

C **S P R I N G** CHILDREN'S LEADER **2 0 0 2**

A NEWSLETTER FOR THOSE WHO LEAD CHILDREN IN THE CONGREGATION.

Adapting to
GraceLink



A Child-Sized
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News & Notes



Seven C's for
Volunteers



2001 Statistics



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Spiritual Learning: Is It Really Happening?

"My children are not learning at Sabbath School," Sylvia reports. "They love the activities, but they aren't learning spiritually. Could the problem be with the GraceLink lessons?" Many teachers worry, as Sylvia does, about what children are learning at church.

One reason children may not learn as they should is because they come to church without the spiritual soil of their minds having been cultivated all week. In the 1980s, about one in five primary-age children were studying the Sabbath School lesson thoroughly during the week. In the 1990s the ratio dropped to about one in ten. For too many of the other children, the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit was running off like rain on hard, uncultivated soil. And let's face it, even God can't save our children in one hour per week.

Friday nights present a second challenge. Teachers may not realize how many families consider Friday night a non-school night. Kids stay up late—some even watching TV. They come to church tired and dispirited, if they make it at all. These children may or may not eat breakfast and many find it difficult to concentrate.

Teachers like Sylvia can tell kids are not learning when

- 1) They neither ask nor answer questions thoughtfully.
- 2) Their eyes fail to light up with the joy of discovery.
- 3) They fool around and fidget incessantly.
- 4) They disrespect authority, including God's.

That's where GraceLink comes to the rescue. By using the active learning approach the leader-teacher resource suggests, teachers can make Sabbath School sparkle so that these children will be drawn into what is happening.

But although activities wake kids up, they do not teach—at least not on their own. Teachers must help children process what they've experienced by asking debriefing questions. Four keys to successful debriefing can make all the difference.

Key #1: Introduce the lesson at church first—before asking children to study at home. This gives you a chance to make the lesson so inter-

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esting that kids want to study at home the following week. Challenge children a dozen times during Sabbath School to share the activity with their family. Make sure the kids know what they learned from the activities so they can explain it at home. Repeating the main idea often--the message or PowerPoint--helps fix it in memory.

Key #2: Ask questions. Be sure to ask no-fail questions--questions without a wrong answer--such as: What happened just now? How did you feel about what happened? What might this activity tell us about God? About us?

Key #3: Accept their answers. Listen to their answers; find out what they learned and what you may need to re-teach. Affirm each answer, appreciating the thought and risk involved for the student. Ask others what they think. Student answers may point the discussion in a direction you did not plan to take. Be ready; be adaptable; let the Spirit lead.

Key #4: Add your insights. Having shared their own viewpoints, the kids will now be ready to listen to your perspective. You have earned the right to their attention. At this point real learning has taken place.

~Noelene Johnsson

Common Sense Ways of Adapting to GraceLink

Each group of children has its own dynamic. Teachers must adapt the suggestions provided in the leader-teacher resource, not only to the needs of the group, but also to their own style and personality. The following are some suggestions for making GraceLink work in your classroom:

- ▶ Change a drama script to a story. Let the children read the parts or have someone tell the story. Keep in mind that kids remember 90% more when they're involved, rather than just listening and watching.
- ▶ If an activity is too active for you, choose a substitute that teaches the same lesson. There are many good ancillary books available with alternative suggestions. But remember, pencil and paper activities are not really "active" and remind the kids of school work.
- ▶ It's okay if you choose not to do eating activities. They are provided as an optional tool--a way to create one more teachable moment (and an energy source for kids who skipped breakfast, we might add). If you do use food in Sabbath School, make sure that you

A Child-Sized Mission Just for Kids

Janet Rieger, children's ministries director for the South Pacific Division, has a great concern for young children in Papua New Guinea. Many parents have not had the opportunity of education, and can't read the Bible or the Sabbath School lesson to their children. Believing that the Lord is leading, Janet plans to put the lesson material on audio cassettes in their local languages.

In the areas where the need is greatest, electricity is not often available to run conventional cassette players, and batteries are expensive. But not to worry--Janet has located a sturdy cassette player powered by turning a handle (see picture). "If there's one power source that never seems to be exhausted," Janet says, "it's kids' energy!"

