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HELPING YOUTH Teach

Youth need to teach. The Lord made this clear when He listed the duties of a priest: “The priest’s duty is *to preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and administer the sacrament*” (D&C 20:46; emphasis added).

Just a few verses later the Lord extends the duty to teach and expound to teachers and deacons (see D&C 20:58–59). The truth is that all of our young men and young women need the opportunity to teach occasionally.

The Benefits of Youth Teaching Other Youth

Jesus Christ was the perfect teacher. Teaching helps youth follow the Savior’s example and become more like Him. Teaching also prepares them to become missionaries, parents, and leaders in the Church. When youth teach, they have to study the gospel and live it. They also have to have the Spirit in order to teach (see D&C 42:14). As a result, youth teachers usually learn more and gain a stronger testimony of the topic than those they teach.

In addition, youth who teach gain confidence and learn teaching skills. Youth who have had the opportunity to be teachers also learn to be better students and class members.

What’s more, the youth being taught are also blessed. Youth often listen and participate more when their peers teach. Friendships are strengthened as youth discuss gospel

topics with the Spirit present. And youth are frequently better able to help one another work through common problems.

How Can Adult Leaders Help Youth Succeed?

When youth teach, adult leaders are responsible for ensuring appropriate behavior and a spiritual atmosphere.

Adult leaders follow the Spirit when inviting youth to teach.¹ Some youth are not ready to teach, and leaders must be careful not to make these youth feel uncomfortable. Other youth may be ready to teach only part of a lesson, but others could teach an entire lesson. While youth should usually have at least a part in teaching most lessons, they should not teach every lesson. In small classes, youth should not be asked to teach too often. Some lessons, especially those on difficult topics, are best taught by adults. Furthermore, youth need to see adult leaders model correct teaching principles.

Adult leaders or parents should work one-on-one with youth to help them prepare their lessons. This assistance includes asking youth to read the lesson at least a week in advance,² suggesting they pray to know what Heavenly Father would have them teach, developing a lesson plan, and practicing teaching the lesson together. As youth receive revelation during the preparation process, leaders can help them recognize it as such.



*Youth need to teach,
and with some help,
they can teach well.*

together. Jacob took the first half of the lesson, showed a short video, shared scriptures related to our topic, and asked thoughtful questions.

Jacob also asked the class members

Adult leaders can help youth teachers create questions that generate discussion, invite the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and help students discover truth for themselves. Leaders can also help youth learn to be silent after asking a question to give class members time to receive revelation.

During the lesson, adult leaders could share personal experiences and testimonies that help the youth see that they are not alone in their challenges and give them hope to overcome them. Youth need the wisdom and experience that adult leaders offer. Leaders should also clarify doctrine when necessary.

Adult leaders avoid taking over the lesson, even if the youth teacher is struggling. However, leaders can be prepared to provide support by studying the lesson materials beforehand and praying about how they can best help the youth teacher.

Youth Can Teach, and Teach Well

I recently was asked to substitute teach my ward's 12- and 13-year-old Sunday School class. I asked my 13-year-old son, Jacob, to help me teach. We made a lesson plan

what they were feeling and helped them recognize the Holy Ghost.

In the second half of the class, I had the class members teach each other the First Vision. We then invited them to teach the First Vision to their families in family home evening. After the class we sent an email to the parents informing them of our invitation.

When I asked Jacob how he felt about the lesson, he said, "It was really good. I know the Spirit was there because I didn't think my classmates could answer our questions, but they did."

Youth need to teach, and you can help them succeed. As they do, their testimonies will grow, and they will be better prepared to be missionaries, parents, and leaders in the Church. More importantly, they will become more like the Savior. ■

Please see the new manual Teaching in the Savior's Way at teaching.lds.org for more ideas on improving teaching.

NOTES

1. Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidents counsel with their adult leaders in deciding which youth will teach upcoming lessons (see *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 8.3.2).
2. Because revelation comes "line upon line, precept upon precept" (2 Nephi 28:30), reading the lesson at least a week in advance gives teachers time to receive revelation.