



The 5-Step Formula for Sunday School Growth

Great formulas have altered our universe. Einstein was right! $E=MC^2$. Subsequent attempts by scientists to improve on it or to question its

validity have proved fruitless.

A lay Sunday School leader from an earlier time developed a formula for Sunday School growth. It has yet to be improved on! His name was Arthur Flake. He was the Sunday School director of his church. Here's Flake's simple formula with some simple tools for each step.

Step 1. KNOW THE POSSIBILITIES

Learn who lives in your community. How many of those people are unchurched? How many preschoolers, children, youth, adults of various ages are there? What are their social and economic groups? Do you know their names?

20 Sources of Prospects and Actions to Grow your Sunday School and Church

1. Church members not enrolled in Bible study.
2. Guests in worship services.
3. People who attend special events and ministries through the church—i.e. Vacation Bible School, special concerts, or family events.
4. Parents and siblings of preschoolers, children, and youth enrolled in other Sunday School classes or departments.
5. Parents and siblings of preschoolers, children, and youth enrolled in Vacation Bible School, Backyard Bible Clubs, or mission Vacation Bible School.
6. Extended family members, friends, neighbors, or associates of people who are members of your church or are enrolled in other Sunday School classes or departments.
7. Conduct a neighborhood Opinion Poll in neighborhoods around your church.
8. Conduct a telephone survey.
9. Obtain information from a newcomer welcoming organization or other agencies about persons or families who have moved into your community recently.
10. Designate a Sunday in which all members are asked to complete a card providing information on people they know who are potential prospects.
11. Organize a "Prospect Watch" in member neighborhoods, encouraging members to look for persons/family moving into the area.
12. Conduct community or neighborhood Scripture distribution visitation; be on the lookout for prospects.
13. Use birth records to discover potential prospects for your Sunday School ministry to preschoolers and their parent.
14. Special Day to Honor Special Groups—i.e. teachers.
15. Kindergarten, Day Care, Mother's Day Out programs sponsored by your church.
16. Church recreation programs and teams sponsored by the church.
17. Instant Prospect Search—Take a few minutes during Sunday School to ask people to identify prospects that are family members, relatives, neighbors, work associates, friends, and acquaintances that are not Christians or involved in Bible study.
18. First Contact—outreach plan and ministry to expectant parents and families with preschoolers (birth to one year).
19. Baby Hunt—church-wide awareness of and search for unchurched families with children birth to one year of age.
20. Special Education—church-wide awareness of unchurched families with family members with special education needs.

Step 2. ENLARGE THE ORGANIZATION

Funny. You ADD new units BEFORE you reach new people. You provide for them first! That requires faith. God blesses churches with faith and a willingness to prepare for the people you intend to reach. It works!

Is Your Class Ready to Start a New Unit/Class?

Look over the following list to determine whether it is time for your class to start a new unit.

- ❑ The class has too wide an age span (10 or more years for adults).
- ❑ There are more than 40 enrolled in an adult class, or more than the recommended enrollment for student, children, or preschool units (see chart below).
- ❑ Meeting space is filled with members, regardless of number enrolled.
- ❑ Needs are not being met consistently
- ❑ Prospects have been found, but there is not a class to which the prospects can be assigned naturally.
- ❑ The number of persons in an age group has suddenly grown.
- ❑ New church members are not currently being enrolled in classes.
- ❑ There are more prospects in our class than members.
- ❑ More absentees than members that attend.
- ❑ Our class feels that they don't need to grow because they already don't know everyone who is attending.
- ❑ Active members can miss more than two weeks in a row and not be missed.
- ❑ People drift in and out of the class, and no one in the class notices.

Step 3. PROVIDE SPACE AND EQUIPMENT

Another act of faith. You provide a place for a Bible study group to meet and the needed equipment and supplies to make Bible study more effective. Space can be just about anywhere—not necessarily in your church building.

Room Specification Suggestions

A church needs to provide the best possible space for small-group Bible study. Here are some suggestions related to determining space needs.

