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The Use of Rotation Model Sunday School

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A thesis  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of Human Development and Learning  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education

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by  
Heather Renee Jones  
May 2004

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Keywords: Rotation Model, Sunday School, Early Childhood Education

## ABSTRACT

### The Use of Rotation Model Sunday School

by

Heather Renee Jones

As outlined in this paper, Rotation Model (RM) Sunday school employs early childhood education practices. This study investigates the attitudes of parents, children's Sunday school leaders, and children in RM Sunday school compared to those in Non-Rotation Model (NRM) Sunday school. The purpose of the study was to determine if the attitudes of children and adults involved in RM were more positive than children and adults not participating in the model. Thirteen churches in East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia participated in the study. Surveys rating attitudes toward Sunday school were completed by 100 children and 63 adults. Results showed no difference between attitudes toward Sunday school of the children in RM and NRM programs. Adults in this study involved in RM have significantly more positive attitudes toward children's Sunday school than those in NRM. Children's Sunday school attendance was reported for nine Sundays in order to study attendance patterns.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Problem

Many churches in the Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church have begun to implement and/or investigate use of the Rotation Model (RM) for children's Sunday school programming. The RM is a vastly different approach to the traditional Sunday school program. Church leaders spend time investigating the model prior to implementation. The model uses theories and philosophies appropriate for early childhood education. Much of the published Christian education curriculum is not developmentally appropriate and is often far behind education methods in the public schools. However, the RM curriculum includes lessons and activities developmentally appropriate for young children. As Christian educators determine what Sunday school curriculum to use, they often want to determine the program that will have a positive effect on attendance and Bible knowledge and skills. This study investigates the attitudes of parents, children's Sunday school leaders, and children in RM Sunday school compared to those in NRM Sunday school.

#### Significance/Background

Church leaders often want to learn what types of programs, events and publicity will increase Sunday school attendance. The Workshop Rotation Model of Sunday School is a children's Sunday school program which has gained popularity in the past 20 years. Anecdotal evidence suggests the use of RM increases Sunday school attendance and children's retention of Bible knowledge.

In RM programs classrooms are transformed into exciting workshops through appropriate paint, furniture, and decorations. Bible stories and concepts are taught through child-friendly

multimedia workshops. The RM uses art workshops, drama, music, games, audio-video, puppets, storytelling, computers, science, cooking, and any other educational media. Bible stories are taught in all of the workshops for four to six weeks rotating the kids to a different workshop each week. The same teacher is in a workshop each week teaching the same lesson, with age-appropriate modifications, week after week to the different aged classes coming in. “Shepherds” are consistent adult leaders assigned to one age group of children. (Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen, 2000).

The Rotation Model fits with the philosophies of early childhood education in several ways. Early childhood professionals believe children should participate in active learning. The learning experience offered in RM Sunday school invites children to be actively engaged in the curriculum. The physical environment, including organization and aesthetics, is important to early childhood educators. Rotation Model is known for drastic remodeling of classrooms. Children in a RM Sunday school class are provided opportunities to learn through various styles and methods (Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen, 2000). Early childhood professionals value children as individuals; thus, individual learning styles are incorporated into the curriculum. Rotation Model Sunday school is an example of a combination of theories and practices of early childhood professionals implemented in the Christian education arena.

#### Predictions

1. It is predicted there will be a significant difference in Sunday school attendance patterns between first through fifth grade children of medium-sized Holston Annual Conference churches using Rotation Model and churches not using the Rotation Model such that churches using Rotation Model will exhibit more consistent attendance patterns.

2. It is predicted there will be a significant difference as reported on a researcher-developed survey between the attitudes of parents and teachers of children in first through fifth grade attending a Rotation Model Sunday School and parents and teachers of children attending a non-Rotation Sunday school such that parents and teachers of children attending a Rotation Model Sunday school will exhibit more positive attitudes toward Sunday school than non-Rotation parents and teachers.
3. It is predicted there will be a significant difference as reported on a researcher-developed survey between the attitudes of children in first through fifth grade attending a Rotation Model Sunday School and children attending a non-Rotation Sunday school such that children attending a Rotation Model Sunday school will exhibit more positive attitudes toward Sunday school than non-Rotation children.

#### Assumptions

1. It is assumed teachers are delivering curriculum consistently.
2. It is assumed teachers are not using outrageous efforts to increase Sunday school attendance. For example, teachers are not calling to remind children and parents to come to Sunday school each day of the week. Additionally, teachers are not offering children monetary rewards to come to Sunday school.
3. It is assumed those churches claiming to use the RM are following the form of the definition given.
4. It is assumed the children and adults completing the surveys will do so honestly.

#### Limitations

1. Children are not responsible for getting themselves to Sunday school. Parents are ultimately responsible for getting the children to Sunday school.

The “logistics” of church attendance have changed, too. The rise in single-parent households and the reality of children alternating weekends between divorced parents are new challenges to Sunday school attendance and teacher recruitment. The demise of the corner church has further distanced our members from us, both psychologically speaking and in terms of time spent in the car. Restful weekends have gone the way of the hula hoop. Sunday morning now competes for attention during the typical family’s action-packed weekend. (Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen, 2000, p. 8 – 9).

2. There is no standard form of student evaluation of knowledge being used by churches.
3. The weather tends to affect Sunday school attendance and may limit the reliability of the study.
4. Churches may experience internal problems such as change in staff or a death that may influence attendance patterns.
5. Participants’ answers on the Likert scale may reflect the way they think they should feel rather than how they do feel.
6. The principal investigator was not present when the surveys were given.
  - a. It is not certain how the study was presented.
  - b. The contact person may or may not have encouraged participation.

#### Delimitations

The generalizations made from this study may be applicable only to those medium-sized churches in the Holston Conference or churches like those.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### The Workshop Rotation Model

In the past 15 years, many churches across the country have implemented a new Sunday school program. Churches of every denomination have been, and are, trying new approaches to reach children and increase attendance through kid-friendly ways (Labi, 2002). *Multi-Dimensional Learning, The Problem* (Children's Ministries of America [CMA], n.d.) suggested some reasons why Sunday school was in need of a change:

1. We have children once a week for about an hour, but they only come sporadically at best.
2. We scurry to recruit "teachers" to fill our "slots" to be sure all the age groups are covered. And these volunteers actually need to be multi-gifted but are generally not.
3. We can't find enough volunteers who will commit to an every Sunday morning teaching schedule.
4. We use curriculum that may give us a variety of teaching options, but we try to cram it all into one hour in one room with teaching volunteers who are not necessarily good at using this material. We purchase enough for every child, whether they come every week or not (wasting money).
5. We have curriculum that is dependent upon last week's lesson, but the children attending this week might not be the ones who attended last week – review begins to feel pointless (para. 2).

The need for change was obvious. The Sunday school classrooms were beige and did not have the same excitement as even the typical public school classroom. "Today's generation no longer accepts the old excuse for Sunday school, that it's like medicine: 'bad tasting but good for you,'" (Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen, 2000, p. 7).

In 1990 a pair of Christian educators, Melissa Armstrong-Hansche and Neil MacQueen, named their developing Sunday school program "Workshop Rotation Model." The ideas and concepts behind the model were not new. "Essentially, the model is a fresh and practical approach to organizing what we already know and how to do: teach the Bible creatively,"

(Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen, 2000, p. 5). At the time of the model's beginning, Hansche and MacQueen were working with the Sunday school program at the Presbyterian Church in Barrington, Illinois.

“Workshop Rotation Model isn't a curriculum, - it's a design philosophy that seeks to respond to the problems many of us (Christian educators) face in our programs while unleashing in a practical way the creativity already present in congregations” (MacQueen, 2002, para. 2). Churches using RM often made two major changes in their Sunday school programs (Kruzman, n.d.). The first was that they drastically remodeled their Sunday school classrooms into inviting, kid-friendly spaces. The second major change in the program was the method of teaching Sunday school. The teacher stayed in the same room, teaching the same lesson several times, in accordance with his or her gifts, passions, and abilities. The children then rotated to different “workshops” during a rotation. A rotation teaches the same Bible story four to eight weeks, and a workshop is a classroom. Workshops consisted of art, cooking, science, computer, audio-visual, music, storytelling, games, and drama. Churches chose which workshops worked best for their congregation. Students have learned more about the Bible stories presented in Workshop RM because the story has been presented multiple times using varying methods (Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen, 2000).

