

UPHOLDING THE INTEGRITY OF THE WORKSHOP ROTATION MODEL

Theological & Educational Basis

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Potter's Publishing

The Workshop Rotation Model is spreading like the flames of the Holy Spirit across the country. Churches are embracing the model as the most exciting thing that has happened to Sunday School in a long time. As the Workshop Rotation Model spreads – in many cases by word of mouth – we must ensure and preserve the integrity of the model. Take the quick test below to see if your Workshop Rotation Model practices are consistent with its educational philosophy.

The initial attraction by many to the model is its varied and exciting activities and decorative room interiors. If we limit ourselves to these initial attractions, we run the risk of reducing the model to nothing more than snazzy learning centers developed around isolated learning activities. If the model were to rely on attractive workshops alone, the flames would extinguish themselves in the near future.

The Workshop Rotation Model has a wealth of theological and educational underpinnings, which, if upheld, will perpetuate the model in new, creative, and educationally and theologically sound ways.

TEST: ARE YOU REALLY PRACTICING THE WORKSHOP ROTATION MODEL?

Check all that apply:

REFLECTING WORKSHOP ROTATION MODEL:

- Snazzy room environment enhances model
- Biblical concepts drive workshops
- Carefully crafted concepts and learning experiences make deliberate connections across workshops in a unit. (integrated workshops)
- Learning is integrated to application in real life.
- Room environments are flexible and can accommodate a variety of Multiple Intelligence based learning activities.
- Focus of activities is on the PROCESS; children are engaged in discovery and making meaning for themselves with the guidance of the teacher.
- Biblical concepts that are important for children to learn are chosen first. Secondly, Bible stories are considered that best convey the concepts.

NOT REFLECTING WORKSHOP ROTATION MODEL:

- Snazzy room environment drives model
- Activities drive workshops
- Workshop's concepts and learning experiences tend to stand alone with no obvious connections to other workshops other than topic or theme. (isolated learning centers)
- There is no application to real life.
- Room environments are fixed and host the same Multiple Intelligence based activity over and over.
- Focus of activities is on the end PRODUCT (craft, skit, food); children do not discover meaning for themselves but are told it.
- Bible stories that you want children to know are chosen first. Secondly, concepts from the story are decided on.



WHAT IS THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE WORKSHOP ROTATION MODEL?

The Model is grounded on an array of theological and spiritual concepts. These concepts are interconnected and mutually supportive when a church's clergy and educators sustain the model's integrity by using:

- † Trinitarian theology in a more wholistic manner in a unit's concepts, learning objectives, and spiritual practices.
- † Covenant theology as the model for how God relates to us as children of God. Covenant theology also provides the basis for identifying our faithful responses.
- † Incarnation theology as the model for living faithfully, guided by the ministry of Jesus Christ.
- † Faith, its development and practices, as the desired outcome of all learning through the model.
- † The Body of Christ as the model for the church, the community that forms the social reality to communicate its faith.
- † Multiple Intelligences as the seedbed for developing the multiple gifts of the Spirit in each learner.
- † Ministry and mission as basis for learners to use their faith in their daily lives.



WHAT IS THE EDUCATIONAL BASIS FOR THE WORKSHOP ROTATION MODEL?

The Workshop Rotation Model is based on three main educational philosophies:

1. The Multiple Intelligences
2. Integrated Learning Practices
3. Engaged Learning



The Multiple Intelligences:

Educational research conducted by Howard Gardner indicates that we have multiple intelligences. Gardner maintains that instead of having an intelligence measured by a singular, numerical IQ, individuals have multiple intelligences. To date, Gardner has identified eight intelligences:

- Verbal/Linguistic
- Logical/Mathematical
- Musical/Rhythmic
- Visual/Spatial
- Bodily/Kinesthetic
- Naturalistic
- Intrapersonal
- Interpersonal

Gardner believes that we learn best through our dominant intelligence and can strengthen our weaker intelligence through experiences in that area.

Traditional education generally focuses on a verbal approach with passive listening. Some children learn this way. Many do not.

The Workshop Rotation Model allows children opportunities to know God and understand God's Word through multi-dimensional learning experiences.

