

THE Teacher Council DIFFERENCE

One comment in one teacher council meeting changed more than my teaching.



Teacher council meetings are helping Sandra Cattell (center) improve her teaching abilities.

By Sandra Cattell

I'm fairly old, so when I was called to teach the young women, I thought, "My goodness! I wonder why they've called me?"

I put a lot of effort into preparing lessons appropriate for the young women's needs, and I hoped they would be willing to share what they learned and what they did with it during the week. But my questions were often met with silence.

In one of our ward's first teacher council meetings, one of the teachers said she too was finding it difficult to get

the youth to communicate during the lessons. Another teacher in the meeting said, "Well, you can allow silence, you see." Sometimes people need a little time to think about a question before answering.

That comment in teacher council meeting made a difference not only in the way I teach but for my students as well. I thought a lot about it. In my next Young Women lesson, I asked the class what gospel principle they had applied during the week. As usual, there was silence. But instead of immediately jumping in to fill the silence,

WHY TEACHER COUNCIL MEETINGS?

Because we are all children of God, anyone willing to learn and live the gospel can become more like our Heavenly Father. Teachers play an important role in how we learn and live the gospel.

To help teachers, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have invited wards and branches around the Church to adopt teacher council meetings. These monthly meetings allow teachers and leaders to learn together as they share ideas about teaching.

These meetings are new, but they are already having a positive impact on both teachers and learners. Below are comments from members who have come to appreciate and enjoy teacher council meetings:

- “Having a support system strengthens me. Sometimes as teachers we feel teaching is a one-person job. But that changes when there is a council and a forum to share struggles, thoughts, and feelings and get feedback from a group who understands the calling.”
—Preston Stratford
- “Teacher council meetings help me realize the significance of my efforts to facilitate learning.”
—Margaret Tueller



- “I’ve enjoyed obtaining ideas on how teachers can learn to better ‘teach people’ instead of ‘teach lessons.’”
—Richard Pattee
- “Discussing ways to improve how we ask questions and encourage more participation has been very beneficial. Being able to talk about successes and frustrations has given me insight as well.” —Ken Sonnenberg
- “This council has done a great job at teaching skills that will make us better teachers. If you are more skilled as a teacher, everyone in your class can benefit. While it is a teacher council, I feel like I’m growing spiritually as well.” —Brent Nelson
- “It has been a pleasure to be stretched in my thinking for improved teaching.” —Camille Fronk Olson

To learn more about teacher council meetings and *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*, visit teaching.lds.org.

I remembered our teacher council discussion and quietly said, “There’s no rush.”

The moment I said that, the conversation started to flow. The young women started to open up, and they shared some tender experiences. I immediately wanted to thank the teacher who had made that simple comment in teacher council meeting about silence. I was amazed how practicing that one principle had such a big difference so quickly.

But I didn’t realize until later what a difference that and other principles I’ve been learning are making. After church

the mother of one of the young women told me that her daughter had said she knows that I’ve been called of God.

I can’t tell you how special hearing that comment was to me. There I was thinking, “What have I got to teach these young women?” But I must be teaching them something. I’m called for a purpose, and teacher council meetings are helping me fulfill that purpose. ■

The author lives in Scotland.

To learn more about how you can help change lives by changing the way you teach, visit teaching.lds.org.