



Based on the Works of Arthur Flake
David Francis

Nashville, Tennessee
LifeWay Christian Resources
of the Southern Baptist Convention

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DAVID FRANCIS serves as director of Sunday School for LifeWay. Before coming to LifeWay in 1997, he served for 13 years as the minister of education at First Baptist Church, Garland, Texas. David and his wife Vickie have three sons and teach Preschool Sunday School and Adult Discipleship groups at Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tennessee.

INTRODUCTION

Who Was Arthur Flake?

Arthur Flake became the first leader of the Sunday School Department of the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources) in 1920. What career path do you imagine brought him to that position? Was he a prominent pastor? a minister of education? a seminary professor?

Mr. Flake, a committed layman and traveling salesman, settled down in Winona, Mississippi, in 1894 to enter the department store business. By 1895 Flake led the Winona Baptist Church to form the first Training Union in Mississippi. He served as the church's Sunday School director and was so successful that he was employed in 1909 as a field worker for the Baptist Sunday School Board. Then this outstanding layman was asked to move to Nashville in 1920 to head the Sunday School Department, which became the major work of his life for the next 17 years. He died in 1952 in Memphis, Tennessee, but his legacy lives on.

Sunday School: The Original Small-Group Experience

More than a century before Flake began his work, the Sunday School movement started in Britain. Robert Raikes established "schools" in the 1780s using the Bible to teach reading on Sundays to children who labored in factories the other six days each week. By the early 1800s, churches offered similar classes for working class men and women. Classes met both on Sundays and weekday evenings. The initial purpose of the schools was to teach reading and writing by using the Bible. Soon a huge movement duplicated this practice all over Britain and then in the United States. So from the beginning, Sunday Schools have been outreach-oriented small groups that enjoy fellowship and learning, while using the Bible as their textbook. Whether we call it Sunday School, Bible study, Bible fellowship, or something else, most small-group ministries duplicate these same purposes and characteristics today.

Flake's Five Step Formula

Arthur Flake's work with Sunday Schools in the early 1900s led to the development of what he is perhaps best remembered for. Flake promoted a five step formula for building and growing a Sunday School:

- Know the possibilities
- Enlarge the organization
- Provide the space
- Enlist and train the workers
- Go after the people

Although Mr. Flake authored many books that included allusions to portions of the formula, we have been unable to discover his five steps explicitly stated in any of them! Rather, this remarkable formula apparently formed the "talking points" of his "stump speech" or perhaps even the subject matter of a five-session Sunday School revival, enlargement campaign, or clinic.

Today's Sunday Schools and Small Groups

What ties the original Sunday School and Flake's Formula to today's small-groups and Sunday Schools? If your small-group ministry shares the following characteristics, then it is functionally comparable to Sunday School:

1. Outreach is a primary focus of the ministry.
2. New people can join a class or group at anytime.
3. The style of the ministry is relational.
4. The ministry meets on a long-term and ongoing basis.
5. The ministry's purposes include, in a foundational way, all five purposes of the church.
6. The primary textbook is the Bible.

As we explore Flake's five classic steps for growing a Sunday School, never lose sight of the objective of the original small-group experience: to invite men and women, boys and girls to study the Bible with a group of peers under the guidance of a committed leader so that the Holy Spirit might do His work through the living Word of God. The philosophy and methodology of organization and growth Flake popularized over 80 years ago remains remarkably valid today for developing an outreach-oriented, relational, small-group Bible study ministry, whether it is called Sunday School or something else.

Whether your groups meet in classrooms or living rooms, God continues to bless the Sunday School/small group strategy and the application of Flake's formula.

Know the POSSIBILITIES



Step 1

Census Data

No one needs to convince you that many who live in your community do not attend church. However, census data can provide a great deal of detail about the numbers, ages, household sizes, and income levels in your ministry area. Some census data is even available for free at www.census.gov/. Almost always you can conservatively assume that well over 50 percent of the households in your area do not attend church. That means that if it reached just its share, every Sunday School has the possibility of doubling. Such numbers can be motivational. Ultimately, however, census data can only give you numbers. Identifying the names, addresses, and phone numbers of prospective members is the foundational step toward a growing Sunday School.

Primary Ministry Area (PMA)

In order to know your possibilities, it is important to establish a clear understanding of the primary geographical area you believe God assigned to your church. Almost every church can point to someone who drives a long way to attend, but these distance drivers are usually the exception. Most churches would do well to define a tight Primary Ministry Area on which to focus their efforts. Get a map and consider what natural, political, psychological, or transportation boundaries best define your Primary Ministry Area. Once you've done this hard work, you can become more deliberate about reaching those in your ministry area. "Scrub" or analyze the census data to determine your real possibilities. More importantly, use this information to focus your attention on getting to know the needs of the people in your Primary Ministry Area. Ask God to give you ideas for ministries to address those needs.

Perspective

Some churches do indeed have a truly regional ministry. We hear a lot about them. But did you know that fewer than 300 Southern Baptist churches average more than 1,000 in Sunday School attendance? In fact, fewer than 3,000 average over 250. This means that over 90 percent of the 40,000 or so Southern Baptist congregations average less than 250. Over half of these average less than 100. Too many churches give up, saying "we are just a little church" and can't grow much. The reality is that most people are reached for Christ by

smaller churches. Churches averaging 50 can set a goal to go beyond 100. Churches averaging 125 can determine to surpass the 250 mark and break into the top 10 percent. What goal will you ask God to help you reach for His glory?

A Religious Census

Arthur Flake strongly encouraged using a religious census to discover the possibilities for your Sunday School. Flake proposed (*Building a Standard Sunday School*, pp. 21-22):

A religious census should be taken at least annually in every community; in growing centers and communities, twice each year; and in mill and factory districts, with shifting, changing populations, a canvass may be needed every three months.

