

PRESCHOOL/CHILDREN LITERATURE CHARACTERISTICS

On a scale of 1-5, rate whether the literature...

1 - Strongly Disagree 2 - Disagree 3 - Neither Agree nor Disagree 4 - Agree 5 - Strongly Agree

- ___ has a Bible-based foundation
- ___ has doctrinally sound information
- ___ has authentic learning activities
- ___ has educationally sound content and activities
- ___ has a variety of learning methods
- ___ guides conversation
- ___ encourages critical thinking
- ___ has the child at the center of learning
- ___ has age appropriate content
- ___ has life application statements that connect with Bible passages

Total Score: ___ / 50

HOW TO EVALUATE LITERATURE FOR PRESCHOOLERS AND CHILDREN



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CHARACTERISTIC**DOES THE LITERATURE COMPLETE THIS CHARACTERISTIC?****CHILD CENTERED** **YES** **NO**

Is this activity based learning?

 Yes No

Are children in an atmosphere of learning?

 Yes No

Do activities have a purpose?

 Yes No

Do children have a choice of activities?

 Yes No

Are the activities age-appropriate?

 Yes No

Does the child have ownership of learning?

 Yes No

Are the activities interesting, challenging, relevant to the child's life?

 Yes No

Do activities encourage independence and working with others?

 Yes No

Are the children given opportunities to explain and display their work?

 Yes No

Are the children given opportunities to discuss application of what they have learned?

 Yes No**AGE APPROPRIATE** **YES** **NO**

Does the literature relate the biblical passages to the child's everyday, common experience?

 Yes No**LIFE APPLICATION CONNECTED WITH BIBLE PASSAGES** **YES** **NO**

Does the child understand the connection between everyday activities and the Bible?

 Yes No

CHARACTERISTIC

DOES THE LITERATURE COMPLETE THIS CHARACTERISTIC?

VARIETY OF LEARNING METHODS UTILIZED

YES NO

There are both cooperative and individual learning objectives.

Yes No

There are hands-on investigations of the Bible and other materials.

Yes No

There is availability of the following:

Yes No

- Commentaries
- Different versions of the Bible
- Dictionaries
- Concordances

It is inclusive of all cultures in written and visual illustrations.

Yes No

There is a balance of active and quiet activities.

Yes No

There is a balance of guided conversation and engaging listening activities.

Yes No

GUIDING CONVERSATION

YES NO

Teachers lead in guided learning instead of the role of dictator or lecturer.

Yes No

Questions are "Tell me about..."; "What if..."; "How does that make you feel?"; "Tell me what the Bible says."

Yes No

ENCOURAGING CRITICAL THINKING

YES NO

Use "thought questioning" to stimulate thought and deepen understanding.

Yes No

Examples of these would be:

- Determining solutions to problems
- Discussion of advantages/disadvantages of solutions
- Open discussion about the solutions
- Choosing the best solution

HOW TO EVALUATE LITERATURE

Churches have many choices in lines of literature in order to teach children about God. But, is every literature line the same? What are considerations to think about when choosing a literature line? Does it make any difference to the children?

Yes, it makes a difference to the child!

Some considerations of literature would be:

- Evaluating the purpose of the teaching goal
- Background materials for teachers
- Biblical values to be taught to the child

The church will need to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of each line. After an evaluation is completed, an informed decision can then be made.

What characteristics do teachers and parents want to see strengthened in children each year as they participate in church activities? It can be summed up in Matthew 22:36-39.

And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. And a second is like it, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:36-39 (NAS)

Loving God entirely and loving others are the greatest attributes taught to children and should be the first attribute sought in curriculum. Every other attribute can then be categorized into two sections, creating a spiritual foundation and building on that spiritual structure.

CREATING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

Important aspects of the spiritual foundation would include:

- Knowing God
- God created everyone
- God loves each child
- Personal relationship with God
- Having friendships with others

Foundation of knowing God

Our spiritual foundation rests on knowing God.

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever. Isaiah 40:8 (NAS)

Foundation of knowing that God created everyone

God is the creator of the universe and of mankind. And God created man in His own image, in the image of God, He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27 (NAS)

○ **Foundation that God loves each child**

Every child is loved completely by God.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NAS)

