Teaching and Facilitation

All of the Student Living materials are to be taught in a format that welcomes participation and promotes meaningful discussion. Discussions can bring results that seldom occur in any other way. For example, an effective discussion can (1) promote diligent learning, (2) encourage unity among those you teach, (3) increase understanding, and (4) reduce misunderstanding. Consider the following suggestions adapted from Teaching, No Greater Call (pp. 63-65) on conducting effective discussions:

A. Use Questions. Questions can help learners understand a principle, think about it more deeply, and relate it to their lives. Ask questions that encourage thoughtful comments and help individuals truly ponder the gospel.

B. Be Sensitive to the Spirit's Influence on Those Present. The Holy Ghost may prompt one or more of those you teach to contribute insights that others need to hear. Be open to promptings you receive to call on specific people. You may even feel impressed to ask a person who does not volunteer to express his or her views.

C. Find Ways for All to Participate. Those you teach will benefit from each other's participation. "Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege" (D&C 88:122).

D. Do Not Talk Too Much. Teachers who lecture most of the time or answer every question themselves tend to discourage learners from participating. You should be careful not to talk more than necessary or to express your opinion too often. These actions can cause learners to lose interest. Think of yourself as a guide on a journey of learning who inserts appropriate comments to keep those you teach on the correct path.

Your main concern should be helping others learn the Gospel, not making an impressive presentation. This includes providing opportunities for learners to teach one another. When an individual asks a question, consider inviting others to answer it instead of answering it yourself. For example, you could say, "That's an interesting question. What do the rest of you think?" or "Can anyone help with this question?"

E. Do Not End Discussions Too Soon. Be careful not to end a good discussion too soon in an attempt to present all the material you have prepared. Although it is important to cover the material, it is more important to help learners feel the influence of the spirit, resolve their questions, increase their understanding of the gospel, and deepen their commitment to keep the commandments.

F. Acknowledge All Contributions. You can help those you teach feel more confident about their ability to participate in a discussion if you respond positively to every sincere comment.

"As you become more aware of teaching ideas around you, it will be helpful for you to keep track of impressions you receive. Carry a small notebook with you, and write about things that strike you as potential teaching ideas. Record insights from talks you hear or lessons in which you participate. Write about faith promoting experiences. As you develop the habit of noting these things, you will become more and more aware of the rich teaching resources that are around you" (Teaching, No Greater Call, p. 23).
Prepare
Sincere preparation allows the Lord to teach through you not only by word but by testimony and example.

- During your preparation, the Spirit can inspire and direct you to the gospel principles that will bless the lives of those who participate in the discussion. The Spirit will also help you in developing questions for your lesson.
- Take time to read, ponder, and plan your lesson. The more time you give yourself to prepare, the more time you give the Spirit to guide your steps.
- As you prepare, ask yourself some questions: How do I want others to participate in the lesson? Do I need to make any assignments or invitations beforehand? You may have someone come with an experience ready to share or you may have someone ponder a question and come with an answer.

We learn in the manual, Teaching: No Greater Call that we need to develop a “teacher’s eyes and ears.” Consider the following suggestions:

- **Study the Lesson Well in Advance.** When you are familiar with the lessons you are going to teach, you will be more aware of everyday occurrences that you can use to teach those lessons.
- **Pray Everyday for Help in Your Preparation.** Ask Heavenly Father to help you be aware of things that will make your lessons vivid, memorable, and inspiring to those you teach.
- **Always Keep in Mind Those You Teach and the Lesson You Are Preparing.** Think about those you teach. Consider their lives, the decisions they face, and the directions they are going (Teaching: No Greater Call, pp. 22-23).

Framing
When setting up a discussion, take a moment to determine what the desired outcomes are, how the discussion mechanics will flow, and how you will evaluate participant understanding. This will give the discussion a structure or frame that will help it be effective. Without proper framing, discussions may not make complete sense or may stray from the main point.

Framing helps everyone understand the boundaries of the discussion as well as where to focus learning and application.

Teach One Another
The value of a Student Living lesson is found in discussion. To simply read through the lessons, one misses the desired outcome of Student Living. These lessons are an opportunity for everyone to become “neighbors, in the true scriptural sense of the word,” to “remind, help, and encourage us to consistently think, speak, and act in a way that invites the Spirit of the Holy Ghost among us” (David A. Bednar, “In the Path of Their Duty,” see p. 21 in this manual). Through your preparation and framing, you can create an environment where participants feel comfortable contributing. In your role as facilitator, your attitude will have an influence on how people participate. Be attentive to what your attitude and body language communicate throughout the course of the discussion.