There was no certain size or denomination of church using the RM. Churches with 10 to 200 children in Sunday school have been recorded using the model. However, some larger churches have spent thousands of dollars creating kid-friendly spaces that the smaller churches were not able to do. No matter the size, anecdotal evidence suggested churches implementing the RM spent a great deal of time, effort, and resources prior to starting the program.

“Some people worry about the continuity that may be lost with this model, the opportunity for one teacher to really get to know the children through the course of the year. The answer: Shepherds” (“Cornerstones,” 1998 – 2002, para. 8). In RM, a shepherd is the constant adult figure for the children. The main purpose of a shepherd was to build a relationship with the children. A shepherd attended Sunday school each Sunday and stayed with a particular class for the course of a school year. The shepherd also helped with attendance, offering, and other bookkeeping-type chores so the teacher could focus on the lesson.

Ways of obtaining curriculum for Sunday school has changed with the use of RM. There are several publishers now printing RM curriculum: Cokesbury – Power Express, Augsburg Fortress – Firelight, Cornerstones, and Potter’s House. However, published curriculum was not available when many churches began using RM. At that time church members resolved this problem by writing their own curriculum. Members often worked with one another and church staff to develop the Bible background material and lesson sets. Churches were able to write the curriculum to specific needs. If a church member wanted to use his or her talents as a carpenter, a lesson was written to fit that need. The website <[www.rotation.org](http://www.rotation.org)> had hundreds of lesson postings for RM. The lessons were posted on the website to be shared (MacQueen, 2002).

The RM does not assume all teachers are multi-talented. The lessons are designed to teach the material using one method at a time. According to Armstrong-Hansche and MacQueen (2000), traditional curriculum tried to do too much; the result was teacher frustration and student overload. Traditional lesson plans tried to use too many learning styles at once, using six or more elements in one lesson. RM curriculum uses simpler lesson plans so that learning can take place at a slower pace (Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen).

The use of RM in Sunday school uses several philosophies and theories of early childhood educators. The content of the following sections of the paper will attempt to define the philosophies and theories, and relate them to RM.

### Multiple Intelligences

Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences suggested people had different ways of perceiving and understanding the world. One definition of intelligence is a "set of skills allowing individuals to find and resolve genuine problems they face," ("Funderstanding," 1998 – 2001, para. 1). Silver, Strong, and Perini (2000) wrote that Gardner defined intelligence as "the ability to solve problems that one encounters in real life, the ability to generate new problems to solve, and the ability to make something or offer a service that is valued in one's culture" (p. 7). Many public school teachers have used Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences in classrooms. There have been many adaptations and interpretations of the theory. In the past 15 years the theory has not only influenced the public school arena, but it has also had an impact on Sunday school programs (O'Donnell, n.d.).

Gardner's intelligences are:

1. Linguistic – the ability to use words and language
2. Logical-Mathematical – the capacity for inductive and deductive thinking, as well as the use of numbers and recognition of abstract patterns
3. Bodily Kinesthetic – the capacity to use one's whole body to express ideas and feelings
4. Visual – the ability to visualize objects and spatial dimensions and create internal images and pictures
5. Musical – the capacity to perceive, transform, and express musical forms

6. Interpersonal – the ability to perceive and make distinctions in the moods, intentions, motivations, and feelings of other people
7. Intrapersonal – the inner state of being, self-reflection, and awareness
8. Naturalist – the ability to perceive and learn from the natural world (Campbell, 1997, para. 36).
9. Existential – the ability to be sensitive to tackling deeper questions of human existence, such as the meaning of life and why we are born (Wilson, 2003, para. 1).

Teachers ought to use curriculum and instruction methods that incorporate all the intelligences; humans are born with nine intelligences. Each person has stronger and weaker intelligences, and many tasks require the use of more than one intelligence (Silver et al., 2000). As with any curriculum, the instructional methods of using multiple intelligences should be appropriate for the content (Campbell, 1997). Teachers have found themselves reaching to make a lesson work while trying to use all nine intelligences. It is best to have the material fit the content than to stretch the lesson just to match an intelligence style. There is no single way to implement using multiple intelligences in the classroom. Gardner suggested looking at each person individually in order to determine intellectual strengths and weaknesses (Weiss, 1999). Children who were provided with a learning environment where any intelligence could be used were more likely to learn than only with linguistic and logical activities, such as with paper and pencil exercises.

### Multiple Intelligences and Rotation Model

At the time RM was gaining momentum, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences was becoming widely accepted. Gardner's nine intelligences have served as a catalyst for RM curriculum (Henderlight, 2002). The RM curriculum is typically written so that the lessons reach

learners of each intelligence style. “Educational research tells us that children tend to be more visual learners and kinesthetic (movement) learners in their childhood, with the capacity to listen and learn (auditory learning) not fully developing until puberty” (Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen, 2000, p. 27). This information serves as a basis for the workshop-style curriculum used by RM. RM employs the use of different intelligence styles through visual lessons, kinesthetic lessons, and opportunities for intrapersonal learners as well.

### Learning Styles

Research has indicated individuals perceive and process information in different ways. The notion of learning styles first appeared in literature in the 1950s (*Learning Styles*, 1991). It did not influence education until the 1970s when several theorists developed definitions and learning style inventories. Learning styles were found to be important to use in the classroom, and the definitions were more general than that of multiple intelligences.

A widely accepted definition of learning styles is they are “characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment” (*Learning Styles*, 1991, p. 16). Cognitive styles included sensory preferences and related more to how information was being used. Affective styles included characteristics such as social motivation and persistence. Physiological styles consisted of reactions to the physical environment, including noise levels and time of day preferences. In relation to early childhood education, knowledge of these learning styles has helped teachers be aware of children’s individual needs. Schools that have used learning styles have had teachers willing to try new approaches, have sought resources, and teachers showed respect for diversity and individual differences (*Learning Styles*).

Three primary learning modes for learners were classified as auditory, visual, and kinesthetic (Tileston, 2000). Auditory learners retained information by hearing it; however, that does not mean lengthy lectures were the only way these students learn. The attention span of the child was considered along with the content of the information. “Visual learners are those who need a mental model that they can see” (Tileston, p. 16). Concrete models were appropriate to help children grasp difficult information. Kinesthetic learners grasped information best through movement and touch. Teachers who implemented practices for kinesthetic learners allowed these children to stand and move around the classroom.

### Learning Styles and Rotation Model

Traditional Sunday school curriculum is not normally sensitive to the fact that people have different learning styles (Henderson, n.d.). Rotation Model curriculum allows flexibility for teachers to take learning styles into account in the classroom. Traditional lesson plans tried to do too much; the plans crammed too many styles of learning in to one lesson (Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen, 2000). Rotation Model curriculum focuses on a specific learning style with each lesson; thus, if children attend more than one Sunday during a rotation they will experience the story using different learning styles. Children participating in a RM Sunday school may do a movement activity, create art, or listen to a story. All children are reached with this model (Henderson).

