



## FINDING THE RIGHT CHILDREN'S MISSIONS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

By Karen Hardin

*"How'd you like to do missions every month in all of the kids' classes?" the children's director proposed. I was speechless. I had been praying about an opportunity like this for two years, but now that my dream could become reality, a wave of panic hit me. Shifting from writing sporadic project-centered and ministry-specific lessons to designing ongoing curriculum sounded daunting. If your church is adding mission education to your children's programming, you may be wrestling through some of the same issues I did when I accepted my director's proposal.*

### Should we develop our own curriculum or use existing resources?

Developing an ongoing mission program for a range of age-levels is a monumental task, similar to writing your own Sunday school curriculum. Unless your church has someone with a background in child development, an understanding of learning styles, practical experience with a range of ages, and a broad knowledge of missions, it is better to use existing curriculum. Fortunately, many excellent children's mission resources are available today. Reflect your own church profile by developing an outline of concepts you want to teach and selecting products that match your goals. Other ways to tailor existing curriculum to your church setting are to add in church-specific giving or service

projects and develop teaching segments which highlight ministries of missionaries you support.

### What are the major sources of mission curriculum?

Once your team has determined the concepts you want to communicate, begin investigating available curriculum. Since children's mission products do not line the shelves of your local Christian bookstore, you will need to look to other sources. If your church is part of a denomination, begin by checking its website. Some denominations offer children's resources focused on specific missionaries, ministries, or areas of the world.

A second source for curriculum is mission agencies. As with denominations, most resources will be ministry or area-specific. For example, Wycliffe Bible Translators offers children's books, CD ROM's, and videos on Bibleless peoples.

Voice of the Martyrs carries children's materials on praying for persecuted Christians in many nations.

Most traditional Sunday school materials do not include strong mission components. However, developers of *DiscipleLand* curriculum ([www.DiscipleLand.com](http://www.DiscipleLand.com)) intentionally created a mission strand. At Grade 4, "Transforming the World" units focus on Acts and modern-day missionaries. At all levels, Hidden People Profiles introduce students to people groups with little gospel witness and provide prayer requests.

While considering sources for mission curriculum, don't overlook local churches. Those with children's mission programs in place may be willing to answer questions, give advice, or loan you materials. Ask your regional ACMC office ([www.acmc.org](http://www.acmc.org)) for recommendations of churches in your area that have successful children's missions programming.

For the widest array of children's missions materials, contact church mobilization organizations. These groups focus on equipping local churches to educate and engage their congregations in missions. Their regional conferences often include workshops taught by children's mission educators and feature exhibits of the latest kids' products. Some organizations have children's consultants who write curriculum, lead training sessions, and answer questions about implementing specific resources. Here are three of the best.

**1. APMC** ([www.apmc.org](http://www.apmc.org)) offers a variety of children's resources as well as training workshops at regional conferences across the United States. Margie Marsh and Marielle Dupree are their children's mission experts.

**2. Caleb Project** ([www.calebproject.org](http://www.calebproject.org)) has produced a series of children's videos and curriculum on unreached peoples, a 13-week curriculum on children's roles in missions, and a kids' skit book. They carry a variety of children's mission curriculum from other organizations as well, including hands-on prayer tools. Jill Harris and Karen Hardin are their children's specialists.

**3. US Center for World Mission** ([www.uscwm.org](http://www.uscwm.org)) has several staff members focused on children's mission programming, namely Nancy Tichy and Gerry Dueck. They produce a semi-annual newsletter that describes new children's mission resources and lists training opportunities. To receive this free newsletter, email Gerry at [gerry.dueck@uscwm.org](mailto:gerry.dueck@uscwm.org).

## When selecting curriculum, what questions should you ask?

As you investigate resources, you may be surprised at the number of children's mission products available today. How should you go about selecting curriculum? Your children's missions program needs to be shaped by your desired outcomes. The overarching question should be, "What do we want the students exiting our program to know and do?"

If you are supplementing an ongoing program such as Sunday school, VBS, or AWANA, ask additional questions. "Will this resource fit into our existing format? Does it present the same concept across a number of age-levels? Will this require additional staffing to implement? Will additional teacher training be needed?"

When developing a multi-year missions program ask, "What foundational concepts are important for students to learn during the first year? How can we build upon these concepts in the following years? Which resources give students opportunities to respond to what they are learning through projects, prayer, and giving?"

After you implement curriculum, make sure to re-evaluate your program at least once a year. Ask, "Where did we see holes and which resources did not work well in our context?"

Designing a children's missions program takes time and commitment, but it is an opportunity to influence a generation. God can use such an investment to give children a vision and heart for the peoples of the world!

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