors and all students to check in using the KidCheck Computer check in! They will have a sticker nametag if they have done this.

BATHROOM PROCEDURES

Please remind parents of younger students to send their children to the bathroom before Sunday School. If a student in a classroom with no bathroom must use the bathroom during Sunday School please use the buddy system and send students to the bathroom in same sex pairs.

FIRST AID

There is are basic first aid supplies in the ‘kitchen’ of the Family Welcome Center. If a student receives an injury that needs more than minor bandaging during Sunday School please contact Tina or Marie to fill out an incident report. Please inform parents of all injuries.

ARRIVAL

We ask parents to check their children in on the computer and get their nametag before worship.

Children ages 3y.o.-5y.o.(K): After the children’s message Sunday School teachers will meet their class just outside the sanctuary doors or in the lobby of Landes. Parents may remain seated.

Children grade 1 - grade 5 will walk directly to their classroom after the children’s message.

DISMISSAL

Children ages 3y.o. through 5y.o.(K): must be picked up by a parent from the classroom. We recognize that many teachers have children of their own to pick up and also may be going to another service. If a student has NOT been picked up by 10:25am or 11:55am, please bring them to the Family Welcome Center and we will help locate their parents.

PLEASE verify that the symbol on the guardian pick up tag matches the symbol on the name tag.

Children grade 1-grade 5 are instructed to select a location for meeting their parents after Sunday School and Worship Services are over. (Please ask parents if they have had that conversation with their students when they drop off their child off the first few weeks of class. Also, please make sure the younger children (& new visitors) successfully meet a parent for the first few weeks).
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT & DISCIPLINE

Discipline in the Sunday School environment, can be very manageable with some simple techniques.

Remember that you have access to One who gives strength for all things. “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.” Psalm 37:5

1. Clear Expectations
   Lose no time in setting standards and communicating acceptable behavior for your class.
   Keep it Simple, e.g.,
   1. Respect each other
      (no talking when others are talking)
      (keep your hands to yourself unless you have permission)
   2. Raise your hand to speak
   3. Use inside voices

2. PPP (Pre Planning Pays)
   Planning is your best assurance of preventing indecision and problem behavior.
   - Be organized
   - Have lesson fully prepared and enough activities for the whole hour
   - Think through the sequence of your activities
   - Have all your supplies ready and a sample project completed
   - Keep students involved
   - Have alternate plans and materials to fill unexpected gaps
   - Anticipate Problems and plan accordingly; e.g., the child that has difficulty with transitions—give them advance warning before changes; the child that has trouble focusing—give them a special job.

3. Remind, Redirect, Remove if necessary.

   Check out additional articles on discipline in the back of this hand book.
   See staff if you need more tips or advice.
CLASSROOMS

Remember all of the Sunday School classrooms are shared spaces. We would like to respect each other and keep the environment clean, warm and friendly.

Please make a point to return the Preschool rooms to the condition they were in when you got there. It is hard for those teachers to reset everything when they come in on Monday morning.

Each classroom has some posters and bulletin boards pre-hung. We would like to keep the amount of holes in the walls to a minimum.

All Sunday School Supplies are located in the Sunday School workroom and in your “Teacher Basket” which will be picked up every Sunday morning. Please respect the Day School’s materials and use our supplies rather than theirs.

If you are planning a particularly messy project please use newspapers or tablecloths on work surfaces to help with clean up.

Please involve the students in clean up and teach them to be “good stewards” of the church facilities as well. All toys (in the Day School rooms) and messes should be picked up at the end of class, please plan time to do that.
“Then they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive in every way.” Titus 2:10b

The teacher guides provide the lessons and activities each week. Please follow the curriculum given to you. Children respond well to a consistent format. The lesson sequences are written with that in mind. However, flexibility is key. Some weeks the lesson goes more quickly than others. Remember our goals BEE-LINE and RELATIONSHIPS.

