



Considering Context

Factors to consider when choosing curriculum and planning educational ministries vary from congregation to congregation. Local, regional, and cultural influences affect the needs of faith communities. Your contextual impact list may include—but is not limited to—area schools on flexible schedules, extracurricular activities 24/7, youth and adults seeking relationships not religion, invisible parents before or after a child’s baptism, isolated or disenfranchised senior adults, and a weak or strong economic environment.

Planning sustainable educational ministries, and selecting the curricula and tools to support your vision, requires churches to consider context. What educational plans and tools are helpful when school is year-round, with breaks every six to eight weeks, instead of only the summer months?

- Offer mini-courses, short-term book studies, and thematic approaches for youth and adult faith formation. **Tools to consider:** [Faith Questions](#), [Being Reformed](#), [Engage](#), [Body & Soul](#), [Lent](#) or [Advent](#) devotional books and studies
- Develop a unit or seasonal approach for elementary children, with optional special content presented and repeated during school breaks. **Tools to consider:** [We Believe](#), [Feasting on the Word Curriculum](#), [Awesome Adventures](#), [We Believe Workshop](#), and [BeTween](#)
- Include multigenerational education, worship, and celebrations throughout the year. **Tools to consider:** [Mission Stories](#), [I Know My Bible](#) in units with all ages, [Gifts of God: The Sacraments](#) video and other tools for sacrament education, and a [Glory to God](#) hymnfest

How do you plan for individuals and families involved in extracurricular activities 24/7?

- Send *We Believe* “For the Home” and the link to extra, interactive activities online or “Tools for Ordinary Time: Prayer” by e-mail.
- Use *Feasting on the Word Curriculum* components *Conversations on the Feast* and *Joining the Feast* to help households make connections between education, worship, and mission anytime and anywhere.
- Introduce youth, adults, and volunteers to [Opening Doors to Discipleship](#), online leader and discipleship courses.

When, where, and how will your congregation address cultural and generational needs, such as youth and adults seeking relationships not religion, invisible parents before or after a child’s baptism, isolated or disenfranchised senior adults, and a weak or strong economic environment?

- Create a culture that nurtures relationships of respect, love, and support through mutual, lifelong partners and mentors of children, youth, and adults beginning long before confirmation—from birth, after first visits or joining the community, and throughout life’s milestones.
- Consider *Feasting on the Word Curriculum* to provide a common biblical text and lens for relational faith sharing.
- Find ways to meet the needs of individuals on their terms at a popular coffee shop they frequent, through a devotion time during children’s choir practice, at a Zumba class after Bible study, with a service project that offers a place to contribute, and through the lows and highs of life.

What cultural influences affect your faith community? How can you plan for the variety of needs? What tools will you need to create a sustainable educational ministry? Consider your context.