

Teacher Development

A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR UNITED METHODIST CONGREGATIONS

Our Vision for Teachers

Teachers in all settings are spiritual leaders who pay attention to their relationship with God and with others and who live their faith in their daily lives. They have knowledge and skills to create safe, healthy settings for people to seek God, respond to God's grace, and find support and encouragement for living as disciples in the world.

Becoming a spiritual leader is a transformational experience, which is the work of God. The work of the congregation is to:

- understand how teaching ministries support the formation of Christian disciples;
- establish clear expectations for teachers;
- develop a congregational plan for teacher development;
- assist teachers in assessing their knowledge and skills and in building personal learning plans;
- provide teachers with opportunities for spiritual growth and learning;
- provide resources and other materials that teachers may need to be effective.

As congregations identify and equip people for teaching, they can find guidance in the General Rules developed by John Wesley for use with class leaders and published in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, p.73-74. As a starting point for our teachers, we expect that they will abide by the first rule "by doing no harm, avoiding evil of every kind." As teachers grow in faith and ability, they will find themselves increasingly living the second rule of "doing good;...as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as possible, to all..." Finally, as teachers develop and mature, they will follow the third rule to "attend upon all the ordinances of God" (spiritual disciplines). These spiritual disciplines include congregational worship, prayer, fasting, Holy Communion, and scriptural study. These and other means of grace expand our connection with God and our ability to live our daily lives in ways that help meet true need and transform the world through acts of love. Within this context, teachers and group members experience God's sanctifying grace in their teaching and learning.

About This Leaflet

As congregations develop their own plans for teacher development, it is important to keep in mind what teachers need to know and do to be effective in their task. To facilitate the planning process two continua have been developed that articulate basic knowledge and actions for effective teaching. On pages 2 and 3, you will find what every teacher needs to know in ten core categories. On pages 4 and 5, you will find what every teacher needs to do outside and inside the teaching session. Based on the model of the General Rules, each category on the continua begins with envisioning what is needed to "do no harm" in the classroom and then moves toward what is needed for "doing good...to all." Indicator statements are included on both ends of the continuum that describe what knowledge and behavior may look like as people move from one end of the continuum to the other.

On the pages following the continua you will find additional helps for developing a congregational plan for teacher development. It is our prayer that with God's leading you will develop a plan for your congregation that will equip and support teachers as they lead in forming disciples for the transformation of the world.

What Every Teacher Needs to Know

To Do No Harm	To Do All the Good You Can
Bible	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know that the Bible is the basic book for Christians because it contains stories that help us know about God and Jesus. • I know that The United Methodist Church believes that the Word of God is included in both the Old and New Testaments. • I can locate books, chapters, and verses in the Bible. • I know there are different versions of the Bible. • I know there are different ways to study the Bible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know how to make Bible passages alive and relevant to today. • I can articulate how the Bible is authoritative for me. • I can teach others to use their Bibles. • I can use different versions to help make the Bible come alive in the class. • I know how to use a variety of methods to help group members find meaning.
People	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe that each person is uniquely created by God. • I know the general age-level characteristics of the group with whom I work. • I know there are a variety of teaching and learning styles and personality types. • I know how groups work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I treat each person as a child of God and appreciate his or her uniqueness. • I understand the pattern of growth throughout the life span. • I match methods to the learning styles of my group members. • I use my knowledge to create effective learning experiences for my group.
Christian Heritage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think it is important to know our Christian heritage. • I understand that our heritage helps us express our faith through prayers, hymns, creeds, celebrations, and sacraments. • I know that we celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas, his death on Good Friday, and his resurrection on Easter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand myself and others as part of the ongoing story of the church. • I use the Christian heritage to enrich my teaching. • I live and help others live within the rhythm of the church year.
The United Methodist Church	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know that the UMC defines the mission of the church as making disciples of Jesus Christ. • I know that the UMC theology and doctrine can be found in <i>The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church</i>. • I know that the UMC has a unique history and a unique connectional identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a teacher I claim my role in making disciples of Jesus Christ. • I use the UMC theology and doctrine in my teaching. • I claim my role as a United Methodist Christian and help others to do the same.