A religious census involves sending teams of church members door-to-door in assigned areas, asking residents about their church involvement and securing the names and ages of everyone in the household who does not attend church. The church then uses this information to make assignments to the appropriate classes for follow-up. The related People Search program of recent decades encouraged the teams to go further. They would ask the unchurched family to enroll in Sunday School. The teams enjoyed surprising success in enrolling these families! Is this method still valid in a society that values cocooned lives and privacy while fearing predators and crime? That depends on your community. If this most aggressive of methods is not right for you, don't despair! There are a lot of other ways to get names.

Telephone Surveys with Mail Follow-Up

A phone survey follows many of the same principles as the census. Phone lists can be purchased indicating the names and number of occupants by streets. Church callers use the list to systematically call people living in the church's ministry area. Callers should identify themselves and ask, at most, two questions: (1) "Are you actively involved in a local church?" (2) Only if the answer is no, "May we send you some information in the mail about our church?" The caller then verifies the name and address found on the phone list. Follow up the call with a mailing or a series of mailings. A follow-up call can be made at a later time, inviting the prospect to a special event.

The Church Membership Roll

Every church member should be enrolled in a Bible study class. In many churches, enrolling members is an automatic process. If it is not in your church, check the membership roll to discover the names of prospective Sunday School members. As Flake observed,

“Every church member should be studying the Bible. He should be studying the Bible with the other church members in the Sunday School. There is little definite Bible study done outside of the Sunday School, not enough to take into consideration, so we might say that people who do not go to Sunday School do not study the Bible” (*Building a Standard Sunday School*, p. 21).

Inactive Sunday School Members

Could you start some new classes for those who don't currently attend? While in seminary, I started a “paper class.” Prospective members came from a list of husbands of women who attended a ladies class with my wife. After a few weeks of visits to drop off learner guides and some follow-up calls, we regularly had seven to twelve men in attendance. Could you enlist an entrepreneurial leader to start with a paper class and build it?

Worship Service Visitors

Today this is the best source of compiling names of prospective Sunday School members. But Flake did not mention it. Why? Because back in the 1920s he encouraged the adoption of a goal of 70 percent of those attending Sunday School staying for “the preaching service.” At the time, some churches shared “half time” or even once-a-month preachers and Sunday School was the “front door” of the church and the primary source of prospective church members. How that has changed! Many churches today find it challenging to have 90 percent of worship attendees also attending Bible study. Today most guests visit the worship service first. In worship or in Sunday School, it is important to get the names, addresses, and ages of each person and family that visits—every time they visit! A follow-up visit to the guest on the same day he visits by a church member is very impressive. Be sure, at the very least, to send a letter from the pastor the week of the visit inviting them to attend again.

Summer and School Ministries

Certainly you can secure the names of children and students who enroll in your church's Vacation Bible School, youth camp, or other summer activities. If your church operates a Christian school or weekday early education ministry, you

may be surprised to discover the number of families who are not active in church.

Special Events

Capture the names, addresses, and phone numbers of people who attend special events. Do you offer a Halloween alternative such as a Fall Festival? Or perhaps special musical programs at Christmas? One way to reward guests for providing this information is to have a drawing. One church in a transitional community in Oklahoma City found that even unchurched folks are delighted to sign up for the chance to get a new Bible. Use your imagination. Just get the names!

Newspaper Notices

Local newspapers, especially “hometown” publications, are good sources of the names of the newly born, the newly wed, and the newly widowed. New parents, young couples, and older singles going through a life transition may be unusually receptive to an invitation to join a Bible study group.

Newcomers

In smaller communities you might simply enlist a team of folks to be on the alert for moving trucks. In some communities you can even obtain the names of newcomers from the local utilities or real estate records. You might even subscribe to a newcomer service, such as the one available through LifeWay Christian Stores (www.lifewaystores.com/prospectservices).

FRANs

The best prospects are the Friends, Relatives, Associates, and Neighbors of those who attend Bible study. Eighty to ninety percent of surveyed persons indicate that the invitation of a FRAN motivated them to first visit the church they currently attend. Encourage every Sunday School member to identify his or her network of FRANs and invite them to Bible study. This might be a good method to consider your possibilities and set an achievable goal. Assume that every member has one unchurched FRAN who could attend your church. Once reached, these unchurched FRAN's could double your current enrollment. If just half of these unchurched FRANs responded positively to an invitation to attend, your attendance would grow by 50 percent. Isn't that a reasonable possibility for your Sunday School?

Advanced Demographic Profiles

Demographics provide more detailed and sophisticated data than a census. They are also more accurate and helpful when

deciding which types of people to reach and in which areas they most likely live. International missionaries talk about working among assigned people groups in their assigned country. The word translated *nations* in the Great Commission literally means a group of people with a unique combination of culture, customs, lifestyle, and language. International missions makes great progress based off this understanding. This especially works in places such as China and India where billions of people make up thousands of people groups. This principle also applies to nearly every community in North America. Churches need to strategically target and reach people groups.

What will a demographic profile reveal? Visualize a map of your Primary Ministry Area. Now imagine a number of areas of the map with different colors. Each color represents a concentration of people with similar interests, income and education levels, entertainment preferences, and buying habits. Demographers identified 64 people groups in

America. After much prayer and a lot of dialogue, this information can help your church determine which of these groups God called you to reach. Some churches and associations use this data to determine which people groups are not being reached. This unmet need becomes the basis of a new church or strategic ministry.

Admittedly this type of information requires computer resources and is not cheap. But the expense remains within reach of churches that really want to know their possibilities. Though not instantaneous, these reports are incredibly useful tools to discover your possibilities. If you are interested in obtaining a demographic study, check with your association or state convention. They may provide this information to churches as a service. LifeWay Christian Resources also has this capability. (E-mail sundayschool@lifeway.com and your request will be forwarded to the appropriate representative.)

Enlarge the ORGANIZATION



Step 2

Prepare for the Possibilities

Perhaps the most revolutionary of Arthur Flake's concepts can be stated like this: Organize enough classes, departments, or groups to provide for your possibilities, not just your current attendance. This is the way he expressed it in 1922:

It will be necessary to enlarge the organization in order to take care of all the people on the church roll and those discovered in the census. There will be no use to go on with the same old organization hoping to increase the size of the Sunday School permanently. Unless the present Sunday School organization is enlarged, practically all of the work done in taking the census will come to naught.