- When you pose a question, wait patiently for responses. Allow people time to think. If the silence is prolonged, it might indicate that people do not understand the question. On the other hand, it might mean that profound thought is taking place, which shouldn’t be interrupted prematurely.
- Encourage students to ask questions. Ask if anyone has questions before moving on to a different part of a discussion.
- Listen attentively as people respond. Avoid preoccupation with the discussion process or with what your next question will be. This encourages further participation that “…all may be edified by all…” (D&C 88:122).
- Avoid the temptation to end a good discussion too soon in order to present all the material you have prepared or to move on to the next part of the lesson or activity. More important than covering material is that those participating feel the Spirit, have their questions answered, increase their understanding of the gospel, and deepen their commitment to follow the example of the Savior.
Ponder and Prove

The Savior often asked questions to encourage people to ponder and apply the gospel principles He taught (see Matthew 16:13-15, Luke 7:41-42, 3 Nephi 27:27). Consider also how the spirit of the Lord used questions to guide Nephi when he desired to see the things his father had seen in the vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 11:14).

- Start with a lead question. A well-structured lead question sets the parameters as well as provides the focus for the ensuing discussion. Inspired lead questions do much to create and develop meaningful discussions. Lead questions are typically broad and open a discussion rather than seek out a specific answer.

- With good questions, you can guide people to discover new ideas and make connections between the material and things they already know. Ask questions that encourage thoughtful comments and help individuals truly ponder the gospel. These questions often begin with words such as what, how, or why.

- After opening the discussion, use follow-up questions to direct the discussion and to explore, discover, clarify, challenge, and apply key principles. Good follow-up questions will help inspire people to higher levels of learning, such as moving from knowledge of the principles to an increased desire to apply them in one's life.

- Keep in mind that you don't have to ask all the questions. Follow-up questions can be asked by one participant to another, to the entire class or to you. Remember, the main purpose of asking follow-up questions is to empower those you are teaching to deepen their ability to learn from and teach each other, not just simply respond to you. Strive to have people respond to and engage each other in the discussion whenever possible.

- When leading a discussion and responding to comments, a facilitator's role is to validate, amplify, and testify of the principles discussed. The facilitator can strengthen the presence of the spirit in the discussion through thoughtful and inspired responses.

Activities

Activities help improve the learning experience and can draw class members into the lesson. When choosing the type of activity you will use, consider the audience, the setting, and your subject. Choosing an appropriate activity will enhance the learning of those involved.

- **Think-Pair-Share**—Using a question, prompt, or example gives students a few minutes to ponder. Have students pair up and share their personal insights with one another. After they discuss in pairs, invite them to share with the rest of the group.

- **Role Play**—Role plays involve taking on a persona while acting out a scenario. Assign roles to the participants involved and give them information both about their character and about the situation to be enacted. A role play need not be more than two to three minutes. After the role play, lead the class in a debriefing of the experience.

- **Scenarios**—Scenarios or case studies provide an opportunity for participants to apply principles of problem solving to real-life situations.

- **Brainstorm List**—Within a certain time limit, have participants come up with ideas, solutions, applications, etc., to a principle or question. As participants share, mark off duplicate items.

Application

A lesson is not complete until a challenge or invitation is extended which inspires and motivates participants to apply what they have learned. Each of the Student Living lessons has an application section to help participants apply what has been discussed. A worksheet that accompanies the application section is available online for printing at www.byui.edu/studentliving under the Ward & Stake Leader section.
Evaluate Your Teaching

As you teach, take an opportunity from time to time to reflect on your teaching. Use the following excerpt from the manual, Teaching, No Greater Call, (pp. 103-104) to help you evaluate your teaching. Consider writing down some of your responses and/or goals in a journal or other special place to help you improve. This page is also available to print online at www.byui.edu/studentliving under ‘Ward and Stake Leaders.’

“We ascertain and establish acceptable standards of excellence ... and measure our work accordingly. We should be less interested in excelling others but more concerned with excelling our own past records” (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 488).

We should take time after each lesson to follow President Kimball’s counsel to “measure our work.” This will help us prepare for the next lesson and continue to improve as teachers.

Whatever changes you are prompted to make, remember that evaluation of your teaching should be a positive experience, not a discouraging one. Every time you discover a way to improve your teaching, you discover a new way to help others learn the gospel and live according to its principles ...

The success of a lesson is measured by its influence on those you teach ... The questions listed below may help you as you evaluate lessons ... After considering what you have done well, you can determine what you can do better.

- At what points in the lesson did those I teach seem most willing to participate? When did they seem less willing to participate?
- At what points in the lesson did they seem to feel the influence of the Spirit most strongly? When did they seem to feel the influence of the Spirit less strongly?
- At what points in the lesson did they seem most thoughtful? When did they not seem to be thinking very deeply?
- At what points in the lesson did they seem to make the most application in their lives? When did they seem to miss the lesson’s application in their lives?

As you ponder each of the questions listed above, consider these follow-up questions:

- What aspect of the lesson presentation seemed to contribute to those responses?
- What does this tell me about those I teach?
- How can this understanding help me as I prepare the next lesson?