The good news is that these players cost only US\$30 each. The other good news is that after recent satellite programs in Papua New Guinea, there are many new believers, so hundreds of players are needed!

Some children's Sabbath Schools are making this a project. Some church schools are taking part too. What a wonderful way for North American kids to share the advantages of GraceLink and the love of Jesus with children over there. Send your contributions to

PNG GraceLink project
NAD Children's Ministries
12501 Old Columbia Pike
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Donations will be sent to the South Pacific Division through NAD Treasury, insuring that every cent given goes toward the tape recorders.



know your students' allergies, health problems or dietary restrictions, and parental preferences. Always have substitute foods on hand, and choose snacks wisely.

- ▶ Want to use felts still? Why not? Children can be active placing felts on a felt board. But variety is the key to keeping their attention. Remember, God made children with bodies that need to move often.
- ▶ Where's the theme? True, the GraceLink programs don't look like the theme programs of the past, but there is always a monthly theme. It's based on an aspect of worship, grace, community or service. These themes focus not on kids' behavior, but on Jesus and

Variety is the key to keeping children's attention.

our response to Him (behavior being one aspect of that response).

- ▶ Where do I put the "housekeeping" parts like birthday, mission, welcoming visitors? Anywhere you like. Don't leave them out. The children's mission quarterly is still available (now online at <http://gracelink.net>, see RESOURCES). Think about unique ways to link mission to the monthly theme.
- ▶ Memory verses--who says kids don't still learn them? They do if you take the time to

teach them and if you give the kids a chance to say them together. Teach memory verses with pictures, music, activities. Kids remember them longer that way. Then all the kids can get stickers and feel good about trying to learn God's word, not just the one or two whose parents cared.

- ▶ Studying at home after the lesson is taught in church--does it really work? Well, that's up to the leader. The activities in the children's papers are geared to personalize the lesson to the child's life. As a leader it is your responsibility to ask the children what they learned the past week from doing the activities. Don't forget to affirm and encourage parents when their children have studied. And if nothing else works, make a chart and track their daily study successes. Call kids up to study on the phone if they need a boost toward daily prayer and study.

▶ Before you start anything, be sure to read the front pages of the leader-teacher resource. All the instruction you need is there. It will answer a lot of your questions.

Pick and choose what feels comfortable for you. But don't throw out our great new curriculum because some parts don't fit you. Look for help if you have a problem, and be sure to let the editors know how you are finding it. They're truly interested in making our curriculum the very best ever.

~adapted from Barbara Manspeaker
Potomac Conference

Bug Safari at Festival of the Laity



Donna Williams (Florida Conference) and her team demonstrate their creative Bug Safari Vacation Bible School at the Festival of the Laity in Orlando. By setting up learning stations, they accommodate many groups in one large room.

1) Donna stands beside the ant hill, made by covering tables & chairs (or empty cardboard boxes) with crumpled "rock paper." The ant bodies are made from garbage bags and balloons, with styrofoam eyes and wire coat-hanger legs.

2) Up front at Ladybug Landing, the preschool area.

3) Bert and Margie Lopez (Florida) model the safari hats and T-shirts that crew members wear.

4) A Bible times tent provides an entry to the Bible Exploration Station, where each day's Bible story is told.

5) Stacey Bondurant (Chesapeake Conference) gives directions for one of the exciting Safari games.

6) Margaret Taglavore (Southwestern Union) teaches the memory verse.

More pictures coming soon; see SNAPSHOTS OF PAST CONVENTIONS at <http://childmin.com/Events>. Check out the new suggestions for crafts and decorations, healthy snacks, and links to bug-oriented items at <http://childmin.com/VBS>.

News & Notes

Church Chairs 4 Kids

Ever wondered why small children have a hard time paying attention in church? Now there's a special booster seat designed for your family-friendly church pew. The seat raises children to a level where they can see and participate in worship activities.



For more information, phone 410-857-0644, e-mail tfelmon@juno.com, or visit <http://Churchchairs4Kids.com>.

Little Voices Praise Him

Many people have asked about a CD to accompany the new songbook, Little Voices Praise Him. It's ready at last—check with your local Adventist Book Center (800-765-6955) or order online at <http://adventist-bookcenter.com>.