Here are some suggested steps for planning your lesson:

1. PRAY for guidance and discernment (Remember God is in charge)
2. STUDY the Scripture for the lesson and the Outline
3. Reflect on the BEE-LINE (while noted in the lesson, the holy spirit may lead you to a different connection to salvation)
4. PRIORITIZE the activities to make sure you include a variety.
5. PRAY for confirmation

Have fun!

“The wise in heart are called discerning and pleasant words promote instruction.” Proverbs 16:21
SUNDAY SCHOOL PLANNING WORKSHEET (1st-5th)

Date ______________________

Lesson #______ Title __________________________

1. PRAY for guidance and discernment (Remember God is in charge)
2. STUDY the Scripture for the lesson and the Outline
3. Reflect on the BEE-LINE (while noted in the lesson, the holy spirit may lead you to a different connection to salvation)
4. PRIORITIZE the activities to make sure you include a variety.
5. PRAY for confirmation

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| Opening Prayer |         |

| **Practice grade level bible knowledge |          |
| Relationship building |          |

| Lesson |          |

| BEE-LINE |          |

| Activities |          |

| Closing Prayer |          |
SUNDAY SCHOOL PLANNING WORKSHEET (K and under)

Date __________________________

Lesson #______ Title __________________________

1. PRAY for guidance and discernment (Remember God is in charge)
2. STUDY the Scripture for the lesson and the Outline
3. Reflect on the BEE-LINE (while noted in the lesson, the holy spirit may lead you to a different connection to salvation)
4. PRIORITIZE the activities to make sure you include a variety.
5. PRAY for confirmation

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RESOURCES AND SUPPLIES

Each classroom will have a “Teaching Basket” the basket will contain:

- lesson materials
- school supplies needed for lesson
- Attendance sheet / feedback form

**Special reminders for you and students will be clipped to the attendance sheets.

GRADE LEVEL BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

In addition to studying the weekly lessons and associated scripture and memory verses, starting in first grade we are asking children at each grade level to focus on special Bible knowledge as well.

First graders
The Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

Second Graders
The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17)

Third Graders
The Books of the Bible

Fourth Graders
The Apostle’s Creed

Fifth Graders
Transition class and Communion.

CHILDRENS WORSHIP PROGRESSION

- 0-2y.o. Nursery-Toddler room available at all worship services
- 3y.o.-1st grade Worship 4 Sundays a year (Sunday after Christmas, Easter, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Christmas Eve)
- 2nd-5th grade Worship 14 Sundays a year (same as above + June, July & beginning of August)

updated August 3, 2015
**TAKE IT HOME EVENTS/FAMILY MINISTRY**

**Family Ministry Road Map** This road map is marked by 'Milestones' and 'Stepping Stones' (Take it Home Events) and Faith Family Unit Nights (FUN) to support families in their role as their child’s spiritual leader.

**Milestone-Baptism** The third Sunday of each month is set aside for baptisms in worship.

**Families Take It Home...Nightly Blessing** (Targeting Families with Toddlers) This class is designed to teach the benefits of and to equip families for blessing their children nightly.

**Families Take It Home...Praying together** (Targeting Families with Kindergartners) This class is designed to teach techniques and equip families to pray frequently with their children.

**Families Take it Home...Worshipping together** (Targeting Families with 1st graders) This class is designed to help parents guide their children in worship and give them techniques for encouraging a positive attitude toward worship as a family.

**Families Take It Home...Cheerful giver** (Targeting Families with 2nd graders) This class is designed to help families talk about stewardship and put in place some of the elements of Dave Ramsey’s *Financial Peace* class.

**Milestone-Third Grade Bibles** During third grade, parents are invited to participate in a special way as partners in the annual tradition of distributing third grade bibles.

**Families Take it home...Serving together** (Targeting Families with 4th graders) This class is designed to help kids and adults understand the variety of ways in which we can serve our Lord, no matter what our age.