To be sure, a few people will join the Sunday School as a result of being visited during the census, but there can be no large permanent growth unless there is an organization strong enough to reach, hold, and teach the people who should be in the Sunday School. The size of the organization needed is dictated by the number of pupils available, as revealed by the information secured (*Building a Standard Sunday School*, pp. 27-28).

Organize by Age Groups

Flake was a strong proponent of an age group "graded" Sunday School and offered three primary reasons (*Building a Standard Sunday School*, pp. 43-45):

1. To make it easier to reach those who ought to be in Sunday School
2. To make it easier to teach those who are in Sunday School
3. To make some individual definitely responsible for winning each lost pupil to Christ

The last reason is the most compelling.

Churches today grade their Sunday School in different ways, particularly among adults. The key is to make sure that a department, class, or group is specifically responsible for reaching each individual prospect.

Flake encouraged churches of all sizes to develop organizations driven by their possibilities. A basic organization provides separate departments and space for each major age group—Preschool (Babies to Kindergarten), Children (Grades 1-6), Students (Grades 7-College), and Adults.

Start New Units

If someone on an elevator asked you to tell him the most important principle of church growth before he reached his floor, what would you say? I would answer: The irreducible law of church growth is to start new units. Starting new units means starting new churches and new Sunday Schools. It also means starting new classes and small groups within an individual church and Sunday School. You cannot reach your possibilities without new units. Let me give you some new unit ideas. If you can think of some other ideas e-mail them to us through newunits@lifeway.com. To get additional ideas, go to www.lifeway.com/newunits.

Enlarge the Preschool Organization

I am convinced that enlarging the preschool is the key to growth in most churches. Yet many churches continue to hope they will grow while ignoring this key. Yes, it is difficult to ask youth and adults to give up members and large comfortable rooms to provide leaders and space for enlarging the preschool. Believe me, I've been there! Could you create a department for babies through two-year-olds and another for threes through kindergarten? If you've done this, could you expand to three departments consisting of babies through ones, twos and threes, and fours through kindergarten? Are you ready to move to six separate preschool departments? It will stretch you! But it is always worth it. And God will bless.

Minister to Babies and Parents

To reach for their possibilities churches need to seek out new parents. New parents obsess about their babies. Many hesitate to bring them to church for weeks or even months. Flake advocated the creation of a Cradle Roll Ministry that visits, ministers to, and reaches these infants and their new parents. Many churches today offer First Contact as an updated version of the Cradle Roll Ministry.

Once these families attend, the parents prefer to find a room and workers dedicated solely to the care of babies. Yet many churches provide preschool departments with a wide age range. Could you start a department just for babies? It doesn't matter if you start with only two workers with one or two babies. You could even start with no babies present!

Remember, you're enlarging the organization based on the possibilities! Maybe this is the first "baby step" of faith God will bless. Maybe you already offer a department for babies to twos; couldn't you start a new unit for newborns?

Enlarge the Organization for Children

You're probably already way ahead of me, aren't you? If you have one department for Grades 1-6, could you move to two (1-3 and 4-6)? If you already have two, could you move to three (1-2, 3-4, 5-6)? If you're already there, might you consider a separate department for sixth graders since it is such an important transitional year? Next offer a department for each grade. Don't get discouraged if you start these departments with fewer pupils. You're organizing for the possibilities!

Enlarge the Organization for Students

By now, you could write this paragraph! Do all the youth meet together now? Consider a separate department for Middle School/Junior High and High School. Then offer within the departments a coed class for each school level. Finally offer separate classes for boys and girls in each grade (especially for younger youth). Not enough room? Ideas for additional room are in Step 3!

Start a College Class

An unfortunate black hole seems to exist in many churches when it comes to retaining or reaching high school graduates as they transition into adulthood. Consider creating a class for unmarried 18- to 24-year-olds. The class could focus on college students exclusively or include those who work full-time. We don't have many of those, you say? Start a class, go after the people, and see what God does!

Enlarge the Organization for Adults

I am about to throw you a curve ball here, so get ready! While starting new adult classes is important, it is secondary to providing leaders for new preschool, children, and student departments and classes. First staff the new age group ministries; then explore options for starting new adult classes.

Explore starting a separate class for single adults. "Our church doesn't have many singles," you may protest. The number of singles in your church isn't the limit of your possibilities. Consider the singles in your community! Are members of your "young adult" class sprouting gray hairs? Maybe it's time to rename the class and start a new "young adult" class! Do you offer a class for engaged and newly married couples? Many churches successfully start adult classes for the "Nearly and Newly Wed."

As you can see, churches can create adult classes based on lifestyle issues rather than age. While age remains the best basis for grouping adults, life stage can also be helpful. I observe that if given the freedom, parents tend to join classes or grade themselves based on the age of their oldest child. It seems that without regard to their chronological age, sharing parental "frontiers" creates a kinship. Note: If you grade adults based on lifestyle or parenting tasks, be sure you can logically assign prospects and visitors to individual classes that are held accountable for reaching them.

Flake on Space

Arthur Flake emphasized the importance of providing suitable places, equipment, and resources for Sunday School. In doing so, he continued an emphasis begun by LifeWay's founder, J. M. Frost, who early on began the Church Architecture Department to help churches address the need for adequate Sunday School space. This emphasis had much to do with the fact that although only about half of Southern Baptist churches had a Sunday School in 1900, 84 percent reported operating one in 1926. Flake wrote:

There is no such thing as building a Sunday School great in numbers in small, cramped quarters. Neither can a Sunday School of the highest efficiency be operated without proper equipment. While good equipment does not necessarily guarantee an efficient Sunday School, at the same time, it is necessary if a Sunday School is to do the best quality of work (*Building a Standard Sunday School*, p.31).

Ideal Space Recommendations

Let's pretend that time and money were no obstacles in providing space, and we could have in the optimum amount of space in each of our rooms—instantly! For more specific information on space, see charts on page 11.

