

## Sunday School Presidencies Learning Important Role

By Lauren Allen

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Each Sunday in the Highland Utah 30th Ward, Richard Christiansen and his counselors in the Sunday School presidency go through a routine familiar in almost every unit of the Church. They make sure that each class has a teacher and help students get from the hallways to the classrooms.

However, Brother Christiansen has caught the vision that his responsibilities are not limited to herding students and ringing bells.

One of the primary roles of each quorum and auxiliary organization is to teach members gospel principles essential to their salvation. The role of a Sunday School presidency, such as Brother Christiansen and his counselors, is to assist auxiliary and priesthood leaders in this charge by acting as teacher training specialists within the ward.

“Teaching is the primary means the Church has to strengthen members, help them deepen their witness of the Restoration, and gain salvation and exaltation,” said Russell T. Osguthorpe, Sunday School general president.

As ward Sunday School president, Brother Christiansen has the responsibility to serve as a resource for parents, leaders, and teachers to help improve the instruction that occurs in the home and in the Church.

“Teaching is what it’s all about, and being effective as a teacher helps others be excited to learn,” Brother Christiansen said.

One of the tools at Sunday School presidencies’ disposal is the teacher improvement course that may be offered during Sunday School. The course consists of 12 lessons found in the *Teaching, No Greater Call* manual and may be taught by a member of the Sunday School presidency under the direction of the bishop.

“This is a course that can be helpful to any Church member who is interested in improving his or her teaching skills,” Brother Osguthorpe said, whether in the home or the classroom. “The lessons help participants learn how to teach by the Spirit, how to invite active, diligent learning, and how to teach so that members will be eager to apply the principles of the gospel in their own lives.”

According to Brother Osguthorpe, Sunday School presidents attend ward council regularly, as outlined in *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*, so that they can understand the bishop’s goals for the members of the ward and can counsel together on how to help improve teaching so those goals can be reached.



During a ward or branch council the Sunday School president could be invited by the bishop or branch president to provide instruction on principles relating to gospel teaching and learning. Brother Osguthorpe suggests that he could also report on attendance in youth and adult Sunday School classes and invite the help of other ward leaders to assist those who may be struggling.

“The most effective teaching in the Church occurs in homes where faithful parents live gospel principles and teach those principles to their children. The auxiliaries exist to support the home in these most sacred duties. The Sunday School presidency is a resource in the ward to help both parents and teachers fulfill their responsibilities,” said Brother Osguthorpe.

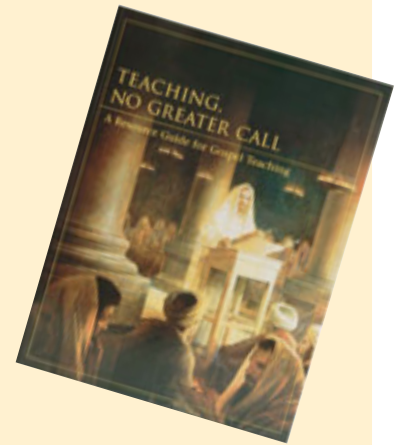
Successful gospel teaching on the part of parents and Church leaders can strengthen members’ testimonies and help them come unto Christ, he said.

“The only reasonable way to measure the effectiveness of gospel teaching [in a ward] is to observe the faithfulness of the members. If more young men are serving missions, if more youth are [growing up and] marrying in the temple, if more parents are reading the scriptures, holding family home evening, and worshipping in the temple regularly, teaching is improving.” ■

## RESOURCES TO IMPROVE TEACHING

Through use of the scriptures, the *Teaching, No Greater Call* (item no. 36123) manual, and the “Gospel Teaching and Leadership” section of the *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*, members may improve their teaching and fulfill the call of President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ “better than we have ever done before” (“We Have a Work to Do,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 88).

“We must strengthen ourselves and our people to get our teachers to speak out of their hearts rather than out of their books, to communicate their love for the Lord and their precious work, and somehow it will catch fire in the hearts of those they teach,” said President Hinckley (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1977], 619–20).



The purpose of the Teaching the Gospel course found in *Teaching, No Greater Call* is to help Church members develop their teaching abilities and realize the importance of improving gospel teaching. The course covers topics such as teaching by the Spirit, inviting diligent learning, and using effective teaching methods.

The *Teaching, No Greater Call* manual is available in more than 30 languages. Contact local distribution centers for availability. ■

## CHANGES TO TEACHER IMPROVEMENT EXPLAINED

In a letter dated November 17, 2006, the First Presidency announced changes to how teacher improvement should be handled. Some confusion persists. The following

### DISCONTINUED:

The *positions* of stake teacher improvement coordinator and ward teacher improvement coordinator were discontinued.

Quarterly teacher improvement meetings were discontinued.

identifies what the policy discontinued and what it did not.

### CONTINUED:

The *responsibilities* of the teacher improvement coordinator now belong to the ward or branch Sunday School president.

The teacher improvement course in *Teaching, No Greater Call* may still be taught as needed. ■