### Brain-Based Learning

#### Basic Brain Facts

Before implementing the brain-based learning theory in a classroom, an educator must become familiar with some basic brain facts. “There is new technology that allows scientists to see and measure the activity of the brain. These are called PET scans (positron-emission

tomography)” (DeBord, n. d., para. 1). This, combined with other technology advancements, has allowed scientists to determine how new information affects the brain. At the time of birth humans have all the neurons they will ever have. “The neurons are the functioning core for the brain and the entire nervous system” (Sousa, 1995, p. 4). The neurons change by becoming more complex. There are two ways the neurons change: through synapses and myelination. A synapse is a microscopic gap between dendrites along an axon, connecting the neurons. The connections are made depending on stimuli or signals the brain gets from the setting. “The musical nourishment and enrichment of young children stimulates the formation of connections (synapses) and the growth of branching extensions (dendrites) in the brain” (Green, 1999, p. 687). A child’s brain makes more connections than an adult’s brain. The richer the environment, the more connections are made. The brain strengthens and prunes connections that have been made. “This process continues throughout our lives, but it appears to be at its greatest between the ages of 2 and 11” (Sousa, 1995, p. 5). The time in which pruning occurs is termed the “critical period.” Not all brain functions have a critical period, and researchers do not know why there is a critical period. Myelin is a fatty substance formed around well-used axons; myelination increases the speed of impulse transmission and reduces interference from nearby reactions.

### Principles of Brain-Based Learning

Brain-based learning is a theory based on the development and structure of how the brain learns. The theory was based on the notion that learning will occur as long as the brain is not prohibited from fulfilling its normal processes. Caine and Caine (1994) listed 12 principles of brain-based learning:

1. The brain is a parallel processor.

2. Learning engages the entire physiology.
3. The search for meaning is innate.
4. The search for meaning occurs through patterning.
5. Emotions are critical to patterning.
6. The brain processes parts and wholes simultaneously.
7. Learning involves both focused attention and peripheral perception.
8. Learning always involves conscious and unconscious processes.
9. We have at least two different types of memory: a spatial memory system and a set of systems for rote learning.
10. We understand and remember best when facts and skills are embedded in natural, spatial memory.
11. Learning is enhanced by challenge and inhibited by threat.
12. Each brain is unique (pp. 88 – 96).

An implication of these principles was that the brain is social. Another implication was that students were capable of learning more than was originally thought. If these principles were sound, educators must move away from the traditional teaching methods. The principles of brain-based learning “provide guidelines for defining and selecting programs and methodologies” (Caine & Caine, 1994, p. 87) for teachers.

### Implications for Teachers

Educators should be “expanding the quantity and quality of ways in which the learners are exposed to content and context,” (Caine & Caine, 1991, p. 5). The brain learns best in real-life immersion – when the content of information is presented within context. When a child decides to play a team sport such as soccer, he or she has a desire to be on the field playing. If

coaches spend hours talking to the children about technique and rules of the game before setting foot on the playing field, it is likely the children will have lost interest in participating in the game. The same concept applies in any type of educational setting; children want the opportunity to experience learning for themselves rather than being passive throughout their education. Rotation Model is one example of Christian education in which children experience learning (Miller & Norton, 2003).

Teachers must realize students' brains work best with the absence of threat. "Threat – real or perceived – significantly restricts, if not eliminates, students' ability to fully engage in the learning process" (Kovalik & Olsen, 2001, p. 1.29). In order for students to feel free of threat, teachers can create a safe environment, know individual students, and provide feedback to children. The result will be students who have the confidence to think and develop their own ideas.

Recent research has shown that the brain and body are closely related (Kovalik & Olsen, 2001). Only animals that move have brains. This means that movement is fundamental to learning. The brain often works and functions by the messages it gets from the body. Teachers must reshape what happens in the classroom in order for students' brains to be actively working. "Given what we know today, competitive sports should be extracurricular and P.E. should be renamed 'movement to enhance learning' and become the province of the classroom teacher" (Kovalik & Olsen, p. 2.13). Emotions are tied to movement, and movement is a quick way to add fun to any activity. Teachers can add movement to activities already planned, particularly with music and body language (Kovalik).

The brain can go down many paths at one time; thus, more than one subject can be taught at a time. In determining what type of curriculum to use, how to instruct students and how to

assess learning, teachers must remember the brain is complex. In brain-based learning, curriculum must be designed around interests of students in order to make knowledge meaningful. Methods of instruction must be varied and flexible. Caine and Caine (1991) suggested brain-based classroom methods include group discovery, social interaction, and integrated subject matter. Students in a brain-based classroom are able to work in teams and encouraged to learn outside the classroom. Students may be able to monitor and enhance their own learning, and be able to assess their learning preferences. Learning should be based on real situations in which the brain is able to make new connections.

### Brain-Based Learning and Rotation Model

There has not been a significant amount of literature written connecting the practices of RM to brain-based learning. However, the theories and practices in RM literature and practices support brain-based learning methods.

Armstrong-Hansche and MacQueen (2000) discuss the brain as being able to process information in different ways:

The human brain is a multisensory marvel, soaking up input from its external world, arranging and linking it in countless ways at multiple levels. The more multisensory the learning, the more broadly and deeply it is stored and recalled. Because the brain is wired this way, conscientious teaching must be wired this way as well in order to make the most of our students' capacity to learn (p. 27).

The RM curriculum is designed to provide multisensory, interactive lessons for children, thus increasing the students' ability to process and store the information. Not only the lessons, but the classroom environments, promote multi-dimensional learning, according to *Multi-Dimensional Learning, The Solution* (CMA, n.d., para. 2). The teaching and environment of RM creates brain-compatible Sunday school classrooms.

## Parent/Teacher/Community Involvement

Teachers, families, and communities must work together to provide children with optimal learning opportunities. Every facet of educating children was interrelated with parent, teacher, and community dynamics.

Teachers serve as role models for children and are members of a learning community with the children. As indicated by Sayre and Gallagher (2001), teachers should display a willingness to accept change, be open to discovery and exploration, and be ready to form a hypothesis and learn with students.

Families and parents play a role in children's education first by providing basic survival needs. The actions of family members serve as a model for children, and family members provide guidance for children as well. It is important for parents and family members of children to communicate goals and specific routines with teachers in an attempt to work as a team. In the article *Parent's Involvement in Child's Education is Single Most Important Factor in Academic Success*, Says Bonnie Adama, National Board Certified Teacher (2003) it was reported that:

Decades of educational research state that an involved parent contributes overwhelmingly to his/her child's grades and test scores, school attendance, quality of homework, positive attitudes and behavior at school, likelihood of graduation, and desire to enroll in higher education. In many ways, parents are the essence of their child's education; parents have the power! (para. 3).

Families look different today than even 10 years ago. Children live in blended families, single-parent families, with grandparents, etc. No matter who the child lives with, educational support from home is important.

“Children are competent individuals who must develop a sense of trust not only with their parents but also with the community” (Sayre & Gallagher, 2001, p. 202). Community members must play an active role in children's lives if children are to become responsible members of a

community. Community members gain the trust and respect of children as they advocate for children and are actively involved in the education of children.

### Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model

Urie Bronfenbrenner, a developmental psychologist, developed a model describing an ecological systems theory. The model consists of four different levels: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Berns, 2004). The model allows a child's development to be studied as it relates to his or her family, school, community, and society. The child plays a role at each level of the model.

The microsystem consists of a person's immediate setting at a particular time. Family, peers, school, and one's neighborhood are included in a student's microsystem. The people and places included in a microsystem are those with whom an individual has the most direct contact. The mesosystem is made up of relations between two or more of a person's microsystems. For example, a child who was not doing well in school may experience turmoil at home. The exosystem is a social setting that affects children but one in which they do not have an active role. The exosystem is comprised of a school board, city council, or a parent's employer, to name a few. The macrosystem is the ideology in which a person lives. The United States, African-American ancestry, and the Roman Catholic Church are examples of a person's macrosystem.

At each level of the model children are affected both directly and indirectly. Also, children's actions, ideas, and being affect society at each level. People are experiencing socialization as they encounter society at each level of the model.

