

MAR THOMA SUNDAY SCHOOL

DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE



OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

(SUPPLEMENT TO BY - LAWS)

SECTION 1

PARISH UNIT

Core Programs

Following program items are essential for the operation of a Sunday School.

1. Comply with the Sunday School By-Laws and directives of the council
 - a. Adhere to the Sunday School academic year as directed through the By-Laws.
 - b. Conduct annual competitions in solos, memory verses, Bible quiz, Storytelling for grades up to 4, elocution for grades 5 through 10, Bible reading etc., Regional level competitions with the representatives from Parishes are also encouraged where practical.
 - c. Attend Teacher retreats, workshop, and other programs as arranged by the Diocesan Council, Center, and Region.
 - d. Commemorate World Sunday School Day (In November), Student Dedication Sunday (In September), Sunday School Anniversary and a Teachers dedication/ recognition Sunday (in the beginning of the school year).
 - e. Implement the recommended Diocesan curriculum in teaching V.B.S, MTC history, faith and practices.
 - f. Conduct summer conferences, or retreats to better utilize the holidays for Christian education.
 - g. Honor and recognize graduates of Sunday School to demonstrate the value of Christian Education.
2. Participate in Regional Sunday School activities to learn from each other to be effective in Christian education.
3. Adhere to the prescribed Sunday School curriculum and participate in Diocesan Examination. Participation in the Diocesan Sunday School examination is mandatory for every Sunday School.
4. Cooperate with the Sunday School Coordinator to assess and share views on Sunday School activities and approval of records.
5. The following levels Sunday School Classes are recommended as a minimum:

CLASS	SCHOOL GRADE
Nursery	Nursery
Kindergarten	Kindergarten
Primary	Grades 1 & 2
Primary-Junior	Grades 3 & 4
Junior	Grades 5 & 6
Junior High	Grades 7 & 8
Senior High	Grades 9 & 10
Post Graduate I, Teacher Training *	Grade 11
Post Graduate II, Teacher Training *	Grade 12, College Students and above

**Teacher training and advanced curriculum may be offered in separate classes or combined classes based on the specific needs of the Sunday School. These classes are intended for training teachers, building leadership, and for providing continued spiritual guidance for our youth.*

6. The local Sunday School may institute other programs, for accomplishing Sunday School mission, in addition to the prescribed programs.
7. The Teachers shall renew their commitment to the Sunday School through the signing of the Teachers Covenant in the Attachment each year.
8. The teachers are required to participate in at least one teachers retreat/ workshop each year.

SECTION 2

CENTER AND REGIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL OFFICE BEARERS

The candidates for office bearers for center, region and diocesan bodies should preferably be Sunday School Teachers with a minimum of five years teaching experience in this Diocese. Additionally, prior experience as Headmaster /Superintendent is desirable.

SECTION 3

ANNUAL DIOCESAN EXAMINATIONS

1.0 Purpose

- Assess the Biblical knowledge acquired by the students
- Provide feedback to students on their understanding of the lessons
- Recognize students for their significant efforts in learning
- Gather data to assess the effectiveness of teaching & learning
- Establish a uniform standard in the understanding of the curriculum

2.0 Authorities and Responsibilities

- The Diocesan Examination Board consisting of the Diocesan council office bearers shall have the responsibility for administering the Diocesan examination in accordance with the Operational Guidelines.
- The examination Board shall have the authority to take emergency decisions when required.
- The Board shall implement administrative controls to uphold the confidence and honor of the examination through the avoidance of any potential impropriety.
- The Board shall ensure anonymity in the evaluation of answer sheets to uphold the public confidence in impartial assessment.

3.0 Administration of Examination

3.1 Examination date and Location

The examination shall be conducted in May on the curriculum prescribed by the Diocesan Council.

The examination may be conducted at any Mar Thoma Sunday Schools or at a common location, for parishes with multiple Sunday Schools, based on administrative convenience jointly determined by the Vicar and the Headmasters / Superintendents.

3.2 Registration

The students appearing in this examination must achieve a minimum of 50% attendance and score at least 60 percent in the Sunday school level examination based on the first quarter curriculum of the school year in order to participate on the Diocesan Exam.

The headmaster/superintendent shall forward the list of all eligible students along with the registration fee, to the Sunday School Diocesan Secretary 45 calendar days prior to the examination date and 60 days before the examination for Canadian Sunday Schools.

No changes to the registration unless it is notified as part of the registration. The fee shall be paid through a check or a money order addressed to the Mar Thoma Diocesan Sunday School with the name of the Sunday School / Church indicated on the check. The Canadian Sunday School shall make the payments through a Cashier's check or Money Order.

3.3 Preparation and Transmittal of Questions

The questions shall be based on the commonly supplied student handouts and the referenced Biblical text in the student book. The memory verses shall be from the student book when a particular version of text is given in the student book. When a particular text is not given in the student book the New International Version will be used unless directed differently. The answer key shall be built from the direct excerpts of the student book and the Biblical references provided in the student book. The answer key shall contain specific reference to the book winter/fall when more than one book is used, page number, and paragraph number to facilitate independent verification. The question and answer key can be made together as one document for the convenience of editing out the answers at the end to create the questions.