Guess what? Most of us don't have the ideal amount of space! The excellent Sunday School leader knows and appreciates the ideal, but he or she also considers ideas for making the most of the space that is available.

Multiple Sunday School Hours

Sometimes you may hear people say that their church has two Sunday Schools. We know what they mean, but technically they operate a single Sunday School that meets on two schedules. Multiple Sunday School hours are challenging to do. I know that personally, having led churches to go from one to two and two to three Sunday School sessions. If you want to enlarge your organization and don't have the time or resources to erect new facilities, it's an option that has proven effective in many churches. The first time I was involved in implementing a dual worship/Sunday School schedule over 20 years ago, it was not very common. Now it is a growing trend among growth-minded churches. One of the best sources of advice is from churches and leaders who have done it successfully. Help in electronic form is also

available from LifeWay (E-mail sundayschool@lifeway.com and your request will be forwarded to the appropriate representative.), as well as many associations and state conventions. The key is to ask for help! It's hard work, but it is well worth the effort.

Preschool and Parking

There are two space issues that cannot be overcome by two or even three Sunday School sessions: preschool and parking. Most churches intuitively understand the parking challenge, although many choose to pretend it's not a problem. Surprisingly, many churches do not understand that their efforts to grow will be stunted if they don't adequately plan for adding preschool space. Unless new dedicated preschool space can be constructed, this will almost certainly mean that space currently being used for other purposes must be captured for conversion to preschool space. Such space should be on a level that provides safe escape in case of fire. Ideally, it should be near existing preschool space and convenient to the worship center and/or young adult classrooms. In many churches this means that children, students, or adults will be displaced to make room for preschool growth. Such a commitment will pay off in the long term. It is easier to accomplish when leadership models the necessary sacrifice. A true story illustrates this:

Pastor's Private Potty to Bed Baby Room

It was a critical time at Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tennessee, a struggling congregation running in the 200s when we joined in 1997 shortly after moving to Nashville. Fast forward to a few months later. In a meeting to address our growing need for preschool space, I made a proposal that shocked others on our study committee—recommending that we rent portable buildings for our staff and convert the church offices to preschool rooms. There were six large rooms with a controlled entrance, a workroom with a sink, two restrooms inside, and—best of all—the pastor's office had a private lavatory that would be perfect for a bed baby room. Someone else announced this proposal to our new young pastor, David Landrith, as he walked down the hall toward the conference room across from his office. I'll never forget his response. Pausing briefly in the doorway, he extended his arms in a victory pose and exclaimed, "Let's do it!" A few short weeks later, both that conference room and his office were teeming

with babies. The church is over 10 times larger now. I am utterly convinced that the sacrifice modeled by our pastor in favor of providing space for preschoolers was blessed by the Father. Brother David then altered the master plan to build a new preschool and children's building ahead of a new worship center. The building now blesses kids three times each Sunday and on Saturday evening. The new worship center is under construction too, and the senior adults are now in the old office/preschool space, close to the worship center, enjoying the rewards of their previous sacrifices and support.

What sacrifices are you willing to make to provide additional Sunday School space, especially for preschoolers?

Flexible Students

Perhaps the most flexible group in your church are the youth. They like crowds. Noise doesn't bother them. As many churches convert space for use by preschoolers and children, often the youth area gets squeezed. If you can break the mind-set that every Sunday School unit must have its own room with four walls and a whiteboard, you can make progress with youth. A solution many churches have found successful is to find as large a room as available for the youth and assign them all to that room. Fellowship halls and gyms are popular choices. Tables are set up as classes. Sometimes rolling partitions provide some sound and sight barriers between the tables; in other cases, it is just the tables. There is a table for seventh grade boys, another for eight grade girls, and so on.

Starting a new unit does not require finding a new room but only setting up a new table and staffing the table with a new adult leader. Students are also more flexible in meeting in a satellite or off-site facility. In our church their pilgrimage has been from separate rooms (which were converted for children) to the fellowship hall (which was later converted to preschool) to a quickly constructed satellite building (which has been converted for adults who gave up their room for preschool) and now to a nearby high school, where they are shuttled by bus. Can every church do this? Of course not. These examples are provided to get you to think outside the box when it comes to providing space for youth. The best thing has been that the students have grown with every move and continue to invite their friends to come with them!

Unmovable Adults

Unfortunately, the greatest obstacle in most churches to providing adequate space is adults who establish an ownership claim or emotional attachment to "their room." One of the sweetest sounds a Sunday School director can hear is when an adult teacher says, "Our class is willing to do whatever it takes to help us reach more people. I'll lead my class to be OK with whatever space we are assigned." May their tribe increase!

Master Teacher Approach

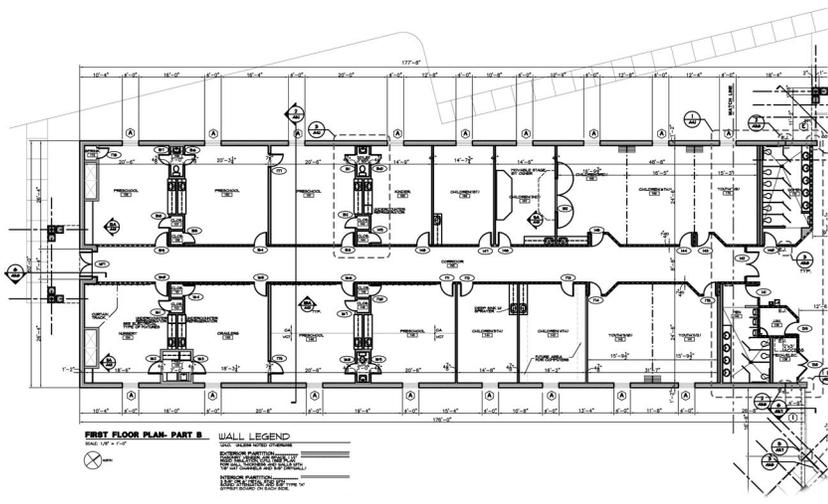
Akin to the idea above for students, sometimes a large space can be provided with tables serving as the classes. The Bible study experience alternates between a master teacher and small-group discussion at the tables led by a group leader or facilitator. All you have to do to start a new group is set up another table and enlist a leader. *Life Connections* curriculum from LifeWay is designed specifically for this type of environment.