What Every Teacher Needs to Know

To Do No Harm	To Do All the Good You Can
Theology	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I profess that God is love. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I experience God’s love and help others experience God’s love.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can know God through Jesus’ life, ministry, death, and resurrection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can express my own understanding of who Jesus Christ is and can help others to express their understanding of Christ.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know that theology is thinking about God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I reflect theologically on my experience and help others to do so.
Teaching	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know there are a variety of ways to teach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I match my teaching methodology to the group members and the context.
Faith Language	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know that the word Christian means one who follows Jesus Christ. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can express my personal experience of the Christian faith.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know the church has its own language to describe its experience and faith. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know there are ways in addition to language to express experience and faith.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know church language can be hard to understand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use appropriate faith language for the group I lead.
Curriculum	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know how and where to get curriculum resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know how to evaluate and adapt curriculum resources appropriately for my group.
Classroom Environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know my group members’ names. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group members experience Christian community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am in the room when the first group member arrives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group members experience Christian hospitality.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know the importance of establishing a safe place for learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group members experience an optimal place and space for learning.
Living the Faith	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know ministry is about loving God and loving neighbor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I help group members live out their ministry every day in all circumstances.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know Jesus was a unique model of ethical living. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I help group members become Christlike in their daily lives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand that people can abuse the authority of being a teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I teach in ways that honor group members, and I learn from their faith experiences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know there are many ways to be in mission and service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I help others be in mission and service appropriate to their spiritual gifts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recognize that Christian faith is a way of life that goes beyond teaching concepts and ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I engage my students in actually practicing the faith, not simply talking about it.

What Every Teacher Needs to Do

To Do No Harm		To Do All the Good You Can
Outside the Group Meeting		
• I read the plan in the curriculum.	Plan	• I create learning experiences appropriate to goals and learners that lead to transformation.
• I prepare for my group by the previous day or night.	Prepare	• I do long-range planning with short-term implementation.
• I know the purpose of Christian education.	See the Big Picture	• The purpose of Christian education is fully integrated into my life mission.
• I look for a connection to make a life application.	Connect	• I develop ways to help group members find their own applications.
• I use United Methodist curriculum as written.	Select resources	• I adapt and supplement resources appropriately to enable transformation.
• I am aware that there are differences in theology and that the UMC has a theology.	Be aware of theology	• I can recognize what theology is implicit in curriculum; I have the ability to determine appropriateness.
• I ask, “What do I believe?”	Think theologically	• I help others think theologically.
• I model the disciples’ example.	Model Christian living	• I model Christ’s example.
• I pray for my class while planning.	Pray for students	• I live a life of prayer, conscious of the needs of my group members.
• I know the spiritual disciplines listed in the <i>Book of Discipline</i> .	Practice spiritual disciplines	• I integrate the spiritual disciplines into my life.
Inside the Group Meeting or Setting		
• I create a physically safe environment.	Develop physical environment	• I establish physical environments that encourage and empower group members to take responsibility for learning.
• I accept any student response.	Develop emotional environment	• I establish emotional environments for questioning, searching, and pushing boundaries.
• I am quiet while group members talk.	Listen	• I can evaluate group learning and encourage further learning.

What Every Teacher Needs to Do

To Do No Harm		To Do All the Good You Can
Inside the Group Meeting or Setting		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I acknowledge the differences in people. 	Value diversity and variety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I actively seek to integrate diversity into the learning experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know there are a variety of methods that can be used to teach. 	Use appropriate teaching process to get desired results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I identify the end result for each group member and incorporate the most appropriate teaching process for the subject and group members' needs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know the biblical story well enough to be able to tell it rather than read it. • I know my own faith story. 	Tell the "story" to be heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have well-developed biblical knowledge and a variety of storytelling skills. • I have a high comfort level and sense of appropriateness in sharing personal faith stories.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can identify at least one life application that can be found in the Bible story. 	Help learner connect story with life application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use teaching methods that help each group member identify applications for his or her own life.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use teaching methods that help group members remember the key concepts after leaving the group. 	Make "lesson" memorable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I create experiences that will "make the point" in ways that will influence the group member for life.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use at least two teaching methods in each group session. 	Use variety of teaching methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I incorporate the most appropriate teaching methods for the desired results.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use the prayer suggested in the curriculum resources. 	Pray with group members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I help group members pray.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can define the concept of spiritual disciplines (using language appropriate for the age level) when praying, reading the Bible, and so forth. 	Include teaching and practice of spiritual disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I regularly incorporate the practice and teaching of spiritual disciplines in my class.