- Analyze all available space. Determine the total square footage of space available that could be used by Sunday School classes and departments.
- Determine the square footage needed by all the Sunday School departments and classes in all age groups (see chart above).
- Based on community changes and age-group shifts, determine whether more space is needed or whether reallocation of space is an option.
- Determine whether multiple use of space is a possibility.
- Determine whether any additional space is available for church use (either by the purchase or lease of portable buildings or other nearby buildings).
- Evaluate whether a new building is a priority.
- Follow church policies in acquiring any new building space.



Note:

It is difficult to sustain attendance beyond 80% of the room's capacity in classrooms where members attend by choice. For example, 10 babies may be placed in an area with a capacity of 10, but adults generally will not attend a class that is regularly more than 80% filled.

Meeting Space Specifications Chart				
Age Group	Space per Person	Maximum Enrollment	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	120-144 sq. ft.	1:6
Student				
Grades 7-12 (class)	10-15 sq. ft.	12	120-144 sq. ft.	1:12
Grades 7-12 (dept.)	8-10 sq. ft.	65	520-650 sq. ft.	1:12
Adults				
Department	10 sq. ft.			
Class	12 sq. ft.	25	300 sq. ft.	1:4 (all leaders)
Dual Use	15-18 sq. ft.	25	375-450 sq. ft.	1:4 (all leaders)

Alan Raughton and Louis B. Hanks, *Essentials for Excellence: Connecting Sunday School to Life* (Nashville: LifeWay, 2003), p. 34.

Step 4. ENLIST AND TRAIN THE WORKERS

Again, an act of faith. You begin developing new leaders NOW! Use an apprentice approach to prepare new leaders for those new classes and new people you are wanting to reach. Involve all your workers in training every year. Growth results.

10 Keys for Enlisting and Keeping Good Workers

1. Pray. Pray to the God of the harvest.
2. Know a good recruit when you see one. What are characteristics of a good Sunday School teacher?
3. Know how many workers you need. Check the recommended teacher-pupil ratio for the age group.
4. Use a job description. Be honest about what you're asking them to do.
5. Know that God is in control. He knows our needs.
6. Share the joy: use the "buddy system." Use division/department directors, and other teachers to help recruit. Recruit two people to work together as "buddies."
7. Provide training. Make workers aware of training options: self-study; video; online; church, associational or state training events; and conference centers.
8. Provide support. Allow your department/Sunday School to become a family.
9. Appreciate your leaders. Use both public and personal expressions of appreciation.
10. Never stop. Don't think it's a once a year thing. Always be looking for new teachers.



Step 5. Go After the People

This is the big deal part! Growth occurs when we invite people. Research shows that unchurched people are waiting for a personal invitation from someone they trust and have an ongoing relationship with. Make it fun. Invite them to a fellowship and then to your Sunday School.

Ministry Contacts

Use the following ideas for making ministry contacts.

Consider making the ideas a four-week or four-month contact plan starting with PERSONAL VISITS and ending with PHONE CALLS.

VISITS

- Use visits to discover someone's spiritual condition and to share Christ.
- Use visits to invite a person to join your group for Bible study.
- Use visits to get to know persons better and to discover common interests. Visits should be made during a crisis—death of loved one, serious illness, loss of job, and so forth.
- Consider the following types of visits:
 1. To visit informally over a meal.
 2. To enjoy recreation together (racquetball, golf, ball games, and so forth).
 3. To invite to class socials and activities.
 4. To help with a household project.

PRAYER

- Spend time praying for individual members and prospective members. Pray for their physical as well as spiritual needs.
- Prayer builds a bridge of compassion between you and your members and prospective members.

LETTERS/CARDS

- Make the cards or letters personal. Handwritten notes are better than typed form letters.
- Use cards/letters for the following:
 1. To relate that you are praying for them.
 2. To invite them to class or church events.
 3. To remember special dates—birthday, loss of a spouse, an anniversary, and so forth.

PHONE CALLS

- Instead of just calling to invite persons to Sunday School, consider using phone calls for the following:
 1. To get acquainted.
 2. To discover prayer needs (set up a 4-inch by 6-inch card for each person and jot down prayer requests).
 3. To follow up on previous prayer requests.
 4. For special events—birthday, new job, promotion, Christmas, and so forth.
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