## Parent/Teacher/Community Involvement and Rotation Model

A whole church approach is required to successfully implement RM. “The Workshop Rotation Model and its curricula can be a way to restore the ‘eco-system’ of home, work, school and church” (Claus, 2001). One church reported that the implementation of RM had an impact on the entire congregation (Kruzman, n.d.). Volunteers of all ages have worked together to transform classrooms and curriculum. According to anecdotal evidence, church members who had not been in the children’s area of the church in years have volunteered time painting or building for the new Rotation workshops. The involvement of parents and congregation members in RM does not end when the classrooms are transformed. After seven months of using the RM, one church reported the number of adults involved in Sunday school had increased by 260% (Derden, n.d.). Because lessons can be matched with skills of congregation members, teachers feel comfortable with the material. Traditional curriculum may never use the talents of a wood crafter; whereas, a RM church may design a lesson especially for the wood crafter to teach.

### Physical Environment

“Any classroom speaks, even when empty of people” (Smith & Harris, 2002, p. 5). When walking into a classroom, a person can determine if something exciting is happening or if no one cares what is happening in the room. Thus, the physical environment of a classroom affects student learning. Agron (1993) wrote of a survey that asked teachers: “To what extent do you feel the quality of learning is affected by the physical environment?” The responses were:

- very significantly – 81%
- somewhat – 19%
- not at all – 0.52% (para. 12).

Teachers must make efforts to improve the classroom physical environment.

Classrooms should be clean in order for students to remain healthy. “Somehow we have come to accept a second-rate standard for cleanliness in our schools” (Kovalik & Olsen, 2001, p. 7.6). Classrooms should be free of stains, dirt, molds, and allergens. Teachers can involve the students and parents in keeping a clean classroom. It is also important for classrooms to be well lit and well ventilated. Oxygen is one of the two most important fuels for the brain. Oxygen is received from fresh air (Kovalik & Olsen, 2001). Learning is inhibited without fresh air. Learning is enhanced in classrooms with adequate natural light, good electric lighting, or both (Stickler, 2001).

It is necessary for the aesthetics of a classroom to be beautiful because it makes students happy and inspires creativity (Isbell & Exelby, 2001). Isbell and Exelby wrote that one way to improve the aesthetics of a classroom was to decrease the amount of clutter. Too much clutter prevents the classroom from functioning effectively. A classroom can, and should, look used and lived in without clutter.

The arrangement and design of furniture and space in a classroom are factors in implementing educational goals (David & Wright, 1975). A symbolic message of what one expects to happen in a particular place is communicated through the physical and special aspects of the room. David and Wright provided examples of such messages. When a teacher’s desk was isolated and placed on a raised platform, it implied the teacher had a higher status and would give knowledge to students. A large, open center in the middle of the classroom invited movement from students.

### Physical Environment and Rotation Model

The state of many children's Sunday school classrooms in churches that have now adopted the RM were "sadder than sad" prior to the implementation of RM (Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen, 2000, p. 13). Children's classrooms have tended to be cluttered with furniture, surrounded by beige concrete walls, and decorated with faded construction paper crafts. Armstrong-Hansche and MacQueen wrote that whatever change in curriculum that was made, it would have little effect if children were in the same uninspired classrooms.

The RM Sunday school classrooms have been transformed into multimedia workshops. The classroom, or workshop, may contain tents, theater seats, or brightly colored murals painted on the walls. The rooms are designed to look like the setting of a particular workshop (Cornerstones, 1998 – 2002). For example, the storytelling room may be set around a fire with tents while a drama room may be created as a news station. Church leaders transforming classrooms spend a lot of time creating the workshop environment, and no two workshops are the same. "The rule of thumb for the transformation of classrooms into workshops is simple: form follows function" (Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen, 2000 p. 26). Some churches have no way around using classrooms with concrete walls. Therefore, some of these churches have used paint to create temple walls on the concrete blocks. Anecdotal evidence suggests churches that have implemented the RM have more organized, less cluttered classrooms.

### Active Learning

Students in traditional classrooms are generally involved in passive learning when they only read and listen to information. However, information is not typically retained through passive manners of learning. Students retain a greater amount of information when participating in active learning. When a student is engaged in active learning, she or he is in control of the

learning, experiencing the learning through hands-on ways and integrating new information. Information develops meaning for the active learner. “Learning by ‘doing’ is a theme many educators have stressed since John Dewey’s convincing argument that children must be engaged in an active quest for learning and new ideas” (Hendrikson, 1984, para. 2).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) listed the following tenants of active learning. The philosophy holds that learning:

1. is a process of engagement with resources and ideas,
2. involves people solving problems and discovering new things,
3. contributes to personal development and social change,
4. occurs sometimes in isolation, but more often in collaboration with others,
5. ignites creativity. (Yelland, 2000, p. 40).

Teachers using the active learning theory make an effort to engage children in learning rather than expect children to merely receive information.

### Vygotsky

A tenant of the active learning theory is collaboration with others. Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory stated humans learn from one another. Vygotsky said child development is the result of the interactions between children and their social environment (Leong, 2001) and is affected by culture. Children interact with parents, teachers, and classmates. Leong wrote that children have interactions with books, toys, and culturally specific practices. “Children are active partners in these interactions, constructing knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 48). Interest in the sociocultural development of children flourished in the 1990s; educators examined this view and how it related to teaching practices (Goffin & Wilson, 2001). Thoughts about sociocultural development also led to the reexamination of the first position statement of the NAEYC on developmentally appropriate practice. The revision included an awareness of the

social context of children's development, including an understanding of families as a context for learning and development (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

The two educational concepts Vygotsky is most known for are scaffolding and the zone of proximal development. A scaffold refers to "anything that a teacher or a peer tutor provides that enables the child to perform a skill or master a concept" (Vinson, 2001, para. 2). The zone of proximal development is defined as "a dynamic range of performance defined as the distance between a child's abilities when working alone and what she can accomplish with the assistance of a more accomplished member of culture" (Goffin & Wilson, 2001, p. 205). Children learn to become functioning members of society as they participate within their zone of proximal development.

#### Active Learning and Rotation Model

According to *Multi-Dimensional Learning, Why this Approach?* (CMA, n.d., para. 2), the RM approach to Sunday school works because we remember:

- 10% of what we read
- 20% of what we hear
- 30% of what we see
- 50% of what we see and hear
- 70% of what we say
- 90% of what we say and do
- 100% of what we experience

Children attending a RM Sunday School are more likely to remember the material because they have experienced it through various means. Children have opportunities to learn the story using all their senses as indicated by *Multi-Dimensional Learning, The Solution* (CMA, n.d.). Because children rotate to different workshops each week, they are exposed to the story or lesson in different formats. If a child does not understand the story one week, maybe he/she will the next week (Cornerstones, 1998 – 2002).

RM invites teachers to be creative in the instrumentation of Sunday school lessons. Research has proven creative methods of teaching are essential, not just a way to keep kids entertained (MacQueen, 2002). Lisa Moeller is quoted as saying, “Rotation seems more engaging for the children. ... It’s very interactive and meets them where they are” (Henderlight, 2002, para. 21). As students become actively involved in lessons where their senses are stimulated, “behavior problems diminish and cheerful participation increases” (Kruzman, n.d., para. 4). Being active in the learning allows children to integrate the information they are learning.

### Technology in Early Childhood Education

Technology is a part of everyday life for all humans. Early childhood educators believe in giving children real life and hands-on experiences. Therefore, technology must be a part of early childhood education. “Children as young as three years of age have been observed to engage in meaningful interactions with the computer” (Isenberg & Jalongo, 2003, p.137). Advocates of technology use argue children make powerful discoveries using technology, while protestors argue such events (children making powerful discoveries using technology) are not generalizable (Isenberg & Jalongo).

The elements of technology in a classroom supplements – does not replace – quality early childhood learning experiences, according to a position statement regarding technology and young children (NAEYC, 1996). The use of technology must integrate with other curriculum. According to Roblyer (2003, p. 11) there are several rational reasons for using technology in education:

1. Motivation – Technology gains students’ attention and increases perceptions of control
2. Unique instructional capabilities – Students are able to access resources and tools

3. Support for new instructional approaches – Encourages shared intelligence and problem solving
4. Increased teacher productivity – Helps with accurate record-keeping tasks
5. Required skills for an information age – Students gain technology, information and visual literacy

When used properly – not as a reward or a place to pass time – technology boosts classroom learning. Technology use provides for creative problem solving opportunities, self-guided instruction, and reflective exploration. The use of technology in the classroom enhances children's social and cognitive abilities (NAEYC, 1996).