**Milestone-Fifth Grade Transition** As 5th graders approach the transition into student ministries we offer a special class on communion for parents and students along with a special worship service to mark this special time.

**Milestone-Dodeka** Between 6th and 12th grade students may wish to become members of the church. Through the Dodeka classes students will learn to share their faith story, learn what it means to be a member of the church and how that applies to their lives. This culminates with a special moment in worship.

**Milestone High School Graduation** In preparation for high school graduation and what follows, parents are invited to a special panel discussion. In addition parents and recent graduates are honored in worship and in the student community.

**Faith FUN Advent**...evening classes and take home kits to help all families celebrate Advent in a more Christ centered way.

**Faith FUN Lent**...evening classes and kits to help all families celebrate Lent in a more meaningful way.
Age Appropriate progression of expectations/skills

Beginners (a.k.a 3’s)

*Intellectual*
- Attend to brief story time
- Complete craft or activity related to story

*Relational/Emotional*
- Develop relationships with peers
- Develop relationships with teachers

*Spiritual*
- Learn to pray
- Learn Jesus loves them
- Learn to be thankful to Jesus

(**all ages build on and reinforce experiences at earlier levels)**

Pre-K/K

*Intellectual**
- Begin Bible verse memory with Journal
- Increase familiarity with Bible stories
- Learn key “take away points”

*Relational/Emotional**
- Encourage others

*Spiritual**
- Prayer for others
- Love of God

1st/2nd

*Intellectual**
- 1st grade learns the Lord’s Prayer
- 2nd grade learns the Ten Commandments

*Relational/Emotional**
- Share the good news

*Spiritual**
- Use spiritual gifts
- Acts of service

3rd

*Intellectual**
- Books of the Bible
- Bible skills
- Life Application emphasis

*Relational/Emotional**

*Spiritual**
- Gratitude for his Grace
- Living as a Christ follower

4th/5th

*Intellectual**
- 4th grade learns the Apostle’s Creed
- 5th grade learns about communion/Transition
- Increase Life Application emphasis
- Analyze Worldview through Christian lens
- Answer question…Now what?

*Relational/Emotional**
- Share the good news

*Spiritual**
- Use spiritual gifts
- Acts of service

- Learn more about context of biblical stories
- Increase ‘take away’ points

- Develop community
- Compassion toward others
Discipline Tips for Your Kids Ministry
By Mimi Bullock 10 Comments

Teaching in today’s world is a challenge but when you are teaching kids about God and His love, the pressure is really on. It is hard to be the perfect example of love and charity when little Johnny stands on the table and refuses to come down. Broken homes and a broken society have all contributed to the lack of discipline Christian teachers see evidenced in their classrooms and children’s churches. As a result, spiritually hungry children may get left behind while we deal with bad behaviors. Besides prayer and patience, use some kids’ ministry discipline tips to make teaching easier.

**Establish Easy Rules**
In order for kids to follow the rules, they need to understand them. Establish a simple rule system, display it on a poster and post them at kids’ eye level. Use as few words as possible when writing these rules. For example you should write, “One person speaks,” or “Raise my hand first.” Only have a few rules, three to five is good. No more than five as this can be too complicated for little ones.

**3-Step Discipline**
After the rules poster is created establish your 3-step discipline policy and teach it to all children’s workers. Here are the steps.
- **Rule Reminder:** When a child breaks a rule, remind him or her the poster rules. Have him repeat the rule with you.
- **Personal Visit:** If the rule is broken a second time, walk to the child and speak to him privately. Bend at the knees if possible to make eye contact with the child in a non-threatening manner. Tell him he has broken the rule and tell warn him about breaking the rule again. Explain to him what the next course of action will be.
- **Immediate Consequence:** At the third infraction, there should be an immediate consequence like a visit to time-out, or removal from a game. Threatening to talk to Mom or Dad after class is not an immediate consequence.

Teachers have the discretion to repeat the process if they like or escort the disruptive child to his parents.