Home Groups

Sunday School classes do not have to meet at the church, and they don't have to meet on Sunday morning. The main challenge of such groups is deciding what to do with children. If you can solve that issue, perhaps starting some home groups is your answer for providing space.

Reduce Clutter and Nonessential Equipment

Many rooms could hold more people if they were just cleaner and less cluttered. Preschool and children's space can be cleared of old, unsafe, or unnecessary toys and equipment. Tables in adult classes almost always limit the number of people who can be included. Cabinets can be cleaned out or removed. The outstanding leader hates clutter. She makes regular "search and dispose" missions through her room. He removes old materials from desks and shelves, finds new homes for abandoned Bibles and casserole dishes, and takes down outdated posters from bulletin boards. She is a fan of the resource room and refuses to "stockpile" art supplies. Could you remove enough clutter from your room to make space for another person?



Meeting Space Specifications Chart

Age Group	Space/Person	Maximum Attendance	Room Size	Leader: Learner Ratio
Preschool				
Babies	35 sq. ft.	12	420 sq. ft.	1:2
Ones-Twos	35 sq. ft.	12	420 sq. ft.	1:3
Threes-Pre-K	35 sq. ft.	16	560 sq. ft.	1:4
Kindergarten	35 sq. ft.	20	700 sq. ft.	1:5
Children				
Grades 1-6	20-25 sq. ft.	24	480-600 sq. ft.	1:6
Youth				
Gr. 7-12 (class)	10-12 sq. ft.	12	120-144 sq. ft.	1:12
Gr. 7-12 (dept.)	8-10 sq. ft.	60	480-600 sq. ft.	1:12
Young Adults 18-24 yrs				
Department	10 sq. ft.			
Class	12-15 sq. ft.	20-25	240-375 sq. ft.	1:4
Dual Use	15-18 sq. ft.	20-25	300-450 sq. ft.	
Adults 25 yrs-up				
Department	10 sq. ft.			
Class	12-15 sq. ft.	20-25	240-375 sq. ft.	1:4
Dual Use	15-18 sq. ft.	20-25	300-450 sq. ft.	
Special Education				
Low-functioning	25 sq. ft.	1:1	480 sq. ft.	
High-functioning		1:4	(10 sq. ft. per person for wheelchairs)	
In between		1:2-1:3		

Enlist and Train THE WORKERS



The Ten Factor

The enrollment potential of any Sunday School is seldom higher than 10 times the number of workers. Each age-group requires a different ratio of leaders to learners.

Three Steps for Enlisting Workers

An enlarged organization is just a piece of paper, and new space is just empty rooms without the most important ingredient in the growth formula: leaders and workers. Flake said it in his matter-of-fact way (*Building a Standard Sunday School*, pp. 28-29):

Immediately this organization should be outlined and the leaders should set themselves to the enlistment of the necessary workers. Where will a Sunday School look for so many additional teachers? How will they be induced to take up the work? They are to be found within the membership of the church and nowhere else. If approached in the right manner they can be induced to serve. There are three steps which, if followed persistently, will produce the required number of officers and teachers:

1. Praying publicly and privately for workers
2. Making a list of prospective officers and teachers
3. Securing the consent of those who have been selected to serve

Where About 100 Percent of the Workers Will be Found

Most of the workers needed to staff an enlarged Sunday School will be found in adult groups. It is imperative that adult classes encourage and honor those who step up to serve within the class and especially those who step out to serve in preschool, children, and student classes. These folks, popularly called “associate members” or “service members,” should be assigned to the best care group leader in the class. They should be invited to every fellowship. They should be called every week. Some classes prominently display the names—or even photos—of their service members. Such practices ensure a steady stream of volunteers because they can be sure they will not be forgotten by their group.

No One Has Asked Me!

The main reason people do not volunteer to teach Sunday School is not because they are uncommitted or lazy. It is because they have not been asked in a prayerful, compelling way. Flake said it in this classic way:

It is surprising how men and women who love God will respond to a definite appeal to service. Many of the best men and women in all churches have done little in Christian service because they have never been offered an appealing task. To the question, “Why stand ye here all the day idle” the answer comes back, “No man hath hired us. We have no task—we do not know what to do” (*Building a Standard Sunday School*, p. 29).

Praying for Leaders

In Matthew 9:36-38, Jesus told His disciples that there were lots of prospective members just waiting to be invited. He instructed them to pray for workers. Now that means more than praying, “Lord, send us some leaders.” The excellent Sunday School leader will compile a list of nonleaders who meet two simple qualifications: (1) Could they serve effectively if asked? (2) Are they church members with an acceptable lifestyle? Then he or she will pray through the list, asking the Lord of the harvest to help match people to positions.

Don't Say “No” for Someone Else

Very few outstanding Sunday School leaders accepted their position because they didn't have anything else to do. On the contrary—most excellent leaders have busy and demanding personal and job-related schedules. Yet they make time for Sunday School work. Why? Because they have discovered there is a deep satisfaction in being a partner in God's business. They have found a supernatural avenue for meeting the human need for achievement and accomplishment that lasts forever. The excellent leader is one who believes that there are many others who want to experience this same kind of eternal satisfaction. So he asks them!

Enlist with Integrity

Decide what person God would have you ask. Don't make a list of second choices! If the person says no, decide on another first choice! Never be able to answer the question, "If I don't accept, who will you ask?" Be able to respond, "I don't know. God impressed your name upon me for this position. If you don't accept it, I'll ask Him again." Schedule a face-to-face appointment with the potential worker. Take along information about the position (job description, samples of teaching literature, names and duties of co-workers, perhaps a book like this one).

