

SUNDAY SCHOOL AUXILIARY TRAINING

Principles of Learning and Teaching

The fundamental purposes of gospel learning and teaching in Church meetings and at home are to help develop testimonies of Jesus Christ and to strengthen families. Understanding and implementing the following gospel principles will help teachers, leaders, and parents to be more effective in carrying out their sacred responsibilities:

1. **“Lay hold upon the word of God”** (Helaman 3:29). Gospel teaching and learning are most effective when centered on the doctrines and principles of the restored gospel as they are found in the scriptures, in the teachings of latter-day prophets, in Church publications, and through the promptings of the Holy Ghost (see Alma 31:5; John 1:1; Helaman 5:12; D&C 11:21; 52:9; 18:34–36; Alma 32:21; 37:11; Romans 10:17; *Teaching Guidebook* [2001], 5).
2. **“Preach my gospel by the Spirit”** (D&C 50:14). The most important and effective teaching, learning, and nourishing that takes place at church or in the home is what is communicated to the individual through the influence of the Holy Ghost (see John 14:26; D&C 42:14; 46:2, 8–9; Alma 17:2–3; D&C 84:85; *Teaching Guidebook*, 5–6).
3. **“Seek learning, even by study and also by faith”** (D&C 88:118). In addition to being a “hope for things which are not seen, which are true” (Alma 32:21), faith is also a “principle of action” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 1). Inspired teaching and learning are best accomplished when both teacher and learner live and act upon the doctrines and principles being taught (see John 7:17; D&C 88:77; 2 Nephi 25:23; Alma 32:27; Helaman 15:7; 3 Nephi 27:21–22; Ether 2:16–25; 3:1–6; *Teaching Guidebook*, 6–7).

The following guidelines are taken from *Improving Gospel Teaching, A Leader’s Guide* (1998), 4–5; page references below are to that publication.

Giving an Orientation to Each Newly Called Teacher

Ward priesthood and auxiliary leaders meet individually with each newly called teacher in their organizations, preferably before the teacher’s first class, to provide a brief orientation. As part of each orientation, the leader should:

- Help the teacher understand the importance of the call to teach.
- Discuss the principles of effective teaching outlined on pages 300–304 of the “Gospel Teaching and Leadership” section of the *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*.
- Ensure that the teacher receives all the materials needed to be able to teach successfully, including the lesson materials for the class and a roll listing every Church member who should attend the class.
- Ensure that the teacher has copies of the “Gospel Teaching and Leadership” section of the *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2* and *Teaching, No Greater Call*. Conduct a brief review of these materials to help the teacher understand how to use them effectively.
- Inform the teacher of Church-produced materials available in the meetinghouse library.
- Inform the teacher of teacher improvement meetings (see pages 7–9). Explain the benefits of these meetings. Encourage the teacher to attend.
- Inform the teacher of the Teaching the Gospel course (see page 10).

- Offer ongoing support.
- Encourage the teacher to contact him or her individually at least once every three months to counsel together about the teacher's calling (see "Counseling with Teachers," pages 5–6).

After a newly called teacher has taught his or her first lesson, a leader should contact the teacher to answer questions and give encouragement.

Providing Ongoing Support for Each Teacher Counseling with Teachers

In priesthood and auxiliary organizations, leaders are assigned to work with specific teachers. For example, a member of a Primary presidency may be assigned to work with those who teach children ages 8 through 11. A member of an elders quorum presidency may be assigned to work with the quorum instructors. These designated leaders should encourage teachers to contact them regularly—at least once every three months. If teachers do not contact their leaders at least once every three months, leaders should initiate a contact.

In these contacts, teachers should feel free to share experiences, discuss the needs of individuals in the quorum or class, and seek help and counsel. These contacts are most effective in person, but if necessary they may be made by telephone, mail, or some other means. When a female leader meets with a male teacher or a male leader meets with a female teacher, another adult should be present.

As teachers strive to meet challenges, leaders can do much to personally support and assist them. In their efforts to help teachers, leaders should remember that they are teachers themselves. They should be receptive to the promptings of the Holy Ghost and look for opportunities to bear

testimony, teach from the scriptures, and give appropriate counsel.

Leaders may feel uncomfortable or even inadequate as they consider their responsibility to counsel with teachers. They will receive insight and ability to carry out this important responsibility as they pray for guidance, study and live the gospel, and remember that they are called of the Lord. They can also receive valuable instruction as they study *Teaching, No Greater Call* and the "Gospel Teaching and Leadership" section of the *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*, attend teacher improvement meetings, and participate in the Teaching the Gospel course.

In counseling with teachers, leaders should allow the teachers' needs and concerns to guide the direction of the discussion. To help teachers think about how they are doing and what they can do to improve, leaders may want to ask questions that prompt careful thought, such as those in the following list. Such questions can also help leaders discover specific ways to help.

- How are you feeling about your calling as a teacher?
- Are there some experiences you have had with your class that you would like to talk about?
- What have been your most successful teaching experiences?
- Will you share some examples of how class members are responding to the lessons you teach?
- What are some specific needs of individual class members?
- What are some of your goals as a teacher?
- What can I do to help you accomplish your goals?

A Prophet's Challenge



"Of all the auxiliaries of the Church, the Sunday School is unique. . . . Its curriculum covers the entire spectrum of the gospel. . . . If the Church is to be strengthened, and it must be; if knowledge of the gospel is to be increased among the membership of the Church, and it must be; if the spirituality of our people is to be refined, and it must be—then the Sunday School must become even more effective" (Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Sunday School as a Missionary," *Ensign*, Aug. 1971, 29).