○ **Foundation of a personal friendship with God**

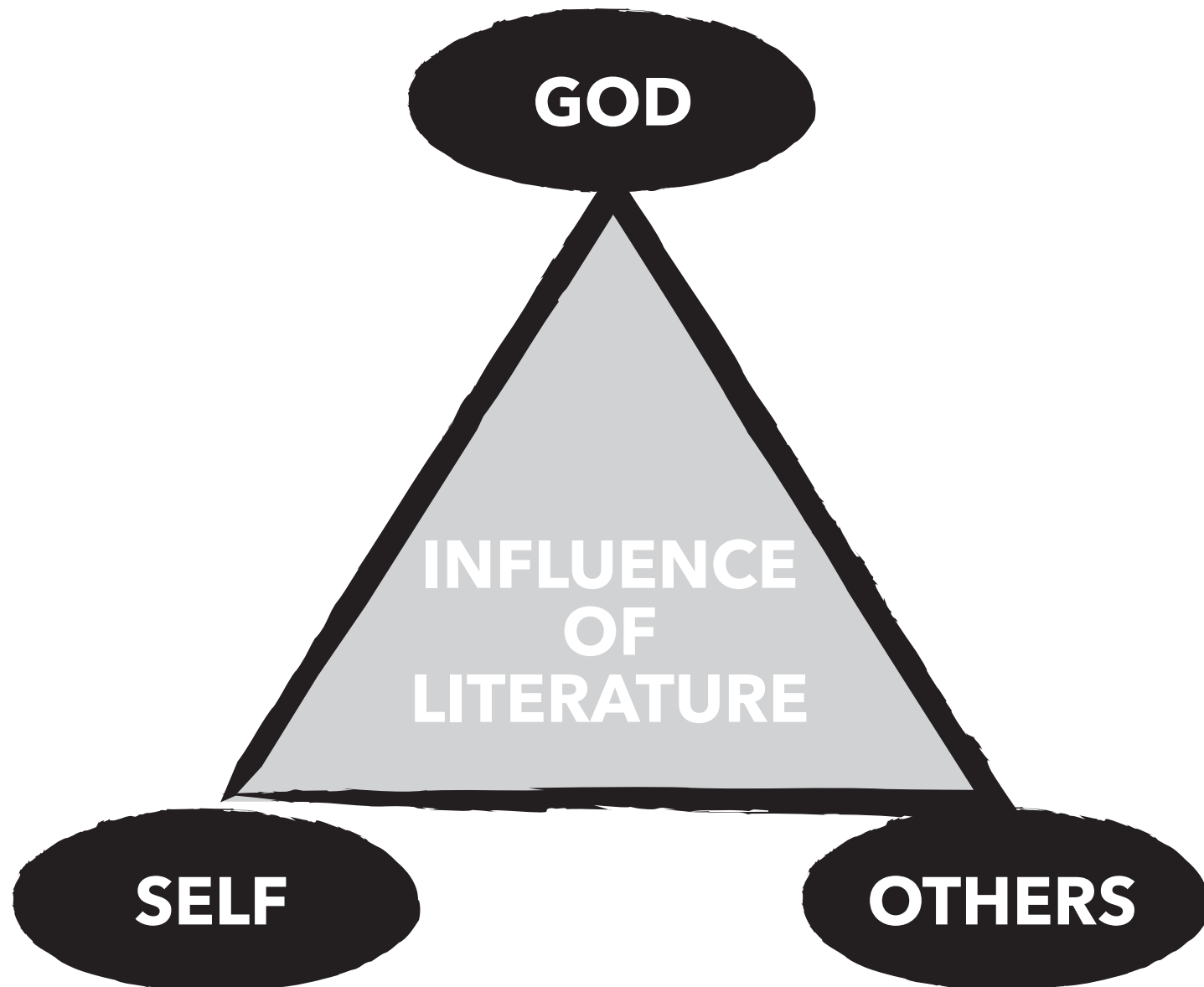
God desires to have a personal relationship with every child and for each one to have a personal relationship with Him.

Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13 (NAS)

○ **Foundation of having friendships with others**

God loves us so completely and totally that He sacrificed His own son in order for each to have eternal life with Him. No greater love has ever been experienced than that of God's Son, Jesus. Because our spiritual foundation is the realization of this agape love toward us, teachers and parents will model the personal growing, thriving friendship they experience with God. They become the models of God's love with the children and others.

And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 1 John 4:14 (NAS)



CHARACTERISTIC

DOES THE LITERATURE COMPLETE THIS CHARACTERISTIC?

AUTHENTIC LEARNING

YES NO

Teaching methods are authentic occurrences in the child's life.

Yes No

It relates to the child's real world.

Yes No

Symbolic language is not used through third grade.

Yes No

Examples of being authentic in actions and thoughts are age-leveled.

Yes No

People are interacting with real objects and real people.

Yes No

There is knowledge that animals do not talk.

Yes No

There is knowledge that animals do not make decisions.

Yes No

Fantasy and cartoon characters are not used.

Yes No

EDUCATIONALLY ON TARGET

YES NO

Age level learning.

Yes No

Learning objects are obvious.

Yes No

Obvious connections to the learning activities.

Yes No

Balanced emphasis on both genders.

Yes No

BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATIONAL STRUCTURE

| CHARACTERISTIC | DOES THE LITERATURE COMPLETE THIS CHARACTERISTIC? | |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| BIBLE BASED | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| Direct reference to Bible passages. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Personal application as related to the passages. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Biblically accurate. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Biblically accurate teaching objectives. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Correct sequence of events. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Correct background. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Strong Bible background materials for teachers. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Balance of Old and New Testament studies. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| DOCTRINALLY SOUND | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| Literature matches what the teacher and the church agree to be doctrinally sound. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Literature gives equal importance to gender and cultural setting. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

If these are the aspects of the spiritual foundation that are to be built for children, what are specific characteristics of literature that need to be emphasized?