Be honest. Don't oversell or undersell the work to be done. Anticipate and answer three basic questions: (1) Why me? (2) Is this job important? (3) Will you provide training and resources? Pray with the person. Don't rush a decision. Ask him if he would be willing to pray about the position. Assure him that whatever God tells him to do will be OK with you. Check back in a few days. If he says yes, rejoice! If no, thank him and move on. Don't take it as a personal rejection. You don't know what may be going on in a person's personal life that influenced his or her decision. Keep the relationship positive so you can enlist him again at some future time.

The Importance of Training

Baseball has spring training. Football has training camp. The armed forces have basic training. McDonald's has "Hamburger University." General Electric credits its training program with its sustained growth. Sports leaders, military leaders, and business leaders know that the recruitment of promising personnel alone will not produce a winning team. This is certainly true for Sunday School leaders as well.

Training Methods

Training can be accomplished in many ways. Self-study is a flexible way to help workers understand the principles of excellent Sunday School work. Leadership diplomas can be earned by self-study as a part of the Christian Growth Study Plan (www.lifeway.com/cgsp). Video, audio, and online training resources are available for many positions. Many churches conduct a kickoff week prior to the beginning of a new Sunday School year, a sort of boot camp for new and experienced workers. Associations and state conventions offer training events and clinics. Many workers point to summer Sunday School Weeks at LifeWay Conference Centers at Ridgecrest, NC, and Glorieta, NM, as highlights of their training experiences.

You might want to consider some type of point system. Encourage every Sunday School leader to earn a certain

number of training points each year. Say it's 1,000 points. Reading a selected book, listening to a prescribed tape, or watching a particular video might be worth 100 points. Participating in your Kickoff Weekend event might be worth 200. Attending a conference center week might be worth 500. You get the idea.

The Apprentice

Perhaps the most effective way to learn a Sunday School position is to serve along with someone who is already experienced. Adult teachers can enlist a promising apprentice, with the goal of seeing them start a new class at the appropriate time. My wife Vickie and I teach pre-K Sunday School. Chris and Dana served with us for several months one year before taking a department themselves and testify to the effectiveness of this method.

The Curriculum Connection

The choice of curriculum is important not only for ongoing Bible study but also in the enlistment and training of teachers and leaders. We do not want a person who is sitting in an adult class observing the teacher to think *I could never do that*. Rather, we want them to think, *I think I could do that if they gave me the same resources*. The trend toward allowing adult teachers to "do their own thing" is reversing. Today many growing churches are requiring their adult teachers to use the same curriculum or limiting their choices of curriculum. It is incredibly more efficient to enlist and train new leaders if all leaders are using similar curriculum. It is easier to supply support materials. It is easier to enlist and equip substitutes.

LifeWay offers multiple curriculum solutions for every age group. Written and produced by Baptists for Baptists, it is used successfully by churches in many other denominations as well. Why? Biblically, it has doctrinal integrity based on the highest view of the authority of the Scriptures. Educationally, it addresses the developmental needs of specific age groups and special populations, uniquely offering specific resources for important transitional ages such as kindergarten, sixth grade, and high school seniors, as well as adults with special education needs. Without sacrificing its commitment to being biblically and educationally sound, LifeWay is also committed to providing curriculum choices that are easy to use and application oriented. The key question LifeWay editorial teams ask themselves related to curriculum is this, "Will this week's commentary and teaching suggestions provide an enjoyable and engaging Bible study experience for both leaders and learners?" Whatever Bible study curriculum you choose, these same criteria and questions may be helpful in making your choice.

Flake's Challenge

Arthur Flake knew that as challenging as the work that preceded it, the real work of Sunday School enlargement was as dependent then as it is now on the hard work of going after the people. He wrote (*Building a Standard Sunday School*, p.33):

As the matter now stands, during the enlargement campaign:

The church roll has been checked.

The census has been taken.

The information has been assorted, graded, and tabulated.

The organization has been enlarged to take care of all the possibilities.

The enlarged organization has been inaugurated.

The proper space has been provided in the building.

The information has been placed in the hands of the officers and teachers.

If we stop here, all the work which has been done will be largely in vain, the organization will go to pieces and discouragement will result on every hand.

The thing needed now to enlarge the Sunday School membership is that this organization should be led by the superintendent and pastor to visit every one of the prospective pupils during the coming week and urge them to come to the Sunday School, and then keep visiting them from week to week with the same urgent invitation until all of them join.

Face-to-Face Contact

In a sophisticated, technological society like ours, isn't visitation a little old fashioned? Well, if American business would stop doing it, we could take care of our air traffic challenges immediately! Most of the business people you see on an airliner are "out on visitation." They could have reached out and touched that potential customer by telephone or written them a note. In fact, they probably have and will. But they know that there is absolutely no substitute for a face-to-face contact with the customer or prospective customer. So they invest in visitation.

Getting it Backward?

Many Sunday School leaders approach follow-up with a worship service visitor by sending a letter or other written communication. If that is not successful, a phone call is made. If that doesn't work, then perhaps the Sunday School

leader considers making a home visit. That's backward! If you would make a face-to-face contact early in the process, the other methods could build on that experience rather than lead up to it. Imagine that it is the first week after a guest has filled out a guest card for the first time. You and perhaps a team of one or two others make an at-the-door visit to introduce yourselves and invite the guest to your Bible study group. It's not even that important for you to get into his residence. The important thing is that you have a face-to-face encounter. When you call him later in the week to reinforce your invitation, he can associate your face with your voice. After that, an e-mail or a note in the mail serves to reinforce your personal efforts. In fact, you may need no further face-to-face contacts at all—if you'll just make one early in the process.

Telephone and E-mail

While visitation remains the ideal, especially for an initial contact, the telephone and the Internet are effective ways to contact and stay in touch with prospective members. If your ministry area is unusually large, these may be your primary methods of outreach.