Coming Events

◆ Growing a Family of Grace: NAD-sponsored Children's Ministries & Family Ministries training conventions will be held **September 12-15, 2002** in Charlotte, NC and **November 7-10, 2002** in San Jose, California. Watch for details online at <http://childmin.com/Events>. Each convention includes a one-day Family Friendly Church track option.

◆ Mid-America Union Ministries Convention: Overland Park, Kansas, **September 19-21, 2002**.

Website Updates

◆ **A chance to evaluate GraceLink:** Now leaders, teachers, and parents have an opportunity to evaluate the new children's Sabbath School curriculum. Share what tickles you and what troubles you, what's working and what isn't. Complete an online survey at <http://gracelink.net>. If you don't have web access at home, you can often log in free of charge at your local public library. You may also complete the survey by phone; call (301) 680-6425.

◆ **New calendar feature online!** Our website is now set up to allow conferences to list their events on the calendar. Check out <http://childmin.com/Events> to see what's posted for your area.

Golden Pacifier Award

To affirm your volunteers, show appreciation with a small award that's nursery exclusive. Get a package of plastic pacifiers, often sold as cupcake toppers in cake decorating shops or party supply stores. Spray paint them gold. Use a hot glue gun or epoxy to affix a pin to the back of each gold pacifier.

Give one of these awards, along with a note of thanks, to a different volunteer each month, and post the recipient's picture as Volunteer of the Month on your bulletin board.

~Lori Niles,
from www.childrensministry.com

Seven C's for Volunteers

"Most mistakes in life come from saying 'yes' too early and 'no' not soon enough," says Josh Billings. Like buying that first car. Remember how afraid you were to ask questions or bargain with the seller?

When seeking volunteers to assist in ministry, failing to ask questions and evaluate the fit can be a big mistake for both the volunteer and the ministry.

Providing an application form for the volunteer to fill out (such as the V-MIF, available at <http://childmin.com/Resources>) and then analyzing responses according to these **Seven C's** can help assure a good fit:

- ⇒ **Calling to ministry**—Does the individual sense God leading in this direction? Do they have a passion for leading children to Jesus?
- ⇒ **Character**—Does the person display evidence of Christian growth?
- ⇒ **Chemistry**—Assess the person's attitude towards service, children, and the team they will work with.
- ⇒ **Competency**—Notice their level of training, the areas of their experience.
- ⇒ **Consistency/congruence**—Do any of their responses contradict each other? Are their interests at odds with this ministry?
- ⇒ **Commitment**—Is the person willing to put time into the ministry on a regular basis?
- ⇒ **Condition**—Consider their mental, physical, and spiritual levels of well-being. Are they at peace? Do they have energy and speak with enthusiasm of the possibilities for this ministry?

The Year 2001: Children's Ministries Overview

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2000</u>
Conference year-end reports	26 (45%)	13 (22%)
Conferences reporting VBS	26 (45%)	18 (31%)
Vacation Bible Schools held	365	272
Enrollment	18,225	11,566
Percent non-Adventist children	42%	51%
Branch Sabbath Schools	163	182
Leadership training meetings	141	153
Baptisms resulting from children's outreach	3,322	141
On-going Bible study classes	258	138
Children witnessing	3,455	1,686
Congregations with other weekly programs for children	255	830

The above table reflects all the information received to date, from 26 out of the 58 conferences which comprise the North American Division. 2002 Year-end reports are available at www.childmin.com/Resources.

Prayer Ideas

- ❖ Keep all your Christmas cards, letters, and photos in a special basket by the breakfast table. When you have your morning devotions, pull out several cards. Review their contents and then pray for those three families or individuals.
- ❖ Place a variety of objects around the room where you have your devotions to remind you of different prayer needs—an apple or small blackboard (pray for teachers), a bandaid or thermometer (pray for those who are ill), a pine cone (pray for those who are

prickly or rub us the wrong way), a Bible (pray for our pastor), or a set of car keys (pray for those who will be travelling today. Walk around the room and pick up each object as you pray. ~contributed by Myrna Wright

Coming Next Quarter

Memorization aids can give kids hands-on experience. Ask the children in your Sabbath School to save their student guides at the end of each quarter. Then watch for ways to use them in the next issue of the Children's Leader.

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