

Coordinating a Program for the Size of Your School

Not all churches have enough children to allow for separate grades in the church school. Several grades must be combined together in the same classroom. The open classroom concept is hardly new and has been developed in the public schools for years. It helps for us to think of those small schools as a small family living and learning about God together.

A basic lesson can be taught to the whole group, and then children divide up into small groups or individually, according to age, work abilities, and interests. Projects all play a great part in such situations, and these activities must be worked out in advance and student-initiated. Older students need more challenge to understand and study the theme or concepts on their own level, at their own speed. Younger students need more teacher guidance and involvement.

Here a few ways to organize this using the OCEC materials.

One Classroom School

Although one class is possible, it is better to divide up into at least two groups for lessons. Where this is not possible, the home study book “Way of Life: Introducing Your child to the Orthodox Faith” can be used as an umbrella program for all ages. The material can be used as an umbrella program for all ages. The material can be divided to cover two years. The themes are the section headings from the book. The books in italics are OCEC manuals that can be used.

First year: Church—New Life in Jesus/New Life in the Church; Advent/Nativity—In the Beginning; Lent/Pascha—Making Things Right/Jesus, the Promise of God

Second year: Feast—Together with God; Home—The Wonder of it All/God, My Friends & Me; Major Saints—God Loves Us/Our Life in the Church

Note: In the following sections the first book mentioned should be used this year. Other books can be used in succeeding years. Pre-school children have such unique needs that no matter the number, they should be placed in a separate area, using Pre-school manuals.

Two Classroom School

1. Kindergarten–Second Grade

Use Together With God;
Then God Loves Us, New Life in Jesus/Making Things Right

2. Third–Sixth Grade

Use New Life in the Church;
Then Jesus, the Promise of God, Our Life in the Church, In the Beginning

Three Classroom School

1. Pre-School–First Grade

Use The Wonder of it All/God, My Friends, & Me; Then Together With God;
Then God Loves Us

2. Second–Third Grade

Use New Life in Jesus/Making Things Right;
Then New Life in the Church

3. Fourth–Sixth Grade

Use Jesus, The Promise of God;
Then Our Life in the Church, In the Beginning

Four Classroom School

1. Pre-School–First Grade

Use The Wonder of it All/God, My Friends, & Me; Then Together With God;
Then God Loves Us

2. Second–Third Grade

Use New Life in Jesus/Making Things Right;
Then New Life in the Church

3. Fourth–Sixth Grade

Use Jesus, The Promise of God;
Then Our Life in the Church

4. Sixth–Seventh Grade

Use In the Beginning;
Then Young Church

Teens—Separate programs and classes should be arranged. Where numbers are very low, youth could serve as junior teachers with responsibility of helping and mastering the content.