Two Categories of Prospects

There are basically two categories of prospective members: those who are looking and those who are lost. Unfortunately, many churches attempt to grow only by reaching out to the first group. A business that concentrated only on lookers would tend to put most of its advertising budget into a Yellow Pages™ ad. Wise business leaders, on the other hand, seek ways to tell a wider audience about their products or services—so do wise Sunday School leaders. Visitation is just a smart and effective way to go about "the Father's business" of offering our community what money can't buy: a life worth living forever—abundant, eternal life through Jesus Christ and His church. There are three basic elements to an effective visitation program.

A Definite Time to Go Out

Contacts can be made anytime during the week. Many members will be glad to make a call or visit at their convenience if you assign them a prospect contact on Sunday mornings. But most of us need to set aside a specific time in

our schedule to visit consistently. Outreach leaders should visit almost every week, perhaps asking a different person to accompany them each week. Many churches find that sustaining a visitation program over the long haul is best accomplished when members and leaders are encouraged to visit once each month on a rotating basis.

Definite Prospects

The prospect file is the outreach leader's basic tool. The outreach leader keeps an accurate and up-to-date record of all information that will help a department, class, or group reach a potential member and his or her family for Bible study, Christ, and/or church membership. The outreach leader uses the prospect file to make outreach assignments to members and other leaders during the group's meeting time and before the scheduled visitation hour.

A Definite Reporting Process

After a contact is made with a prospect, a brief report should be printed on the prospect card and returned to the outreach leader. Perhaps you noted above the use of the term "visitation hour." To avoid burnout, I have found it useful to limit the visitation time to one hour each week, with a definite time for all to meet back at the church to report on their efforts and turn in their reports. When assignments are made and accepted on Sunday mornings, then the report should be returned by the following Sunday (or whatever day the group meets).

An Oikos System

Many churches organize their prospect file (whether it is computerized or manual) on an *oikos* system. *Oikos* is a Greek word translated "household" in most English New Testaments. When a person became a Christian in the first century, it almost always provided an opening for all persons living under his roof to hear and accept the gospel too. So a prospect file is typically set up primarily alphabetically by households. All prospective members in that household are listed together on the prospect assignment and report card given to the person or team assigned to make the contact. Adult classes have primary responsibility for reaching a household if an adult has visited. If a child or young person has visited without a parent, the age-group department has the best chance of reaching that household.

Prioritize Around Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the criteria used by excellent outreach leaders to prioritize outreach assignments. Obviously, persons who have visited your Sunday School at least twice

are the hottest prospects. Your goal for these contacts is to get the person to enroll. Those who have visited once are next (some would argue they are the first priority), and your goal is simple: Get them to come back again! After that, those who have visited a worship service are assigned. Unchurched persons are most receptive to our invitations during times of transition or crisis. Unfortunately, that is when Satan tries to get us to back off or give them some space. Don't buy into his lie.

Leave Something

Always take something to leave behind when you visit. Leaving a Sunday School learner guide says, "We really want you to be involved in our class, and this will help you get a head start." A family magazine or devotional resource is always valued, especially if it is targeted to current needs (e.g., *BabyLife* for new parents, *ParentLife* for parents of young children, *Living with Teenagers* for those raising youth, *Mature Living* for senior adults). A brochure about what the church believes and what ministries it offers is always appreciated. Some churches leave a mug, a pen, or some other "ad specialty" gift. Always leave your name and phone number!

Open Enrollment

Excellent Sunday School classes practice open enrollment. That means we can enroll any person at any time on any thing as long as they agree. And they will agree—if asked! People want to belong. Give them the opportunity to enroll.

The Empty Chair

You should always have an empty chair or two in your class, even if you have to squeeze it in. If someone shows up to sit in it, get another one. Why? To always remind the group that there are others who need to experience fellowship around the open Word of God.

Fellowship Evangelism

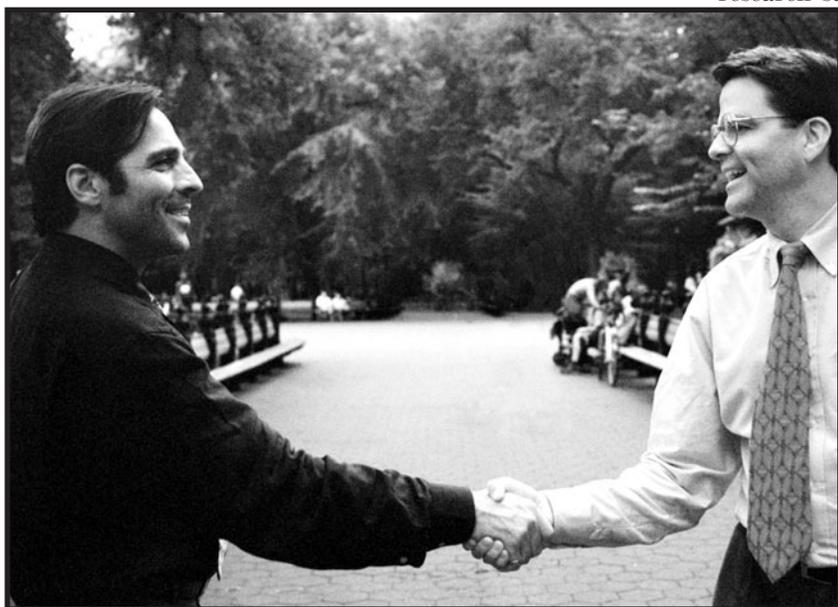
Many churches have discovered the power of the party in helping adults find a connection with Sunday School. Josh Hunt (www.joshhunt.com) has popularized and given structure to this type of outreach.

A Church Web Site

Today the first thing many people do when looking for a new church is to see what they can discover about the congregation on the Internet. A Web site is now within reach of churches of all sizes through LifeWay Link (www.lifewaylink.com).

Off-Campus Groups

Many churches don't have the space to accommodate their small groups on campus. Others have discovered that their FRANs are more receptive to an invitation to a small group study in a home or office. Can the enrollment in such groups be counted in the ongoing Sunday School/Bible Study totals? Yes! Almost all of these groups are functionally comparable to Sunday School. Here's a good rule of thumb: If the five steps in Flake's Formula will help you grow your small group ministry, then it is equivalent to Sunday School, wherever or whenever it meets.