Each workshop in a unit incorporates different ways of learning through the Multiple Intelligences. Children will learn because their dominant intelligence - the way in which they learn best - will often be accommodated.

For example, the active child who can't sit still to complete a worksheet on Moses and the Exodus probably will not take meaning away from the lesson. However, put this same child in a drama or dance workshop, and he or she might thrive in this learning environment.

Therefore, workshop learning experiences should be carefully crafted to reflect and honor the myriad ways children learn.



Integrated Learning Practices:

Best practices in education support integrated learning practices as essential to authentic learning. Integrated Learning is "the incorporation of all the ways children learn best." While shaping the Workshop Rotation Model at your church, there are two critical Integrated Learning practices to incorporate when considering the multi-dimensional activities.

Integrated Learning Practice 1: Learning Experiences and Concepts Need to Apply to Real Life

First, the concepts taught during the Workshop Rotation Model Sunday school need to apply to real life. Research indicates that children do not learn in isolation. Do you remember that math or chemistry or English test that you studied for and promptly forgot after the test? You forgot it because the learning was isolated. It was not connected to anything in real life. Do you also remember the teacher who made learning come alive through experiences outside the text that connected to life?

Ultimate learning happens when learning moves from one set experience to somewhere in real life. Ultimate learning does not occur in a vacuum of fact or story memorization.

It is critical in the Workshop Rotation Model that learning experiences in the workshops make valuable connections to the real lives of children.

The model should facilitate the children to move beyond just learning the who, what, when, where, and how of a story. The children should learn integral biblical concepts and relate them to their lives.

Pretend that the children in your Sunday school are going on a wilderness adventure. Every child has a backpack for survival. How do you want to outfit that child? What do you want to fill that backpack with?

Stories? Facts? You'd probably outfit them with practical equipment they can use during the course of their wilderness journey. First, you'd want the children to know that they are not in the wilderness alone. You'd want them to know that they have equipment and are authorized to use it. You'd also want the children to know how to use the equipment that they have.

In the wilderness adventure called life, you'd want your children to have sturdy, trustworthy equipment to use to get them through the realm of day to day experiences as well as difficult situations. You'd want them to be able to call on faith, prayer, etc.



That's where the biblical stories and concepts come into play. The Bible is like the great outfitting ranch, owned by God. It's where you can get all the valuable equipment for life's journey. Bible stories are like testimonials. They illustrate people who have used God's equipment. They provide the how. They show what is possible with God's equipment.

For example, while experiencing the story of how Jesus calmed the storm, the children can talk about the "storms" in their own lives - divorce, a sick pet, problems with friends, for example. They can make the connection that just as Jesus calmed the storm for the disciples, Jesus can calm those kinds of storms in their own lives as well. They are equipped with the concept that they can call on Jesus in stormy situations. This equipment could go into their backpack.

When planning curriculum in the Workshop Rotation Model, ask: "What concepts should we equip our children with that they can take into their everyday lives?" When

children experience this type of integrated learning which makes connections from biblical concepts to their lives, they will be better prepared for active Christian ministry and developing a mature faith.

*Integrated Learning Practice 2:
Learning Experiences and Concepts Need
to Connect with Each Other*

The second part of incorporating the educational theory of Integrated Learning means that learning experiences and concepts need to connect with each other. When starting a unit of curriculum, it is so easy to get caught up initially in the excitement of workshop possibilities. Unfortunately, when using this approach the activities end up driving the workshops. The end result tends to be 5 – 6 isolated “learning center” workshops.

Here's what you need to do in order to connect the learning experiences throughout a unit:



First, decide what **concepts** you want to equip the children with. Then, find the biblical basis for those concepts. Find stories that illustrate those concepts. Do those concepts emerge from the story? Although there could be many concepts that emerge from the story, decide on 1 - 2 concepts that you want the children to learn throughout the unit. What do you really want the children to take away from the Elijah story? What equipment do you want them to add to their faith backpack?



Next, determine how these concepts can **connect to children's lives**. Determine how these concepts will help develop spiritual life behaviors for children.



Then, carefully craft **objectives** that will create a **bridge of learning**. This bridge will lead the children from understanding Biblical concepts to making meaningful spiritual connections to their lives.



Next, **integrate** the curriculum's biblically based concepts, objectives, and spiritual life learning connections throughout all the workshops of a unit.