Teachers must have adequate training and belief in technology in order for its use to be successful. Teachers must make decisions about what software to use. The reason most given to determine quality software is that the program is interactive and that the child is in control (Isenberg & Jalongo, 2003). The control must be meaningful so the use leads to active learning. Teachers encourage family involvement in technology. Entire families tend to become more interested in learning with the use of technology. Even if teachers have access to the most up-to-date equipment, they must learn to operate the technology efficiently before implementing it in the classroom.

### Technology and the Rotation Model

Several RM workshops incorporate the use of technology. Armstrong-Hansche and MacQueen (2000) list drama, audiovisual, and computer as workshops using technology on a regular basis. Students in the drama workshop may work with puppets, create their own script, or act out a Bible story. Videotaping the dramas for immediate feedback has proven to help focus the children on what has taken place during the class time (Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen). The audiovisual workshop may make use of a television, projector, VCR, and DVD player. Computers are becoming more of an essential part of educating children. Children are

familiar with computers and get excited about using them (Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen). One reason why the use of computers in Sunday school is acceptable is that “most churches have more computer-literate parishioners than biblically literate parishioners” (Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen, p. 45). Christian education software is available. The software includes quiz-making tests to reinforce learning, creative writing, Bible research tools, memory-verse games, and more (Armstrong-Hansche & MacQueen). The uses of technology in Sunday school are numerous; however, the technology used in RM, especially the computer lab, requires constant maintenance.

### Learning Centers

Learning centers are a staple in most early childhood classrooms. Learning centers are designed to nurture total development of children (Isbell, 1995). When a classroom environment is constructed into learning centers the space is planned so children can function autonomously (Greenman, 1988). Learning centers “consist of ways of organizing and presenting material to children that make it possible to incorporate children’s different learning styles” (Stickler, 2001, p. 48). Specific learning centers and their components do not have to be permanent in a classroom (Greenman). Learning that takes place through learning centers is both teacher-directed and self-directed (Isbell). Teachers design the environment and give children choices about what learning center in which to work. Isbell suggests children work cooperatively and experience the world through learning centers.

### Learning Centers and the Rotation Model

Learning centers can be used in different ways for Sunday school. There are several reasons for using learning centers:

1. Learning centers offer children choices of activities.

2. Learning centers provide active discovery opportunities.
3. Learning centers cut down on the boredom factor.
4. Learning centers offer the children opportunities to share and talk with other children as they explore and learn.
5. Learning centers affirm each child as a child of God with unique skills and abilities.
6. Learning centers are fun! (Stickler, 2001, p. 48)

The RM workshops are learning centers. The children rotate to a different learning center each week. Children in RM Sunday school are given the opportunity to experience stories and concepts in different ways. There is a set schedule for children to rotate to the different workshops (learning centers) each Sunday. Children are not given a choice of which workshop in which to participate; they participate in a different workshop each Sunday.

#### What to Expect with Rotation Model

Early childhood practices mentioned above have positive results in classrooms. Therefore, it can be expected that RM will have positive results in Sunday school classrooms. The practices RM uses are developmentally appropriate for children. “Developmentally appropriate practice is based on knowledge about how children develop and learn” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 9). When decisions are based on developmentally appropriate practices, the quality of children’s programming increases.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

#### Participants

Twenty churches were randomly selected to participate in the study. The sample was taken from medium-sized (85 – 225 average worship attendance) churches in the Holston Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. At the time of this study, there were 15 medium-sized churches using RM Sunday School and 159 medium-sized churches not using RM Sunday school. The names of the 15 churches using RM were placed in a hat. The names were drawn one at a time and written down in the order they were drawn out of the hat. The names of the 159 churches not using RM were placed in a hat and drawn one at a time. The names were written down in the order in which they were drawn. Once the names of the churches were drawn, 10 churches using RM and 10 churches not using the model were invited to participate in the study. The churches were asked to participate in the study in the order in which they were drawn. The churches were all from Southwest Virginia and Central and Northeast Tennessee. With the help of the Holston Conference Children's Coordinator, a contact person from each church was named. The contact persons were pastors, church staff members, and children's ministry volunteers. The principal investigator extended an invitation to participate in the study by telephoning each contact person. After each of the contact persons agreed to participate in the study, the principal investigator asked the contact person during this initial conversation if attendance records at his or her church were kept up-to-date. If so, the church was asked to participate in the study. The principal investigator sent a letter (Appendix A) to each of the contact persons along with the appropriate forms. The participants were parents, teachers, and students in Sunday school.

There were 43 CASS from NRM churches and 57 CASS from RM churches. There were 29 AACSS returned from NRM churches and 34 AACSS from RM churches.

### Instrumentation

A pilot test was conducted to determine the reliability and validity of the children's surveys (Appendix B). The consistency and content of the Children's Attitudes Toward Sunday School Survey (CASS) was tested with 18 students in first through fifth grade. The participants in the field study were from a church not participating in the actual research but from the same geographical area as the churches participating in the study. The original CASS included 23 questions. A copy of this survey is in Appendix B. The principal investigator was present at the church to administer the surveys for the pilot study. The principal investigator gave the children instructions on completing the survey. Some of the children asked Sunday school leaders to read the questions.

Items in the Children's Attitudes Toward Sunday School Survey were belief statements (think), behavior statements (do), and affective statements (like). The format for the statements was based on the Perceived Competence Scale for Children developed by Harter (1982). Each item in the CASS describes two different groups of children. Examples of items on the CASS are "Some kids think going to Sunday school is fun but some kids don't think Sunday school is fun." and "Some kids think they have boring Sunday school teachers but some kids think they have exciting Sunday school teachers." When the scale is administered, children are first instructed to choose which of two groups of children, described in the statements, they are most like. Under each statement are two boxes (one large, one small) for marking answers. The larger box is checked if children feel they are a lot like the children described in the statement. The smaller box is checked if the children felt they are only a little like the children described in

the item. This particular format was chosen because it is appropriate for use with school age children.

Results from the original CASS were analyzed to determine reliability (internal consistency). Item-total correlations and overall internal consistency were examined. Items for the final survey were selected based on high item-total correlations and high variability. This resulted in three questions being dropped. For practical and logistical reasons, another eight questions were dropped. After being present for the pilot test, the principal investigator determined that no more than 12 questions would be suitable for Sunday school, as the children and teachers were pressed for time and had difficulty completing the longer survey. The investigator used her best judgment in retaining the 12 questions that seemed the most important. Cronbach's alpha for the original 23 item CASS was .91.

Two researcher-developed Likert-type opinion surveys, the children's survey (CASS) mentioned above, and an adult survey (Adult Attitudes Toward Children's Sunday School, AACSS), (Appendixes C and D) as well as a chart for attendance (Appendix E) were used as instrumentation for the study. The children were given a CASS (see Appendix C) to complete. The items in the CASSs were created from personal experience, consulting with the Holston Conference Children's Coordinator, and consulting with early childhood professors. Examples of the items are:

Some kids think Sunday school not important.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids think Sunday school is important.

A little like me

A lot like me

Some kids learn a lot in Sunday school.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't learn a lot in Sunday school.

A little like me

A lot like me

This format is appropriate for young children because there is something visual with the words.

Items were scored such that “4” reflected the most positive attitudes toward Sunday school and “1” reflected the least positive attitudes toward Sunday school. The results of the CASS between and among the churches using RM and churches not using RM were analyzed using a one-tailed t-test. If necessary, a post hoc would have been used to determine the significance of the results. The level of significance used in determining whether or not to accept the prediction was alpha level .05.