**Put Them to Work**
Before class begins, designate children to specific tasks. Busy work may help the strong-willed, undisciplined child to participate in class. There is nothing wrong with teaching a child how to get “good” attention as opposed to “bad” attention.

**More Tips**
Here are a few kids’ ministry discipline tips to consider. These will help manage behavior in your Sunday School class or any church setting.
- **Avoid repeating warnings.** Saying a child’s name repeatedly will only frustrate you. Use the 3-step discipline plan and do not repeat yourself.
- **Let others talk.** When you talk too much, kids tune you out.
- **Never take it personally.** Kids with poor discipline are not targeting you— they need you. Do not take angry words to heart and do not hold a grudge.
- **Laugh a lot.** Lighten up the room by laughing with your kids, even the naughty ones.
- **Apologize when you are wrong.** In a perfect world, grownups never make mistakes but we know this is not a perfect world. Teach your kids the meaning of humility by admitting when you are wrong. If you reprimand a child that did not deserve it, do not brush it off. The child will not. Admit you are wrong and ask for forgiveness.

Be proactive and take the appropriate measures to get control of your class or ministry. Good, even-tempered discipline will give your child a true picture of God’s love.
8 Helpful Points to Target [for discipline]

In today's day and age the words "discipline” and "classroom” don't seem to go together. Teachers have been strictly warned against discipline, and some students use it to their advantage. Whether your teaching in a Christian setting, or a traditional classroom setting, discipline is an important part of learning. Without structure in a classroom, every student suffers, and teachers lose their passion for their art. Here are some ideas for you to keep your Sunday School classroom running smoothly, and creating an environment where students will look forward to coming and learning about God.

1. Start with the basics - a well organized, clean space

Are you able to focus and pay attention in a cluttered, messy room? Well, neither can kids! Have places for everything that are clearly labeled, and easy to reach. Make sure that they are responsible for picking up after each project and they take part in cleaning up. This is their classroom too, and taking part in the upkeep will give them a sense of pride. Your cheerful attitude will make the difference between this being a drudgery or child's play!

2. Make sure the rules are clearly outlined

However you choose to display the written rules of your class, make sure they are visible to even the smallest child. There are many posters out there for classrooms that have some good general rules in colorful print. At the beginning of each quarter make sure you go over the rules again and ask the children "Why?” - as in, “Why should we keep our hands to ourselves?” Kids love good rules, because it keeps things fair. Just make sure your rules are realistic and don’t repeat themselves. I wouldn’t go over 7 class rules, and keep them basic. The rule "Raise you hand if you would like to speak" covers "no shouting out", and "no talking when the teacher is speaking". etc.

3. Yelling teachers are tuned out, silent teachers draw attention; have a signal!

You can't be hollering over kids heads, and nor should you be. It shouldn't be necessary to yell, but you do need to let them know things are not going well in the class at that moment. It’s easy to get overwhelmed when the noise level is getting way to high, but keep your cool and signal to them. My signal is one the kids picked out: I place my finger on the top of my nose and wait. In response to this, each child who notices my silly position also places their finger on top of their nose and remains quiet. Soon everyone is pointing at their nose, and peace is restored. It’s easy, and your class can make up their own silly signal that will bring the attention back to you so you can continue.

4. Provide Choices

The best form of discipline I have found is to offer choices. If your class has been sitting for longer that 15 minutes and it's time for the Bible lesson, why not offer the choice of sitting on the floor? Or drawing while you teach? This will keep the disruption level down, because there is variety in your
class. I have several artistic kids in my class who actually pay attention and hear better when they can doodle on paper. I do have some guidelines though; it should reflect the story they are hearing. This lets me know they are on the same page!

Choices can also be given when you are playing a game, or what you will have for snack. They are little choices, but it does not take much for a child to enjoy the process.