THE LITERATURE STRUCTURE

Being Bible based, doctrinally sound, using authentic learning methods, being educationally on target, using a variety of learning methods, guiding conversation, and encouraging critical thinking are vital characteristics of literature that need to be considered.

○ Bible based

Direct reference to Bible passages.

Personal application as related to the Bible passages.

Biblically accurate

Biblically accurate teaching objectives

Correct sequence of events

Correct background setting

Strong Bible background for teachers.

Balance of Old and New Testament studies.

There is knowledge of the fact that animals do not make decisions.

Fantasy and cartoon characters are not used.

○ Educationally on target

Age level learning.

Learning objectives are obvious connections to the learning activities.

It is balanced with the emphasis on both genders.

○ Variety of learning methods utilized

There are both cooperative and individual learning activities.

There is hands-on investigation of the Bible and other materials.

There is availability of the following:

Commentaries

Different versions of the Bible

Dictionaries

Concordances

It is inclusive of all cultures in written and visual illustrations.

There is a balance of active and quiet activities.

There is a balance of guided conversation and engaging listening activities.

○ Guiding Conversation

Teachers demonstrate interest in the children.

Questions should be "Tell me about..."; "What if..."; "How does that make you feel?"; "Tell me about the Bible truths."

○ Doctrinally sound

Literature matches what the teacher and the church agree to be doctrinally sound.

Literature gives equal importance to gender and cultural setting.

○ Authentic learning

Teaching methods are authentic actions in the child's life.

Literature gives opportunities to discuss how the learning outcomes can apply to everyday life.

Literature is written in terms of the child's real world.

Symbolic language is not used at all through the third grade.

Verbalization and visualization are authentic and in balance.

The illustration of being authentic in actions and thoughts are understood by the child.

People are interacting with real objects and real people.

There is knowledge of the fact that animals do not talk.

○ **Encouraging critical thinking**

Use "thought questioning" to stimulate thought and deepen understanding. Examples of these would be:

- Determining solutions to problems*
- Discussions of advantages/ disadvantages of solutions*
- Open discussion about the solutions*
- Choosing the best solution*

○ **Leading in guided learning**

The child is the center of learning and everything in the environment is directed toward the child. The teacher is there to guide in learning and discovery instead of the role of dictator or lecturer.

BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS

The second aspect of the literature would be to ensure that the child is the center of the literature. Teachers are to teach the child by using the literature. This means that the spiritual development of the child is the reason literature is written and the reason teachers devote their time to teaching. A person who loves and respects the child guides activities and the child learns when a relationship is built with that teacher. If a relationship is not built with the child, it doesn't matter how good the activities are because learning will be diluted.

Some of the aspects of building on the structure are: child centered, activity based, age appropriate, and evangelistically appropriate.

○ **Child centered**

The child is the center of learning. Every activity, every song, every picture, every game is focused toward the child's comprehension.

○ **Activity based**

- What are they learning?
- Do activities have a purpose?
- What do the activities teach?
- Do children have a choice of activities?
- Are the activities age-appropriate?
- Does the child have ownership of the learning?
- Is it interesting, challenging, engaging and relevant to the child's life?

Do the activities encourage a setting of independence as well as a setting of working with others?

Are the children given opportunities to explain and display their work?

Are they given opportunities to discuss application of what they have learned?

○ **Age appropriate**

Does the literature relate the biblical passages to the child's everyday common experience?

Does the reading difficulty match the level of the child? Some of the levels of reading would include:

- At the beginning of kindergarten, no reading.
- At the end of kindergarten, very simple words.
- At the beginning of first grade, very simple words, then a gradual increase in difficulty throughout the year.
- At all other grades a variety of reading difficulty to include all learning levels of children.
- The reading captures and holds the child's attention.

○ **Life application**

Children must experience the connection between the Bible and their everyday lives. Guided conversations, problems and solutions, and present day dialogue must be directed toward the child to help them make the important connections with what the Bible is teaching and their everyday life. If this connection is not made, then the teacher has wasted valuable time. Connection is made when the child is able to verbalize and personalize how the Bible relates to them. This is one attribute that must be consciously done each time learning is accomplished. Unfortunately, it is also the attribute that is most often left out. The teacher must deliberately make the connection and help the child to discover that connection.

CONCLUSION

Choosing literature reflects the educational and philosophical beliefs of the church. Through prayer, understanding of the needs and characteristics of the learner, and making sure the doctrines of the church are emphasized, literature can be chosen that meets these standards. Good luck in the venture of choosing literature!

CHART OF LITERATURE CHARACTERISTICS

As you select literature, use this chart as a guide in that process. Look at the characteristics which are important to you and make sure it is included in the literature.

CREATING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

CHARACTERISTIC

DOES THE LITERATURE COMPLETE THIS CHARACTERISTIC?

Foundation of knowing God.

Yes No

Foundation of knowing that God created every child.

Yes No

Foundation that God loves each child.

Yes No

Foundation of a personal relationship with God.

Yes No

Foundation of friendships with others.

Yes No