Review of RE Models – compiled by Mary Marsh
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Model	Description	Where to Find Info.	Some Advantages	Special Challenges or Questions
Workshop Rotational	Teach concepts through kid-friendly workshops: Art, Drama, Music, Games, Cooking etc.. Teach the same story or theme in all of the workshops for four or five weeks. Workshop leaders prepare one workshop and deliver it to each class separately. Class Guides handle the personal connections and class continuity.	www.rotation.org	f Lesson planning time is greatly reduced f Children have an opportunity to explore topics in a variety of ways f Varied volunteer opportunities allow people more access to working in RE – Those who would never agree to teach, can easily take on being a Workshop presenter – they are the "guest experts" in the program. f More opportunity for personal connections with students as some volunteers are freed from curriculum responsibilities and are able to focus on knowing the children and learning with them.	f Physical space and equipment needs may be costly in the beginning f Needs special attention to facilitate adult consistency f Requires more time from the DRE or a curriculum development team f Time limits in RE program can present problems for very involved workshops.
Small Group Ministry	An adaptation of the Covenant Circles many churches are using. This model has children broken into small groups that explore the curriculum using a given format.	For an overview see: www.hzmre.com/sgm To order book: www.northparish.org/gailsbook.htm	f Can be a community-building experience f Rewarding for adults as well as children f Could work as a side group during an adult covenant circle	f Might be difficult to build consistent groups if you have very sporadic attendance f Might be a challenge to address different learning styles , particularly if you have a group that includes both kinesthetic and verbal children.
Pillars (Themes)	The whole RE Program studies similar themes in age-appropriate ways. Often the year is broken into 2-3 segments with each covering a "pillar" such as UU Identity or World Religions etc… Some programs use pillars by year.	Many churches have adapted this approach – check websites and with colleagues to find out how they are using Pillars.	l Teachers can become "experts" in particular topics l Students have opportunities to revisit subject matter as they mature if topics are repeated regularly l Existing curricula can be used if lessons are separated and grouped by pillar subject l Easier to publicize curricular topic to congregation as a whole	l Topics might be seen as only superficially studied if Pillars are too short. l Can be complicated to compile pillars on topics for all age groups l If you break up the year, you could face ongoing Volunteer recruitment through the whole year.

Traditional	Using the traditional classroom model, full-year curriculums are chosen. A scope and sequence is usually developed and children progress through the curricula year by year.	www.uua.org/re/resource	f Most of the available written resources use this model f Complete and well-develop curricula are readily available f Very easy to organize and set-up f This is the model most people are comfortable with – you have very little to do to explain the approach	f Less unified for families with more than one child f Sporadic student attendance can undermine curricular goals. f Year-long teaching commitment can be challenging for volunteers f Lack-luster or too-busy volunteers can have trouble bringing "canned" curricula to life
Spirit Play (UU Adaptation of Godly Play)	The goal of Spirit Play is to teach children the art of using religious language - parable, sacred story, silence, and liturgical action.	For more information visit www.spiritplay.net Or see the original model at www.godlyplay.com	f A structure that gives children consistency even with a changing volunteer team f Once people are trained and the program is set-up, very little week-to-week planning time is required f Parents can easily step in for "Doorkeeper" role f Growing number of congregations are using this model, providing a growing network of resources, support and experience f Uses the popular Montessori approach – a well researched and effective educational model.	f Can be expensive to start – leaders need proper training and supplies can be time-consuming and/or expensive to procure f Families unused to these methods can be resistant – you will need to do a lot of communication and orientation to get people to understand and support the program. f Classroom organization is important, if your room is used by outside groups, you will need a plan to protect materials from disorganization (a standard Montessori concern).
Way Cool Sunday School	Each month 4 different types of experiences are planned. Often 2 weeks are spent in a classroom using curricula, one is spent on a social justice project and the last is spent on a community building or art project.	See Greg Stewart's article in Essex Conversations.	f Can bring needed energy and enthusiasm to a program f Can provide new opportunities for congregants to work with the young people without signing up to "teach" f Can really bring your students to be a part of their community. f A nice blend between traditional curricular models, and experiential models.	f Has potential to be fairly complicated to arrange the projects f Initial planning and set-up are labor intensive f You will need to plan for ways to maintain class groupings