The **activities** within the workshops are the last things you will plan. If you have done the above planning, it is amazing to see how multi-dimensional learning experiences/activities naturally emerge to convey the concepts. With this approach, the Bible concepts, objectives, and spiritual life connections for children drive the workshops and the workshop activities deliver them.

*The Bible concepts, objectives,
and spiritual life connections for
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them.*

An Integrated Practice Example:

Faith is a concept that you have determined is integral to the yearly scope and planning for your children. You have chosen several stories on the miracles of Jesus to convey the concept of faith. You want the children to learn what faith is and understand how they can put their faith into action in their lives.

You connect your faith concept to the story of Peter walking on water to Jesus. You carefully plan the objectives for learning you wish to come out of the story. You come up with a sink or float scientific experiment involving an orange. In a Science Workshop, children will be engaged in conducting an experiment and discovering that an orange floats in water when its peel is kept on and it sinks in water when the peel has been removed.

Through this experiment they make connections between this real life experiment and the faith they wear each day and how it keeps them afloat in troubled waters of life.

You connect this science experiment to another workshop where you want children to learn to put their faith into action. You choose the story of the woman who reaches out to Jesus in faith to be healed. The children learn that she had to put her faith into action to change her situation. You develop mission project activities whereby children reach out in faith to help change things in other people's lives.

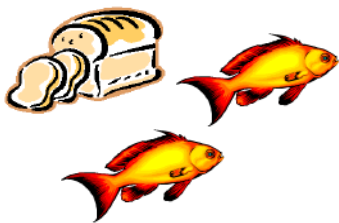
Although this is a simplistic and limited example of the integration process, hopefully it will lend to your understanding of how workshops within a unit need to be connected.

Note:

The Bible is replete with stories of God's fearfully and wondrously created people and how God communicated to them through the multiple intelligences God created. To get across important concepts, God spoke to the people through different intelligences - a pillar of cloud led God's people from Egypt (visual); Jesus' parables caused people to think and ask questions (logical/mathematical). However, you will notice that God did not teach through every intelligence in every story or concept.

Keep in mind that not every biblical concept or story lends itself to every intelligence.

Keep in mind that when working within the Workshop Rotation Model, not every biblical concept or story lends itself to every intelligence. A Bible Math workshop may



really work when teaching the concepts of the Feeding of the Five Thousand story. However, not every Bible

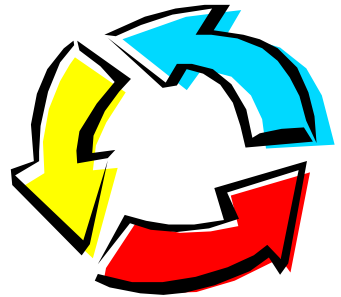
story or concept lends itself to a Math Workshop. And that's okay!

That is why it is important to keep your options for workshops flexible and not use the same fixed workshops with every unit.



Children Need to be Engaged in Learning Experiences

Engaged learning experiences are learning experiences where children are actively involved in their learning and making meaning from it. However, engaged learning does not simply mean active learning. In engaged learning experiences, children actively discover and make meaningful connections with concepts and objectives through a learning activity. The activity should not be solely



focused on making a take-home craft or coloring sheet. The activity should not be for the activity's sake. The activity should engage the children in a thinking process through which they get to the "Ah-ha!" at the end.

An Engaging Learning Experience Example

You want to get across the concept that God sent Jesus, our Messiah, to be our Mighty God. In the lesson, you use the story of Jesus raising a woman's son from the dead.

Then, the children participate in a cooking activity. They make Baked Alaska. They cover ice cream with meringue and bake it in a very hot oven. They discover that the ice cream doesn't melt. The teacher directs them to think about hot situations in their lives. They come to discover that Jesus is our Mighty God who can act as an insulator (like the meringue) to keep us (the ice-cream) from melting in those hot situations. All we need to do is go to Jesus in prayer and ask for him to wrap us in his meringue.

The emphasis in engaged learning is on the learning connections that children can make through a carefully crafted and high interest multi-dimensional activity.



WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES FOR ENSURING INTEGRATED LEARNING AND UPHOLDING THE INTEGRITY OF THE WORKSHOP ROTATION MODEL:

Whether you write your own curriculum or purchase published curriculum, it is imperative that you practice an integrated approach to curriculum to uphold the integrity of the model.

Please refer to the guidelines on the next page. They will assist you as you either write or purchase curriculum. Be leery of using lessons offered free from web sites. Unless they are part of a larger carefully developed curriculum, you will at best have isolated learning activities with no integrated learning experiences. This does not support the educational and spiritual philosophies of the Workshop Rotation Model.

Another way we can ensure the integrity of the model is to become members of Children's Ministries of America. CMA is a professional organization dedicated to promoting the integrity of the Workshop Rotation Model through Regional Seminars and National Conferences. For more information visit www.childministries.org.

IN CONCLUSION, THE WORKSHOP ROTATION MODEL:

Affirms that we are created in God's Image. Children are God's creation. Each child is a unique individual with God-given gifts and intelligences. Children do not all learn the same way. They have different learning intelligences, spiritual gifts, and capabilities.

When we uphold the integrity of the Workshop Rotation Model, we equip children with theological concepts that can help children expand upon and enhance their knowledge of God. These concepts guide children toward a growing faithful vision of who God truly is – the God of love and grace. By giving children multiple experiences in ways they learn best, learners can be guided toward a personal relationship with God. The goal is for children to learn these theological concepts through Bible stories so they can learn specific attitudes and actions for faithful living in everyday situations. †



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Potter's Publishing produces Biblically based, theologically sound, kid and teacher friendly creative curriculum for the Workshop Rotation Model. Toll-free: 1-888-387-8160 or www.potters-publishing.com

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Joyce has 26 years teaching experience in public education. She has been a leader in developing integrated curriculum at the elementary school level and has taught it at the university level. Joyce brought the integrated curriculum philosophy and the multiple intelligences to the Workshop Rotation Model in its early stages of development in 1989. Joyce is actively involved in developing the model along with her pastor husband, Rev. Dr. J. Robert Claus, at the First Presbyterian Church of Morris, Illinois. Previous to this, Bob and Joyce were among the founders of the model in 1989 at Southminster Presbyterian Church in Arlington Heights, Illinois. Joyce develops and writes curriculum for Potter's Publishing.

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Bob is the theological consultant for Potter's Publishing. Besides providing the theological understandings as he does for every unit, Bob provides consultation for each unit. Bob is the pastor at the First Presbyterian Church of Morris, Illinois. Bob first developed the Workshop Rotation Model at Southminster Presbyterian Church in Arlington Heights, Illinois in 1989. Bob's experience in Children's Ministry has led to his doctoral thesis: *The Workshop Rotation Model: Toward a New Educational Approach*.

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GUIDELINES FOR ENSURING INTEGRATED LEARNING AND UPHOLDING THE INTEGRITY OF THE WORKSHOP ROTATION MODEL:

<p align="center">THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN WRITING YOUR OWN CURRICULUM:</p>	<p align="center">QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN PURCHASING CURRICULUM:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Consider biblical concepts that you want children to learn. ❖ Determine spiritual life connections you want children to make. ❖ Carefully choose a Bible story or biblical basis that conveys the concepts and spiritual life connections for children. ❖ Consider how you will integrate the concepts and spiritual life connections throughout all the workshops in the unit. ❖ Plan multi-dimensional learning experiences that convey the concepts and lead to meaningful spiritual life connections for children. ❖ Plan how children will be actively engaged in the learning experience and make meaningful connections to their lives. ❖ Consider how children will reflect on their learning to create personal meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Are overarching theological themes evident? ? Is the theology a well thought-out basis for the curriculum and does it reflect meaningful connections for children? ? Are biblical concepts taught through carefully chosen stories? ? Is the biblical concept(s) of a unit integrated throughout the workshops as an overall learning theme? ? Do workshop objectives reflect the biblical concepts and lead to meaningful life connections for children? ? Are high interest learning experiences crafted that engage children in learning and making meaningful connections to their lives? ? Are workshops activities in a unit varied and do they reflect the multiple ways children learn? ? Do workshops in a unit integrate with each other resulting in connected learning experiences? ? Are opportunities provided for children to reflect on their learning? ? What are the credentials of the curriculum developers?