

****January 2008 update****

Dear Pastors, Commanders, Directors and Sparks Leaders,

We are excited – the new Sparks update is right on schedule to begin in the 2008-2009 club year.

Here's a summary of what is happening.

***A whole new theme.** Sparks will now have a flight theme – changing from the current Skipper/Hiker/Climber ranks to HangGlider/WingRunner/SkyStormer. The entrance booklet will be *Flight 3:16*, a salvation piece centered on John 3:16. The three-year rollout starts the fall of 2008 with the release of the HangGlider™ handbook.

***A new scope and sequence.** The new Sparks handbooks are based on the questions the Sparks-aged kids asked when we did our massive survey. Remember, we asked more than 4,000 kids “What’s your biggest question about God and the Bible?” This approach also fits into our new, integrated program development. Sparkies want the detailed facts about the Bible, and that’s what we plan to give them. The three Sparks books will be a chronological journey through the Bible featuring biographies of the people whom they meet along the way. The large group lesson books, the *Who* series, will include lessons about the Bible characters not covered in the handbook, so Sparkies will meet a lot of people!

***A “we-can’t-wait-to-show-you” handbook.**

- Biographies of Bible characters so Sparkies won’t be hearing disconnected Bible “stories,” they will hear Bible biographies of real people. They will be learning where those people “fit” in the Bible with the addition of a Bible timeline. These biographies are read-to-me friendly.
- Regular memory sections which include the “why” of what they’re learning. Sparkies continue to move through the handbooks at their own pace. (A pacing schedule is included in the *FlightPlan* leader’s guide.)
- A CD in each handbook featuring the biographies in “audio book” format with music and sound effects, so if a parent doesn’t have time to read to the child, the child can pop the CD into a CD player and listen on his or her own. This is also a fantastic tool for beginning readers to practice their skills. Parents who DO read to their kids can still play the CD at home or in the car to make sure what Sparkies learn will “stick.”

***A new look and feel to extra credit.** The extra credit will be called “Frequent Flyer” and is in a new, fun, four-color format – extra credit cards that fan out from an eyelet. This will include the review of the book verses so a Sparkie won’t have that “why-am-I-doing-this-book-again” feeling because he has to do the same book twice.

Wait! Actually, parents have a choice! They can choose for their child to go through the book twice or for their child to immediately go to the extra credit product (which includes a review of the book verses).

Extra credit awards are similar to the current awards but updated for the flight theme.

***Introducing three new characters and one familiar friend.** Sparky will be joined by three Sparks-aged children: Chloe, Jacob and Joel. Those names were chosen because they are contemporary, but also names of people in the Bible.

***Changes in the award system.** The vest will continue with the addition of an updated logo. The rank emblems will change, of course, and will also be designed so a child does not have to remove the previous emblem when receiving a new one. Everyone likes the jewels! They will continue, but will be placed in pilot wings instead of crowns.

***Exciting media.** We're producing a go-along-with-club media piece that includes eight short stories of the characters and their little friend, Emma. The DVD is called "In-flight Movie" and can be used both in club and at home. The DVD also includes special features to help kids learn/reinforce John 3:16, the Sparks theme song, and the books of the Bible.

***Updated training materials.** We're developing new Sparks club training within the Basic Training framework to correspond with the program update. The role books will reflect the new program and will also include DVDs for both leaders and directors. Leaders will be able to view a day in the life of a Sparks leader, watch ministry skills in action, such as sharing the gospel and disciplining children, and hear from a panel of experienced leaders and directors with helpful advice and tips about working with Sparkies.

The HangGlider *FlightPlan* leader's guide gives ideas for memory games, activities and hints for having a great year in Sparks.

Can you tell why we're excited? We think we've developed a program that will give Sparkies a solid foundation in Bible content. This foundation will carry them into the T&T years where they're presented with a biblical apologetic approach to what they've learned. Our desire is to help these kids develop a biblical worldview – this detailed foundation is part of that development process.

We have talked. We have researched. We have surveyed. We have listened to you, the leaders. We have personally worked in Sparks clubs. We have prayed and continue to pray for wisdom and guidance in making the best choices possible.

Please pray with us and for us as we continue to develop the new curriculum and training.

Sincerely,

Linda Weddle
Senior Designer of U.S. Programs
Awana ®

P.S. Watch the mail this spring for an exciting brochure we are preparing as a foretaste of the style, curriculum, characters and theme of the new Sparks!