5. Don't forget food!

I can't tell you how many children come to class without eating breakfast. The public schools recognize this and almost all provide some form of breakfast for children. I'm not taking about a gourmet breakfast, just a healthy snack like a juice box and a handful of something to nibble on. Do this towards the beginning of your class, and then they can be full and able to pay attention. Choose the child who is the most wiggly to say the blessing; sometimes it's all about being noticed, and having everyone quiet down while they pray is very affirming.

6. Praise good behavior as it happens, publicly!

Don't wait until after class to tell a child how well they were. Chances are you will be worn out and forget! When you see a child making a good decision, tell them right away. ("That was a great job picking up, Annie. Thank you for helping to keep the class clean!") Make sure you keep the praise even. Kids will notice if you always praise the same few students over and over. Even the loud-mouthed child deserves to be praised for something!

7. No public discipline!

I can't stress how vital this is. When you yell at a student in front of the whole class, they're entire being just shuts down. All they feel at that moment is embarrassment; and that's very hard to get over. They might be nodding and giving you the right answer, but all they want to do is just drop through the floor. It's been said the for ever one time you publicly embarrass a person, you need to publicly praise them ten times before that wound is healed. That is not the right environment for Sunday School class. These beautiful children need to trust their teachers.

8. Physical punishment

I shared a story with my students recently about being brought down to the principals office for a spanking for throwing snowballs. They're eyes were big and they giggled at my description of the Maintenance man who was responsible for doling out the spankings. As funny as it was to repeat, it goes without saying that we should never lay a hand on a child. These are not our children, and it is never our place to spank a child, even lightly on the wrist. If you ever feel the need to strike a child, I can safely say that you've let the situation go to far. As soon as you feel the child is becoming out of control, and you've tried giving him/her different options, it is time to return them to their parents. Hopefully you can all get together after church and discuss what happened, but either way, you
need to remove the child before you feel the need to strike them. I can say with confidence, if you strike a child in your care you will be removed from teaching Sunday School, and possibly face charges.

I’d also like to add in this section to please be aware of any physical contact. Comforting an injured child by placing them on your lap for a hug can, most definitely, be taken out of context by a passer-by of your class. Although it seems extreme, limit any contact to an arm around the shoulder to comfort them, and a hand on the shoulder to encourage them. This will protect you, as well as the child. You never know if a child has been abused; your well-meaning hug could actually be making them cringe inside.

**Problem students**

We all have those one or two students who yell out repeatedly, ignore instruction, talk meanly, and just seem to make your day harder. I want to encourage you not to give up. There is a reason God placed them with you. As an adult and as a Christian, you are in a special place to minister to their heart. They might buck and fight you on it, but if you keep on loving them and reaching out I assure you, you will make a mark on their life. My advice for you is this:

- no personal attacks. "Why are you acting like this? You are being bad." etc.

- when they do well in your class, (even if it’s for only 5 minutes) make sure you go to the parents with them and praise them! I can’t tell you how much this will motivate good behavior next week!

- be fair! sometimes we get used to the same students acting up we get "pre-programmed" with annoyance towards them. Check your attitude and make sure that isn’t happening. If this is still a struggle, you should pray that Jesus will help you to love them the way He loves them. If your heart is open and right, I guarantee your feelings toward this child will change!

- If issues are still unresolved, go to your Sunday school Superintendent, or supervisor. They have had much experience teaching and can give you some ideas that may help. They may also have an insight into family issues you were not aware of.

I hope this helps! I have been teaching for almost 15 years, and discipline is still an issue occasionally. I will leave you with a quote from *The Discipline Guide For Children’s Ministries*:

"When we discipline children, we correct them in a way that shows them they are loved. When our kids sense our loving concern, they are much more willing to emulate our values and our relationship with God. Good discipline is guidance towards right behavior, which is much more effective than punishment towards wrong behavior."
I love the opening line to Dr. Spock's 1960s primer on child rearing. His opening advice to parents? "You know more than you think you do." The same holds true for teachers. Trust your instincts, you know more than you think you do about teaching!