An examination board shall be established for the preparation of questions. The examination board, consisting of diocesan council office bearers, is responsible for ensuring that the questions are within the syllabus, structured to avoid ambiguity, and formulated for the appropriate age group. The examination board shall collect questions in the Diocesan examination format, on a rotational schedule from the Sunday Schools in the Diocese. The examination board shall be responsible to compile a full set of questions & answer key, as described in the above paragraph, selecting questions received from Sunday Schools and developing new questions as necessary. The staff and members of the examination board who have access to sample questions from different Sunday schools shall destroy these questions after the final test is developed. Use of these large pool questions to coach Sunday school students, where these board members teach or otherwise associate, is forbidden to prevent unfair advantage against Sunday Schools who did not receive such supply of questions.

The format of the examination, as attached, may be periodically adjusted in response to Sunday School feedback and uniqueness of the curriculum. The questions shall be independently verified by an office bearer to ensure accuracy and structure.

The questions shall be packaged in a double envelope/box, with the inner envelope sealed and visibly marked "**CONTAINS TEST QUESTIONS: ONLY THE PROCTOR IS AUTHORIZED TO OPEN**". The outer envelope/box may be opened by the recipient for examining the procedure for conducting the examination. A copy of the examination guidelines and specific instructions shall be accessible through the outer envelope. The inner package shall have questions for each registered student. This inner package shall be opened only by the Proctor, 15 min. before the examination. Each question / answer sheet shall have a code number specifically assigned for each registered student. This number shall remain confidential

with the examination board for maintaining anonymity during the evaluation of the answers. This package shall be mailed by Priority mail to the Headmaster / Superintendent, 15 days prior to the date of the examination for US schools and 25 days for Canadian Sunday Schools. The Headmaster / Superintendent shall notify the Diocesan Secretary if the Examination Package has not been received 7 days before the date of the examination.

3.4 Conduct of the Examination

The regional coordinator shall assign a Proctor for each Sunday School by exchanging staff members from sister parishes. When there are no other Sunday Schools in the close proximity, Vicar of the respective church shall appoint an independent individual to proctor the examination. The time of the examination in all three US time zones shall be adjusted for conducting the examination concurrently. The proctor shall follow the specific guidance included with the questions. The Proctor shall uphold the honor of the examination through enforcing timeliness and confidentiality. The proctor shall verify the grade, code, and identity with the assistance of the hosting parish teaching staff or Sunday School office bearers.

When the examination is completed, the proctor shall enclose the answer sheets in the supplied envelope for packaging the answers. The closing flaps of the envelope shall be sealed with the signature of the proctor and the Superintendent / Headmaster and mailed to the Diocesan Secretary. Comments on the questions may also be included in this package. Comments of the questions by e-mail would be considered for three days following the examination. These comments would be factored into the grading process when deemed necessary by the examination board.

3.5 Evaluation of the Answers

An answer key shall be prepared and approved by the examination board for each grade levels. The answer key shall contain specific reference and excerpts from the student book, and direct reference to biblical text for each question and answer. Such explicit references are intended to help build consensus on the expected answers and to form bases for evaluating proximate answers. Each answer sheet shall be evaluated by a group of teachers against the answer key and **not evaluated in comparison to other student answers**. The anonymity of the answer sheets will be maintained until the evaluation process is completed. The evaluation in a group environment is intended to encourage quality assessment through peer consultation.

The grading system will be as follows:

Score	Grade
96-100%	A+
90-95%	A
86-89%	B+
80-85%	B
76-79%	C+
70-75%	C
65-69	P (Pass)
64% and below	N (Need Improvement)

All students who receive a Grade of A+ will be given an award.

All students who receive a Grade of B, B+ or A will be given certificates.

A system of curving will be introduced to make sure that at least the top 2% of students appearing in each grade will receive a Grade of A+.

3.6 Announcement of Results

All Sunday School headmasters shall be notified of the results of their respective Sunday Schools. A copy of the answer key for each grade shall also be included along with the examination results for educating students on the correct answers.

A fee of \$5.00 per student exam will be charged for each Sunday school requesting a re-evaluation. Any complaint regarding the Sunday school and its operations without the consent of the Superintendent and endorsed by the Vicar will not be considered by the Sunday school Council. An official format for the complaint must be used.

3.7 Processing of Complaints

Complaints and comments on the examination shall be forwarded to the Diocesan Secretary. These comments shall be resolved by the examination board and factored into the guidelines in appropriate cases. A request for re-evaluation may be within 30 days of the final announcement of results. The answer sheets would be evaluated by another competent teacher when the examination board finds reasonable bases. The Diocesan officers shall approve the resolution of comments and corrective actions.

3.8 Retention and Disposal of Answer Sheets

Answer sheets shall be retained by the secretary for a maximum period of 6 months from the date of the announcement of results to resolve discrepancies and complaints. The answer sheets may be suitably disposed after this period.

SECTION 4

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

Office bearers for the Sunday School center, region, and diocese shall be elected for a term of three years corresponding to the term of the Diocesan Assembly.

The Sunday School Diocesan Secretary shall inform all the Sunday Schools in the diocese to conduct the elections for representation to the respective center committees and inform the Center President & Center Secretary 90 days before the expiration of the term.

The Center General Body shall conduct the election of office bearers and inform the Regional President and Regional Secretary 60 days before the expiration of the term.

The Regional General body shall conduct the election of its office bearers and inform the Diocesan Vice President and Diocesan Secretary 40 days before the expiration the term.

The Diocesan Vice president shall oversee the election of the Diocesan Council Office Bearers. The diocesan elections shall be conducted at a minimum of 20 days before the expiration of the term.

(This information supplements the By-Laws)