Don't Give Up!

Some growth experts suggest that it takes an average of 20 contacts to get a person into a Bible study group for the first time. That's the average! Don't give up too soon. Lives and souls are at stake. Every name represents a person who needs to experience the joy of eternal life: a quality of life worth living now and forever. Don't give up on absentees or inactive members. Perhaps a new class will appeal to them. Many pastors have successfully started a pastor's class, beginning with a few group leaders and a class of folks who have become inactive or only attend worship. The same concept can be used with lay leadership as well.

Witnessing to Persons About Christ and Church Membership

Inviting people is good. Enrolling them is better. Winning them to Christ and responsible church membership is best. That is most likely to happen in precisely that order. A person is invited and enrolled. Then friends from the class, perhaps a FAITH team, share the gospel with them. It can work the other way around too: win, invite, enroll. But most people need to hang around some Christians a while before they decide to become one. And most need more than a "one shot" exposure to the Bible's message of eternal life. A research study by Dr. Flavil Yeakley indicated that those

who were active church members had heard the gospel presented an average of 5.8 times before making a decision for Christ. In sharp contrast, persons who had dropped out of church had heard the gospel only twice, on average, before making their decision. We have long acknowledged that this is the way we cultivate our own children toward faith in Christ. With rare exceptions, this is the pattern of evangelism that is the most effective with youth and adults as well. A commitment to this pattern of evangelism will show up in the number of people enrolled in our classes who are not yet Christians. The excellent Sunday School leader knows who these persons are, cultivates and prays for them regularly, and is sensitive to the gentle nudge of God's Spirit

that indicates that the person is ready to respond personally to Christ. This is the high calling and the primary mark of the growing Sunday School.

Kickoff Event OVERVIEW

Sunday School Kickoff Event

The purpose of the Sunday School kickoff event is to give your church leaders an overview of the universal truths of Sunday School growth and to apply these time tested principles in the various age-graded classes. *The Five Step Formula for Sunday School Growth* is the primary text for this training event. Permission is granted to duplicate this text or you can download an online version which is available on www.lifeway.com/sskickoff.

Event Support Material and Details

A plethora of training resources are also available on this site to help you create a sense of excitement about the potential for Sunday School growth in your church and are at your disposal at no cost to you. Training plans for all age groups that include PowerPoint® presentations and training handouts are available to workshop leaders. The material on this Web site can be customized to fit your situation. Here is a list of the resources available on www.lifeway.com/sskickoff for your training event:

- Five Step Formula for Sunday School Growth* PDF
- General Leadership Training Plan PPT
- General Leadership Training Plan PDF Handouts
- Adult Leadership Training Plan PPT
- Adult Leadership Training Plan PDF Handouts
- Student Leadership Training Plan PPT
- Student Leadership Training Plan PDF Handouts
- Childhood Leadership Training Plan PPT
- Childhood Leadership Training Plan PDF Handouts
- Preschool Leadership Training Plan PPT
- Preschool Leadership Training Plan PDF Handouts
- Banquet Resources PDF
- Worship Planning and Drama PDF
- Adult Sunday School Leader and Learner Guides . . . PDF
- Christian Growth Study Plan Form PDF

Suggested Event Schedule

The provided theme-based training, worship, and Bible study resources could be used with a variety of schedules or use plans. It is recommended that your church use the lesson and worship service on the same weekend as the leadership training sessions. Here are two suggested options:

Friday	Banquet, including award presentations (optional).
Saturday	General training session for all leaders overviewing <i>The Five Step Formula for Sunday School Growth</i> , followed by age group training sessions.
Sunday	The adult Sunday School lesson focuses on Jesus' small group. In worship, the emphasis will be on evangelism, highlighting the message of Step Five, "Go After the People."
Saturday	General training session for all leaders overviewing <i>The Five Step Formula for Sunday School Growth</i> , followed by age group training sessions.
Sunday	The adult Sunday School lesson focuses on Jesus' small group. In worship, the emphasis will be on evangelism, highlighting the message of Step Five, "Go After the People."

Training Event

A general training session for all leaders is critical for helping Sunday School leadership see the big picture and for ensuring that everyone is on the same page. Based on the content of *The Five Step Formula for Sunday School Growth*, the pastor, minister of education, or Sunday School director will overview the Five Steps and share their vision for Sunday School, uniting all leaders into a common ministry effort.

After the general session, age group training sessions will take place and be led by those who provide leadership in the specific age groups. The purpose of this training is for each age group to provide practical application of the principles introduced in the general session. Age group leaders will examine how to minister and teach in a manner appropriate to their age group. Prior to the training event, this material should be presented to the directors of the various age groups who will be responsible for training their teachers. This will give the pastor, minister of education, or the Sunday School director an opportunity to communicate the information to key leaders prior to their preparation so that primary teaching points are shared, eliminating conflicting messages. Other previously published LifeWay age group material, such as *Essentials for Excellence* and the *How-to Sunday School Guides*, are excellent supplemental resources for trainers to use.

Leadership Banquet

Many churches choose to have a banquet to honor teachers as the kickoff event for leadership training. This approach gives the pastor, minister of education, and the Sunday School director the opportunity to encourage the leaders and to express appreciation for the hard work that is done to provide quality Bible study experiences for every person in the congregation. An option is to recognize the Teacher of the Year whose ministry supports the philosophy of Flake's Formula. You may wish to create a Teacher of the Year certificate and possibly present a gift.

Bible Study Helps

LifeWay is providing an Adult Sunday School theme-based leader and learner guide for churches to use for this event. The lesson will focus on Jesus' small group and the benefits of living life together in community. Use the study to help adult members and leaders see how their needs are met in the context of Sunday School.

Worship Helps

LifeWay is providing theme-related sermon, music, drama, and worship ideas for this event. The worship service will emphasize Step Five of *The Five Step Formula for Sunday School Growth*, "Go After the People." Worship will focus on evangelism and will encourage believers to be mindful of those in their community who do not know Jesus and others who do not have a church home.