There was a separate survey for adults (Appendix D) to complete. The quantitative portion of the AACSS consisted of statements in which the participants were to answer “strongly agree,” “somewhat agree,” “neutral,” “somewhat disagree,” or “strongly disagree.” There were 15 items on this AACSS. Examples of items on this AACSS are “The children in my church retain the knowledge they are presented in Sunday school.” and “As an adult, I am proud of my church’s Sunday school program.” The data from the quantitative portion of the AACSS was entered. There were 20 adult AACSSs from non-rotation model churches and 34 adult AACSSs from RM churches. Items were scored such that “5” reflected the most positive attitudes toward children’s Sunday school and “1” reflected the least positive attitudes toward children’s Sunday school.

The AACSS consisted of qualitative components as well. There were open-ended questions concerning Sunday school curriculum and environment. An example of a qualitative question is “What curriculum do you use? Why?”

The contact persons were asked to complete the attendance chart (Appendix E) for nine Sundays. The children to be included in the attendance reporting were to be in first through fifth grade.

### Procedures

Ten churches from the Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church using RM and 10 churches not using the RM for children’s Sunday school were randomly selected to participate in the study. The churches from which the samples came were medium-sized churches (an average Sunday worship attendance of 85 – 225 people), as determined by the Holston Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. A prerequisite of participation was keeping well-maintained attendance records. A contact person from each of the 20 churches was designated to communicate with the principal investigator. The contact person was then asked to report children’s attendance in Sunday school for two months – the Sundays in October and November of 2003. A chart was given to each of the contact persons to report the attendance records consistently. The contact person was asked to return the form to the principal investigator in the self-addressed envelope.

The surveys had a code attached so the principal investigator would know which surveys had been returned. The principal investigator mailed the surveys to the church contact persons. Each of the church contact persons were asked to distribute surveys to Sunday school teachers and parents of children in the first through fifth grades. A letter (Appendix F) from the principal investigator was given to each of the participants with the surveys. Those people

completing the surveys returned them to the contact person, who mailed them back in the self-addressed and stamped envelope provided by the principal investigator.

The contact person was also asked to distribute the student surveys. When distributing the surveys, the contact person explained their purpose to the students, or asked the Sunday school teacher to do so. The student read a letter written by the principal investigator (Appendix G). Informed consent was received from parents of children's participating in the study. The contact person, parents, and Sunday school teachers were available to help the students complete the surveys. The survey participants had the option to stop completing the survey at any point, without penalty. The contact person gathered the student surveys and returned them to the principal investigator. The data gathered were compiled, analyzed, and discussed.

Information about the participants from each church was retained in order to communicate with these persons. The information about the church contact persons was retained in order to communicate the findings of the study to the appropriate churches. It was important to know the church codes so the data could be entered appropriately as being a Rotation or non-rotation church. A follow-up letter (Appendix H) was written and mailed to the contact persons at each of the participating churches.

The independent variable in this study was the type of curriculum the church uses: RM or NRM. Other independent variables including grade, sex, and church were not analyzed as predictions had not been made concerning these factors. A confounding variable was the degree to which a church has transformed classrooms into "workshops." Some churches using the RM have implemented the curriculum without remodeling classrooms. Other churches have drastically remodeled classrooms in an effort to provide an exciting learning environment for the

children. An extraneous confounding variable is the competence of teachers. Especially when relying on volunteers, teacher quality and competence will vary.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This study investigated the attitudes of parents, children's Sunday school leaders, and children in RM Sunday school compared to those in non-rotation model (NRM) Sunday school. The purpose of the study was to determine if the attitudes of children and adults involved in RM were more positive than children and adults not participating in the model. Thirteen churches in East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia participated in the study. Two surveys (CASS and AACSS) rating attitudes toward Sunday school were completed by 100 children and 63 adults. Twenty churches were contacted and agreed to participate in the study. Thirteen churches participated. Cronbach's alpha for the 12-item version of the CASS was .84. Cronbach's alpha for the AACSS was .86. Three predictions were each tested using a t-test.

#### Test of Predictions

##### Prediction 1

It was predicted there would be a significant difference in Sunday school attendance patterns between first through fifth grade children of medium-sized Holston Annual Conference churches using Rotation Model and churches not using the Rotation Model such that churches using Rotation Model will exhibit more consistent attendance patterns.

The first prediction was not supported. In fact, a significant relationship was found,  $t(68) = 1.08, p < .05$ , but not in the expected direction. NRM (mean = 5.41) model programs reported more consistent patterns than RM (mean = 4.71) programs. The data from the attendance charts was compared between the churches using a one-tailed t-test. There were 49 children from non-rotation churches and 21 children from RM churches entered in the attendance portion of the study.

### Prediction 2

It was predicted there would be a significant difference as reported on a researcher-developed survey between the attitudes of parents and teachers of children in first through fifth grade attending a Rotation Model Sunday School and parents and teachers of children attending a non-Rotation Sunday school such that parents and teachers of children attending a Rotation Model Sunday school will exhibit more positive attitudes toward Sunday school than non-Rotation parents and teachers.

The second prediction was supported,  $t(61) = 2.64, p < .05$ . There were significant differences between the adult attitudes of NRM classes (mean = 3.78) and the RM classes (mean = 4.12).

### Prediction 3

It was predicted there would be a significant difference as reported on a researcher-developed survey between the attitudes of children in first through fifth grade attending a Rotation Model Sunday School and children attending a non-Rotation Sunday school such that children attending a Rotation Model Sunday school will exhibit more positive attitudes toward Sunday school than non-Rotation children.

The third prediction was not supported,  $t(98) = .080, ns$ . There were no real or significant differences between the children's attitudes of NRM classes (mean = 3.50) and the RM classes (mean = 3.51).

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to determine if children and adults involved in RM Sunday school had more positive attitudes toward Sunday school than children and adults in NRM Sunday school. Researcher-developed attitudinal surveys were used as instrumentation for this study. There were 100 children who participated in the study and 63 adults who participated.

#### Significant Findings

There was no significant difference in the attitudes of children in RM and NRM Sunday school. Adults involved in RM Sunday school were more positive toward Sunday school than adults involved in NRM Sunday school. In this study, children attending a NRM Sunday school have more consistent attendance patterns than children attending a RM Sunday school program.

Although the findings regarding children's attitudes between RM and NRM programs were not significant, there are a number of explanations for this. Children may have answered in what they deemed socially appropriate ways; in other words, they may think they are supposed to report liking Sunday school. This may be one factor as to why the results of the two sets of children surveys were so much alike. The quality of the Rotation program may be another factor. The Rotation churches participating in the study have been using the model for a limited time (1 to 2 ½ years). As Sunday school leaders become more familiar with the RM, they may be able to implement a higher quality program.

The data did show a significant difference between the attitudes of adults involved in RM and those who are not. The parents and leaders of churches that have implemented the RM had made a decision that the Sunday school program needed to be changed. The change had been made, and the parents and leaders seem to be pleased with the new Sunday school program. This

finding is important because adults are the way children get to Sunday school. When adults are happy with Sunday school they are more likely to make the effort to bring children to Sunday school. Also, when Sunday school teachers are excited about being at Sunday school, that feeling will be transferred to the children. If adult's attitudes are positive, the attitudes of the children are more likely to be positive. The teachers who feel positively toward Sunday school are more likely to spend time in preparation for teaching; thus, the quality of the program will be high.

The attendance data showed that the children attending non-rotation Sunday school are more consistent attenders than those children attending a RM program. One factor in this report could be that RM programs have more visitors than NRM programs. If visitors were recorded in the attendance, the total consistency would be lowered. Several churches reported a reason for implanting RM was to increase Sunday school attendance. However, there was only one RM church participating in the study that reported a recent increase in Sunday school attendance.

### Problems

The pilot test was conducted at one church with only 18 children. The CASS may have been more valid and reliable if more children had participated in the pilot study. There is a lack of test-retest reliability with this study. No child, or set of children, was given the CASS more than once.

