

Diocesan Instructional Guide

Grades 3rd–8th | **Imprimatur:** + William Bower, SSC, Episcopus, Diocese of the Eastern United States, Anglican Catholic Church

Combined-Age Instruction & Three-Year Curriculum Framework

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide is written for clergy, diocesan leaders, Lay Leadership (both Diocesan and Parish), and Student Sunday School teachers serving combined-age classes (Grades 3–8). It provides:

- Instructional guidance for teaching mixed-age groups.
- Clear strategies for differentiation, inclusion, and classroom safety.
- A two-week Student Sunday School Introduction with optional Bible Navigation curriculum.
- An intentional three-year curriculum cycle.
- Integration with the liturgical seasons of the Church Year.
- This model is designed to be replicable, pastorally sound, and theologically Anglican.

PART I: TEACHING A COMBINED-AGE CLASS (GRADES 3–8)

A. THEOLOGICAL & PRACTICAL RATIONALE

A combined-age Sunday School classroom reflects the intergenerational nature of the Church. Children learn not only from the curriculum, but from one another. Older students grow in responsibility and leadership; younger students gain confidence through modeling.

This approach mirrors parish life, where worship, prayer, and service are shared across ages.

B. ADVANTAGES OF A COMBINED-AGE CLASSROOM

- Peer mentoring: Older students assist naturally with reading, discussion, and activities.
- Leadership formation: Upper grades practice servant leadership, not authority
- Community cohesion: Students experience belonging beyond age-based silos.
- Continuity: Families and teachers share a common faith, language, and rhythm

C. CHALLENGES & INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

1. Varying attention spans

- Use a consistent weekly structure.

- Break lessons into short segments.
- Alternate quiet listening with hands-on activity

2. Different reading and comprehension levels

- Scripture is read aloud by the teacher or older students.
- Younger students respond through visuals and concrete questions.
- Older students engage in reflection and application.

3. Maturity differences

- Expectations are clearly stated and reinforced weekly.
- Older students are given responsibility (reading, helping), not control.

D. ADDRESSING DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES

Each lesson intentionally includes:

- Auditory learning: Scripture, prayer, discussion
- Visual learning: Illustrations, icons, timelines, diagrams
- Kinesthetic learning: Crafts, movement, hands-on tasks
- Reflective learning: Journaling prompts for older students.

This ensures meaningful engagement for all learners.

E. SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Sunday School teachers are not expected to diagnose learning differences. They *are* expected to create a gracious, accessible classroom.

Instructional practices include:

- Clear, repeated instructions
- Flexible pacing
- Optional reading aloud
- Process-focused crafts (not product-focused)
- Gentle, private encouragement
- Every child is affirmed as created in God's image and valued in the community.

F. ADDRESSING BULLYING & SOCIAL CHALLENGES

Bullying is not tolerated.

Teachers:

- Establish clear expectations for kindness and respect.
- Address issues promptly and privately.
- Teach reconciliation and forgiveness with adult guidance.

When needed, parents and clergy are involved to ensure the safety and dignity of all students.

PART II: TWO-WEEK or THREE-WEEK STUDENT SUNDAY SCHOOL INTRODUCTION

(Completed before any curriculum begins)

This two-week introduction is required at the beginning of each academic year or when launching a new class group.

Each week follows the same lesson format used throughout the year, reinforcing consistency:

- Opening Routine
- Scripture (NKJV)
- Teaching & Discussion
- Activity or Craft
- Closing Prayer

WEEK 1: WELCOME TO SUNDAY SCHOOL

Focus: Who We Are: God's Family & Our Classroom Covenant

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12–14, 27 & Psalm 133:1 (NKJV)

Instructional Goals:

- Establish classroom culture.
- Define expectations rooted in Christian kindness.
- Introducing Sunday School as a safe, welcoming space.

Anglican Foundations Introduced:

- Respect for Scripture
- Prayer as part of learning
- Sunday as a day of worship

Activity:

Classroom covenant, community rules, or identity symbol craft

WEEK 2: How We Learn: The Bible, Prayer, and Anglican Worship

Focus: Anglican basics and Bible basics

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV)

Instructional Goals:

- Introduce the structure of the Bible.

- Explain the Old and New Testaments
- Provide a basic understanding of Anglican worship.

Anglican Foundations Introduced:

- Book of Common Prayer
- Scripture, prayer, and worship
- Brief overview of the Church Year

Activity:

Bible bookmark, Bible structure chart, or Church Year wheel

Optional: Third Week Curriculum for students who are challenged by navigating the Bible:
BIBLE NAVIGATION PRACTICE

PART III: THREE-YEAR ROTATING CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

After the two-week introduction, students enter a 10-week focused curriculum.

Following the 10 weeks, all Student Sunday School classes transition fully into instruction aligned with the liturgical seasons (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity).

YEAR ONE: GENESIS – THE BEGINNING OF GOD’S STORY

Focus: Scripture foundations and God’s faithfulness

Students study:

- Creation and God’s good design
- Humanity’s relationship with God
- Covenant and promise.
- God’s faithfulness despite human failure

Formation Emphasis:

Understanding the Bible as one connected story and God as Creator and Covenant-Keeper.

YEAR TWO: SAINTS – LIVING THE FAITH

Focus: Christian witness across history

Students learn:

- How ordinary people lived faithful lives.
- Courage, repentance, service, and prayer

- The Church across time and place

Formation Emphasis:

Faith is lived and modeled by real people.

YEAR THREE: SPIRITUAL HABITS – GROWING A LIFE OF FAITH

Focus: Daily Christian practice

Students practice:

- Reading Scripture
- Prayer and worship
- Confession and forgiveness
- Gratitude, service, obedience, perseverance

Formation Emphasis:

Developing habits that support lifelong faith.

PART IV: LITURGICAL INTEGRATION (ESSENTIAL)

Following the Trinity Season curriculum, all classes align instruction with the Church Year.

This ensures students experience faith formation through both structured study and sacred time.

Thematic studies are designed to support, not replace, liturgical instruction.

FINAL NOTE FOR TEACHERS

This curriculum model is intentionally designed to be:

- Theologically Anglican
- Developmentally appropriate
- Pastorally sensitive
- Sustainable across years

Within the rhythm of the Church year, students are formed in faith through Word, example, and practice. They come to know God through the reading and study of Holy Scripture (Genesis), are encouraged by the witness of the Saints, and grow in faith through the regular practice of spiritual habits such as prayer, worship, and service. Together, these elements reflect the Anglican understanding that God shapes His people over time through Scripture, tradition, and faithful participation in the life of the Church.