

Chalk It Up to Learning

The chalkboard can enhance your teaching—when you use it properly.

As a teacher, I am always looking for effective ways to engage my students in the lesson. I thought I was making good use of the chalkboard or whiteboard until I saw the board in the classroom next door. There, neatly displayed in the center, was a simple statement of doctrine, a picture, and two questions along with instructions for the students to answer the questions. As the class members came in, I watched as they looked in their scriptures for answers to the two questions. They even discussed the doctrine with each other. And all this activity was happening before the start of class!

I was impressed. Here was a teacher using a simple tool to engage his students in learning during a time that was normally wasted. He still greeted his students and gathered them for an opening prayer, but when the lesson began, the Spirit of the Lord had already touched the hearts of many of the students. They were prepared for a wonderful experience in the scriptures.

Basic Guidelines

In addition to the guidelines in *Teaching, No Greater Call* (see pp. 162 and 182), I have found the following helpful in using the chalkboard or whiteboard to teach the gospel.

- *Keep it simple.* In the February 2007 worldwide leadership training meeting, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reminded teachers that visual aids are aids. He said: “They are not a substitute for a lesson. Use them in a way that you would use spice in cooking—to flavor, to heighten, to accentuate, to enrich. A map or a painting or a video clip or a key point written on the board—these can often make the difference between a good lesson and a great lesson.”¹

- *Prepare.* Before you teach your lesson, organize on paper what you want to put on the board.

- *Write legibly.* In *Teaching, No Greater Call* (item no. 36123), teachers are encouraged to “write clearly and large enough for all to see, making sure the material is well spaced, orderly, and easy to read.”² You may want to invite a class member to help you.

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If you're looking for something new to help others learn the gospel, you might start by taking a fresh look at something old—
THE CHALKBOARD!



Matthew
5:14–16

Consider drawing simple pictures on the board and inviting students to read a scripture to determine the relationship between the pictures.

What to Write

Here are several ways to use the chalkboard or whiteboard so class members have a more meaningful experience:

Write messages to class members—

- Greet students by writing, “Welcome to Class,” or, “Have a Great Day.”
- Compliment individuals for their school or Church achievements. For example: “Congratulations on achieving the Duty to God Award.”
- Have the quorum or class president write announcements for upcoming activities.

Create interest and enhance the lesson by writing—

- *The lesson title:* Write the title of the

lesson or a phrase that represents the lesson. This will help students think about the lesson before class starts.

- *A question:* Write a question on the board that you will ask later in the lesson. You could even ask students to write down a response before class starts. This will produce more meaningful discussions.

- *A drawing:* Many students are visual learners. Consider drawing or having a student draw simple pictures of people, objects, or events on the board. For example, you could draw a candle on a candlestick holder, a bushel, and a hill. Then you could invite students to read Matthew 5:14–16 and determine the relationship between the objects.



• *An outline:* The board can be used to organize the lesson into small parts that are easy for students to understand. For example, if you were teaching Mosiah 11:1–15 about wicked King Noah, his priests, and the burdens he put on his Nephite people, you could write on the board “Noah,” “Priests,” and “People.” As students discover the characteristics of each group, you or a student could write the characteristics under each title.

Increase student participation by writing—

• *Students’ thoughts:* Invite students to come to the board and write short phrases that represent their thoughts about



USE THE CHALKBOARD TO FOCUS ATTENTION

“I think that no teaching aid surpasses, and few equal, the chalkboard: first, because it is simple to use, and next, because it is universally available—everywhere in the world you

can get a chalkboard. You can use it to focus the eyes of your students while the main lesson is presented audibly. As you talk, you can put just enough on the board to focus their attention and give them the idea, but never so much that the visual aid itself distracts them.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, *Teach Ye Diligently* (1975), 266.

a topic, such as why temples are important to them.

• *Student surveys:* If you are teaching a lesson on Church standards, you could write the words “Word of Wisdom,” “Honesty,” and “Morality” in three columns. You could place check marks under the standards that class members think are most difficult for people to live. Then ask them to share their feelings.

• *Students’ answers:* Use the board to have students write their answers to a question. Suppose you were giving a lesson on the Holy Ghost. You could have students write their answers to this question: “What truths does God reveal to us through the Holy Ghost?”

Effective Teaching Using a Simple Tool

Of course, these are only some of the many ways you can facilitate learning by using the chalkboard or whiteboard. You can think of other ways, adapting them to your class and topic. ■

NOTES

1. “Teaching and Learning in the Church,” *Liabona*, June 2007, 71; *Ensign*, June 2007, 103.
2. *Teaching, No Greater Call* (1999), 162.