The number of questions on the CASS is a problem. The CASS would have been more effective if there were more items. A 20-item survey would have been more reliable and valid than a 12-item survey.

The principal investigator communicated with a contact person at 20 churches, each agreeing to participate in the study. However, the majority of the contact people did not have a

sense of urgency or responsibility in regard to completing and returning the surveys. There were only six out of 20 sets of surveys returned by the requested due date. Seven churches that had committed to participating in the study did not do so at all.

There were problems associated with the principal investigator not being present for the study. First, many adults did not complete all portions of the AACSS. Many adults did not complete the parts in which they were asked to mark “female” or “male” and if they were a “Teacher or Shepherd or Sunday school leader” and/or a “Parent of a 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grader.” The surveys may have been completed more efficiently had the principal investigator gone to each church to administer the AACSS herself. Also, using a specific time and place for the surveys may have been helpful. Had the principal investigator set up specific time to administer the surveys, clear instructions could have been given to the participants.

#### Future Research

As stated earlier, the churches using RM that participated in the study had been using the model between one and three years. A better measure of the attitudes toward RM may be taken when churches have become more familiar with the model. Using the model was still new for several of the churches participating.

Using more churches and soliciting higher participation at each church would produce more accurate and generalizable results. This could be accomplished by the investigator traveling to different churches. The investigator could train several people to administer the surveys. These people could travel to churches and gather data.

A researcher could choose to use churches of different sizes for the study. The dynamics and structure are different for churches of different sizes. Some things that work for a large church may not work for a small church. Large churches tend to have staff people focused on

Sunday school, while smaller churches rely completely on volunteers. A part of the study could be used to target what does work for small, medium, and large churches.

A researcher may want to determine children's attitudes toward Sunday school before and after implementation of RM. One way to do this would be to administer a survey with children at a church using RM that asks the children to compare Sunday school before and after the implementation of RM. Another way to do this would be for the researcher to target churches in the process of implementing RM. The same survey could be given to children before and after RM is implemented.

The data from individual questions may be analyzed. The attitudes of children and adults in RM and NRM churches may be significantly different according to different elements of the program. Some elements of non-rotation churches may be stronger than RM. It would be beneficial to know exactly what parts of the different models are positive and working.

A variable in the success and satisfaction of any Sunday school program is the quality of its leader and teachers. Leaders of early childhood programs play a pivotal role in achieving and maintaining quality (Kagan & Bowman, 1997). One role leaders play is to inspire the development of teachers. "The more skilled teachers are, the more likely they are to experience, and be rewarded by, incidents of success," (Neugebauer & Neugebauer, 1998, p. 216). Teachers must be given continual training opportunities in order to improve skills. When determining the success and/or satisfaction of a Sunday school program the researcher may ask the adult leaders and teachers to list education and experience related to children's Sunday school. Additionally, research can be done on the amount and types of Sunday school teacher training offered at the different churches in the study.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Letter to Contact Persons

Dear (Contact Person),

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. There are a few things I need to let you know.

- You, or other adults, may help the children read the surveys. The children are to put an X in 1 box for each question.
- Please encourage shepherds, teachers, parents, leaders, etc. to complete the adult surveys.
- Please complete the attendance chart as best as you can.
- I would like the materials returned to me by February 5. If you have a problem getting the information complete please contact me.
- You may use the materials provided to mail the information back to me.
- Look for the results in a couple months!
- Office phone - (423)652-2811 - Dr. Laurelle Phillips  
Home phone - (276)475-5215  
[heatherrjones@hotmail.com](mailto:heatherrjones@hotmail.com)

Thanks again!

Appendix B  
Children's Pilot Test Survey

Do not put your name on this paper.

Church Code \_\_\_\_

Check one: \_\_\_\_ I am a boy. \_\_\_\_ I am a girl.

Circle Your Grade in School: 1 2 3 4 5

### HOW I FEEL ABOUT SUNDAY SCHOOL

The questions on these pieces of paper ask you about your feelings about Sunday School. Each question describes two groups of children. First, you pick which group you are most like. Then, you decide if you are a LOT like those children, or just a LITTLE like those children.

#### Sample Question

Some kids like ice cream.

  

If you like ice cream, you would pick this side.

If you really like ice cream, put an X in the big box on this side.

If you like ice cream a little bit, then Put in X in the little box on this side.

A lot like me.

A little like me.

Some kids don't like ice cream.

  

If you don't like ice cream, you Would pick this side.

If you really don't like ice cream You put an X in the big box on this side.

If you sort of don't like ice cream, Then put an X in the little box on this side.

A little like me.

A lot like me.

For each question, put an X in only 1 box.

Do you have any questions? If you do, raise your hand so someone can help you.

1. Some kids are sad when they don't get to go to Sunday school.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't get sad when They have to miss Sunday

A little like me

A lot like me

2. Some kids think Sunday school not important.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids think Sunday school is Is important.

A little like me

A lot like me

3. Some kids learn a lot in Sunday school.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't learn a lot in Sunday school.

A little like me

A lot like me

4. Some kids think going to Sunday school is fun.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't think Sunday School is fun.

A little like me

A lot like me

5. Some kids talk about Sunday school at home.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't talk about Sunday school at home.

A little like me

A lot like me

6. Some kids don't like to sing in Sunday school.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids like to sing at Sunday School.

A little like me

A lot like me

7. Some kids think they have boring Sunday school teachers.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids think they have Exciting Sunday school teachers.

A little like me

A lot like me

8. Some kids think their Sunday school teachers care about them.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids think their Sunday School teachers don't care about them.

A little like me

A lot like me

9. Some kids think Sunday school activities are fun.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids think Sunday School activities are boring.

A little like me

A lot like me

10. Some kids invite friends to Sunday school.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't invite friends to Sunday school.

A little like me

A lot like me

11. Some kids don't enjoy being with their Sunday school teachers.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids enjoy being with their Sunday school teachers.

A little like me

A lot like me

12. Some kids play fun games at Sunday school.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't get to play fun at Sunday school.

A little like me

A lot like me

13. Some kids make neat things in Sunday school.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't get to make neat Things in Sunday school.

A little like me

A lot like me

14. Some kids think their Sunday school classrooms are cool.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't think their Sunday school classrooms are cool.

A little like me

A lot like me

15. Some kids don't like their Sunday school classrooms.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids like their Sunday School classrooms.

A little like me

A lot like me

16. Some kids don't have friends at Sunday school.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids do have friends at Sunday school.

A little like me

A lot like me

17. Some kids help take care of their Sunday school classroom.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't help take care of Their Sunday school classroom.

A little like me

A lot like me

18. Some kids feel comfortable asking questions in Sunday school.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't feel comfortable Asking questions in Sunday school.

A little like me

A lot like me

19. Some kids enjoy learning about God.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't enjoy learning About God.

A little like me

A lot like me

20. Some kids don't like their Sunday school classrooms because there is nothing exciting on the walls.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids like their Sunday school classrooms because There are exciting things on the walls.

A little like me

A lot like me

21. Some kids enjoy Sunday school because they get to do something different each week.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't enjoy Sunday school because they do the Same things each week.

A little like me

A lot like me

22. Some only go to Sunday school because their parents Make them.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids go to Sunday school because they want to.

A little like me

A lot like me

23. Some kids know a lot of adults in the church.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't know many Adults in the church.

A little like me

A lot like me

Appendix C

Children's Attitudes Toward Sunday School Survey

(CASS)

Do not put your name on this paper.

Church Code \_\_\_\_

Check one: \_\_\_\_ I am a boy. \_\_\_\_ I am a girl.

Circle Your Grade in School: 1 2 3 4 5

### HOW I FEEL ABOUT SUNDAY SCHOOL

The questions on these pieces of paper ask you about your feelings about Sunday School. Each question describes two groups of children. First, you pick which group you are most like. Then, you decide if you are a LOT like those children, or just a LITTLE like those children.