One pastor was passing by a classroom of fifth-graders and noticed the teacher reading out of the teacher's guide to the children. The pastor was so troubled by the sterile teaching method that he found the Christian Education Pastor and asked that the teacher be removed. The CE Pastor listened calmly but reassured his boss that the teacher was a good communicator who must have been having a bad morning.

There are two equal and opposite errors of using any graded curriculum in your classroom. Teachers can rigidly follow the script while ignoring their own unique interests or the students' innate desires. This error can create a climate in which learning is stifled. Teachers can also ignore the curriculum altogether or wing a lesson that they've just casually read. This error creates the opposite danger of tangential, boring, and unfocused teaching. Here is some trust-your-instinct advice that will help you guide your students on any given Sunday.

Read quickly through your entire lesson once on Sunday afternoon (or after you finish your last lesson). Then take a break for a few days. You'll be amazed at what God will teach you while you let this lesson "incubate" in your own heart. Some lessons even offer a Bible Background section to assist you in personalizing the lesson before you teach it. Prepare your supplies for each activity before you teach the lesson. When children are working or involved in an activity, look ahead in your lesson or outline to determine what you need to do to transition to the next activity. Always stay a step or two in front of the kids so you can lead them.

Don't hesitate to make sure your classroom is arranged to complement your curriculum. This should be done on a regular basis, even if the room is a multiuse classroom or you are just there once a month. As you prepare your lessons, think about where you'll do each activity and the logistics of pulling it off. Make modifications for your needs and environment. For example, if a curriculum calls for a game of Tag and your class meets in a room the size of a cubicle, you can have children walk heel-to-toe or on their knees.

Look for places to add instruction on distinctive that are important to your church and denomination. Most curriculum publishers provide a great foundation for your lessons by focusing on the major aspects of the faith. They also avoid controversial topics such as methods of baptism and beliefs about communion. Your curriculum can serve as a great launching point for you to include the doctrines and practices that are important to your church.

Finally, don't be afraid to try things that you normally would avoid. For example, just because you hate drama or crafts doesn't mean the children in your class hate it. Give new ideas a good chance to succeed by making minor adjustments that fit your class. If you teach an activity with a bad attitude or with low enthusiasm, the activity is doomed from the start.
Attendance Boosters

Think it Over

How do you feel
when a student
doesn’t show up for
that lesson you just
knew he or she would
love? How can you
turn your disappoint-
ment and discouragement into action by
creating a class that
students will feel
sorry to miss?

You can’t increase student achievement without increasing student participation! You can’t have any of your students participating if they don’t show up. What can a Sunday school teacher do to enhance the attendance of those students who, while on the class roster, rarely or inconsistently attend? Even though children aren’t completely in control of their Sunday school attendance, you can have an impact on turnout.

It’s important to recognize that your students are children. Children don’t drive to church. They might only spend every other weekend with their churchgoing parent, or their parents may be sporadic attendees. Attendance charts actually punish kids by noting who is not in attendance. Never point out how many times a child has missed your class. Rather, celebrate each child’s attendance and participation. Warmly welcome infrequent attendees’ arrival by telling them how glad you are that they are there.

When children don’t attend, let them know what they’ve missed and that they are missed. Send a card, make a phone call, or just send home the lesson they missed with a note. Emphasize that you hope to see them next Sunday without focusing on the past.

Work to make every class the best it can be. Make your opening the best part of the day! Start on time, and remember that the minute the first student arrives is the moment class begins. If you delay or continually restart the class, you’re rewarding the last person. Don’t start with a large-group activity. It is difficult to be late and arrive to a large group in which you cannot find your friends. Begin small, and then when you have critical mass, begin your large-group setting.

Focus on how to make Sunday school an event that children are sorry to miss. Is it exciting? Do they have a friend they’ll miss? Are they engaged when they attend? Do they say “aww” in disappointment when their parents arrive? Showing up is not the goal! You are after children who show up motivated to learn and grow in their relationship with Christ.