Developing a Congregational Plan for Teacher Development

Assess Current Reality

Using the continua on the preceding pages, help teachers identify where they would place themselves in their knowledge and behavior as spiritual leaders. These continua are tools to help you discern where support and nurture are needed and to help teachers create personal plans for growth and development.

Create and Implement Individual and Group Development Plans

Remember that one size does not fit all and that there are many ways to grow as a teacher. Training events, individual study, mentoring, Covenant Discipleship groups, and apprentice teaching are just a few of the methods that may be part of a teacher development plan. Some competencies are relatively easy to attain through reading or workshops. Others are more complex and require ongoing practice and reflection.

Pay particular attention to areas in which teachers need training or mentoring to reach the “do no harm” level. You may want to pair an experienced teacher with a less experienced teacher to ensure that the leadership of all learning groups and classes has appropriate skills and knowledge.

Your assessment may reveal specific subjects or skills in which most of your teachers express a need for additional support. These can become a part of your overall congregational plan for faith development and disciple-making.

Evaluate the Plan

Individual and group development plans are dynamic and change as teachers grow as spiritual leaders. Transformation is an ongoing and lifelong process. We should not expect that any teachers will reach the end of their teacher development plan.

Provide ways for teachers to evaluate and revise their individual learning plans periodically. Create a mechanism for individual assessments to inform the congregation’s comprehensive plan for teacher development.

Pay attention to transformation that is occurring in your teachers, in the lives of those they teach, and in the community at large. Name and celebrate the ways that God is working through the teaching ministries of your congregation.

Some Questions to Consider

- What training, nurture, and support are needed to equip our teachers to move from doing no harm toward doing all the good they can?
- What training, nurture, and support are we providing for new teachers to ensure that no harm is occurring?
- How are we helping experienced teachers to learn and grow?
- Does our congregation have an intentional plan for helping individuals grow as disciples, and how are teachers incorporated into that plan?
- How is our congregational understanding of sabbath renewal incorporated in our plan for teacher development?
- Do we have a congregational prayer ministry that undergirds and supports our teachers?

Core Resources for Planning

All of these resources are available for download at no additional cost at <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org>. If you are reading the PDF version of this document, you can access the resources by clicking on the title.

Foundations: Shaping the Ministry of Christian Education In Your Congregation

Grounded in “Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task” as stated in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, this is a statement of the biblical and theological foundations of Christian education.

Intentional Faith Development: Establishing Standards for Christian Formation and Discipleship.

To be used in conjunction with Foundations, this resource helps congregations as they develop standards as part of a comprehensive plan for faith formation.

iTeach

A free monthly e-mail newsletter for teachers and leaders that provides support for the developmental areas identified in *Teacher Development*.

What Every Teacher Needs to Know

Originally published as a series of booklets, these resources are now available as downloadable leaflets. Each leaflet provides basic knowledge to help teachers reach the “do no harm” level in the areas identified in *Teacher Development*. Leaflet titles include:

Teachers as Spiritual Leaders and Theologians
Teachers Know Their Place in the Faith Story
Classroom Environment
A Short Glossary of Faith and Church Language
Understanding The United Methodist Church
Teachers Know Their Place in the Faith Story
Teachers Live the Faith
A People of God
Who Am I as a Teacher?

Development Through the Lifespan

An age-level developmental chart that includes physical, cognitive, and spiritual development.

The Ministry of Christian Education

Information that was formerly found in the book *The Ministry of Christian Education and Formation: A Practical Guide for your Congregation* is now available as a series of downloadable leaflets. Leaflet titles include:

Assess Your Congregation’s Policies
Assess Your Facilities and Equipment
Budgeting for Christian Education and Formation
Choosing Curriculum Resources
Creating Job Descriptions
Evaluating Your Ministry
Forming an Effective Christian Education Team
Getting the Word Out

What Every Child Should Experience: A Guide for Teachers and Leaders in United Methodist Congregations

This resource contains a comprehensive guide to Scripture significant for children as they develop. It also contains a chart of what children need and understand developmentally as well as what teachers and parents can provide related to the concepts of God, worship, the Bible, home and family, relating faith in everyday life, community and world, significant terms, and Wesleyan heritage.

Selected Discipleship Ministries Staff Directory

Call on these staff members of Discipleship Ministries for assistance with your ministry of Christian education and formation.

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