#### Sample Question

Some kids like ice cream.

If you like ice cream, you would pick this side.

If you really like ice cream, put an X in the big box on this side.

If you like ice cream a little bit, then Put in X in the little box on this side.

Some kids don't like ice cream.

If you don't like ice cream, you Would pick this side.

If you really don't like ice cream You put an X in the big box on this side.

If you sort of don't like ice cream, Then put an X in the little box on this side.

A lot like me.

A little like me.

A little like me.

A lot like me.

For each question, put an X in only 1 box.

Do you have any questions? If you do, raise your hand so someone can help you.

1. Some kids think Sunday school is not important.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids think Sunday school is important.

A little like me

A lot like me

2. Some kids learn a lot in Sunday school.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't learn a lot in Sunday school.

A little like me

A lot like me

3. Some kids think going to Sunday school is fun.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't think Sunday School is fun.

A little like me

A lot like me

4. Some kids talk about Sunday school at home.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't talk about Sunday school at home.

A little like me

A lot like me

5. Some kids think they have boring Sunday school teachers.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids think they have exciting Sunday school teachers.

A little like me

A lot like me

6. Some kids think Sunday school activities are fun.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids think Sunday School activities are boring.

A little like me

A lot like me

7. Some kids invite friends to Sunday school.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't invite friends to Sunday school.

A little like me

A lot like me

8. Some kids make neat things in Sunday school.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't get to make neat Things in Sunday school.

A little like me

A lot like me

9. Some kids think their Sunday school classrooms are cool.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't think their Sunday school classrooms are cool.

A little like me

A lot like me

10. Some kids enjoy learning about God.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't enjoy learning About God.

A little like me

A lot like me

11. Some kids enjoy Sunday school because they get to do something different each week.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't enjoy Sunday school because they do the Same things each week.

A little like me

A lot like me

12. Some kids know a lot of adults in the church.

A lot like me

A little like me

But

Some kids don't know many Adults in the church.

A little like me

A lot like me

Appendix D

Adult Attitudes Toward Children's Sunday School Survey

(AACSS)

**For Teachers, Staff, & Leaders, & Parents**

Church Code \_\_\_\_  
 Position at church (circle all that apply)  
 Teacher or Shepherd or Sunday school leader

Sex: Female Male

Parent of a 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grader

Please place an X in the box that best fits with how you feel.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I am pleased with attendance levels in our Sunday school program.					
2. I am not satisfied with the curriculum my church uses for Sunday school.					
3. The children in my church retain the knowledge they are presented in Sunday school.					
4. Adults in my church do not support the children's Sunday school program.					
5. The environment in the children's Sunday school classroom(s) is warm and inviting.					
6. I feel my church does not have a successful children's Sunday school program.					
7. The children in my church enjoy Sunday school.					
8. The children in my church do not learn much in Sunday school.					
9. The children in my church often invite friends to Sunday school.					
10. The children in my church have positive relationships with Sunday school teachers.					
11. The children in my church think the Sunday school activities are boring.					
12. The children attending Sunday school take responsibility in caring for the classrooms.					
13. The children in my church tend to make quality art projects in Sunday school.					
14. As an adult, I am proud of my church's children's Sunday school program.					
15. The children's Sunday school classrooms are not appealing.					

What do you feel is the best thing about your Sunday school program?

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**For Teachers/Leaders/Staff**

What curriculum do you use? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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How easy is it to recruit volunteers for children's Sunday school? \_\_\_\_\_

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**For those using the Rotation Model**

If you have implemented the Rotation Model, why did your church feel it was an important change to make?

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Share how your church changed the classroom environment for Rotation Model.

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Has attendance changed since you started using the Rotation Model? How? \_\_\_\_\_

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Appendix E  
Attendance Chart

		10/5/03	10/12/03	10/19/03	10/26/03	11/2/03	11/9/03	11/16/03	11/23/03	11/30/03
Child	Grade									
A										
B										
C										
D										
E										
F										
G										
H										
I										
J										
K										
L										
M										
N										
O										
P										
Q										
R										
S										
T										
U										
V										

## Appendix F

### Adult Cover Letter

Hi,

My name is Heather Jones, and I am currently a graduate student at East Tennessee State University. I am pursuing a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education. As a part of the graduation requirements, I am writing a thesis. During the past several years I have had experience working with the Rotation Model of Sunday school, and my interest in children's Sunday school programming has grown. The purposes of this research study are to:

- Evaluate Sunday school attendance patterns
- Evaluate children's attitudes toward Sunday school
- Evaluate parents'/teachers'/leaders' attitudes toward Sunday school

For the study, you are being asked to complete an attitudinal survey toward children's Sunday school. Children in first through fifth grades are being asked to complete a separate survey. If you are a parent of a child(ren) in this group, you have the right to determine whether or not your child(ren) participates in the study.

The surveys will take less than 10 minutes to complete. No part of the survey will include the name of the participant. You, or your child(ren), are under no obligation to participate in the study. If a participant becomes uncomfortable completing the survey, he or she will be able to stop. If you decide you do not want your child(ren) to complete the survey, please let child(ren) and the adult in charge of administering the survey know of your decision.

All data gathered as a result of the study will be made available to church leaders, church staff, and curriculum publishers. The information may be useful to these persons in making decisions regarding children's Sunday school.

If you have any questions or problems at any time, you may call Heather Jones at (276)475-5215, or Laurelle Phillips at (423)439-7903.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Heather Jones

## Appendix G

### Children's Cover Letter



Hi!

My name is Heather, and I am a student at East Tennessee State University. Before I graduate, I have to do a project. I would like you to help me with my project by completing a survey.

The purpose of this project is to:

- \* study children's Sunday school attendance
- \* find out what children think about Sunday school
- \* find out what adults think about children's Sunday school

The survey for you to complete will determine how you feel about Sunday school. You will choose statements about kids that are most like you. You will take the survey at church. The survey will have 12 questions, and it will take less than 10 minutes to complete. Once you start answering the questions, you can stop at any time if you aren't sure about something. You may raise your hand to ask questions while you are taking the survey.



All the information that is gathered at the end of the study will be kept private. The survey will not have your name on it; no one will know which one was your survey.

The information about how people feel about Sunday school will help teachers and church leaders plan good Sunday school programs for children.

Your parents know about the survey. If you do not want to complete the survey, let the adult in your classroom know. It is OK if you don't want to complete the survey. If you have any questions, talk to your parents. Together, you can call

Heather Jones (276)475-5215  
Laurelle Phillips (423)439-7903

Thank you,

Heather Jones

Appendix H

Follow-up Letter to Contact Persons

March 2, 2004

Dear (Contact Person),

I would like to thank you again for participating in my study. The purpose of the study was to investigate attitudes of children and adults participating in Rotation Model Sunday School compared to those in non-rotation Sunday school.

Surveys were completed by 100 children and 63 adults. The findings of the study showed no difference between attitudes of the children and a significant difference between adults. Adults in this study involved in Rotation Model have more positive attitudes toward children's Sunday school than those in non-rotation Sunday school.

If you would like more specific information about the results from your church I will be glad to send those to you.

Sincerely,

Heather Jones

VITA

HEATHER R. JONES

Personal Data:                   Date of Birth: January 27, 1979  
  Place of Birth: Big Stone Gap, Virginia  
  Marital Status: Married

Education:                        Public Schools: Wise County, VA  
  Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, TN;  
  Child and Family Studies, B.S., 2000  
  East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN;  
  Early Childhood Education, M.A., 2004

Professional Experience:        Teacher and Teacher Assistant, Wellmont Child  
  Development Center, Bristol, TN, 2000 – 2001  
  Director of Program Ministries, First United Methodist  
  Church, Bristol, TN, 2001 - 2003  
  ETSU Graduate Assistant, Johnson City, TN, 2003 – 2004  
  Camp Dickenson Co-Director, Fries, VA, 2004 – present