

# DIRECTIONS

Foursquare National Department of Christian Education

A Newsletter for Christian Educators

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## The Way We Learn

**A** real key to unlock a person's potential rests in an ability to recognize the way they learn.

Jesus brought life to learning. He used the natural to explain the supernatural. Jesus helped people learn truth by beginning with the end results. He explained living water to the woman at the well. His call to the disciples in Matthew 4:18 was, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Jesus understood the culture; He knew those four fishermen would know and respond to that illustration.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus captures our attention by beginning with the end(action) in mind and working through to the present (attitude)! Action reflects attitude.

Jesus' disciples learned by understanding. He had a PURPOSE for them. They were given goals and principals to live by. In Matthew 28:19 - 20, Jesus shares the purpose, "GO and make disciples..."

He was PRESENT - He would walk them through the learning process. In verse 20, He says, "Lo, I am with you always."

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He gave them POWER - they had to believe they had the ability through Jesus to accomplish those goals and follow those principles. In verse 18, Jesus states, "All authority has been given Me in heaven and earth."

Today, our focus in Christian Education (learning for Christian life) should be the same—not a transfer of Bible information in a classroom, but rather the creation of an atmosphere where Biblical truth will penetrate or permeate the heart and mind for change.

Jesus based His teaching on relationship. This never-ending process of evaluating and adapting "THE WAY WE LEARN" will allow us to meet the changing needs of this generation.

*Rick Wulfestieg*

# THE WAY WE LEARN

Learning how to recognize and appreciate learning styles can help you identify the natural strengths and tendencies each individual possesses.

One of the most effective models for understanding learning style differences comes from the research of Dr. Anthony F. Gregorc. His model provides invaluable insights into how our minds perceive and order information. There are two points of view for each process:

**Perception:** The way we take in information. Perceptions shape what we think, how we make decisions and how we define what's important to us. Our individual perceptions also determine our natural learning styles.

**CONCRETE** This quality lets us register information directly through our five senses: sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing. When we are using our concrete abilities, we are dealing with what is here and now—the tangible, the obvious. We are not looking for hidden meanings or trying to make relationship between ideas or concepts. The key phrase simply stated is, **“It is what it is.”**

**ABSTRACT** This quality allows us to visualize, to conceive ideas, to understand or believe what we can't actually see. When we are using this abstract quality, we are using our intuition, our intellect, our imagination. We are looking beyond what is to the more subtle implications. The key phrase for the abstract is, **“It's not always what it seems.”**

Although everyone uses both concrete and abstract perceptual abilities, each person is more comfortable using one over the other. For example, the person whose natural strength is concrete may prefer to listen in a direct, literal, no-nonsense manner. The person whose natural strength is abstract may often pick up the more subtle cues from others as they communicate.

**Ordering:** The way we use the information we perceive. Once we've taken the information in, we all use two methods of ordering what we know. According to Gregorc, the two ordering abilities are sequential and random:

**SEQUENTIAL** A method of ordering that allows our minds to organize information in a linear, step-by-step manner. When using sequential ability, we are following a logical train of thought, a conventional approach to dealing with information. Those who have strong sequential ordering abilities may prefer to have a plan and follow it, rather than relying on impulse. Their key phrase is, **“Follow the steps.”**

**RANDOM** Random ordering lets our minds organize information by chunks and with no particular sequence. When we are using our random ability, we may often be able to skip steps in a procedure and still produce the desired result. We might even start in the middle or begin at the end and work backwards. Those with a strong random way of ordering information may seem impulsive or more spontaneous. It appears as if they do not have a plan. Their key phrase is **“Just get it done.”**

## What makes most sense to them?

### Dominant Concrete Sequential

- working systematically
- paying attention to details
- using literal interpretations
- establishing routines
- knowing what's expected of them

### Dominant Abstract Sequential

- using well-researched information
- learning more by watching than doing
- using logical reasoning
- living in the world of abstract ideas
- working through an issue thoroughly

### Dominant Abstract Random

- personalizing learning
- having broad, general principals
- maintaining friendly relationships
- deciding with the heart, not the head
- participating enthusiastically in projects they believe in

### Dominant Concrete Random

- using insight and instinct to solve problems
- working with general time frames
- developing and testing many solutions
- using real-life experiences to learn
- trying something themselves rather than taking your word for it

# Team TEACHING



## Outreach Partner

This Partner works with the teacher in building relationships with existing students and their families and in surveying the congregation and community for new students in the classroom. The Outreach Partner creates a plan for personally contacting each student during the quarter through telephone calls, notes, birthday cards, etc. This person assists the teacher in maintaining contact with absentees, and in the process discovering any kind of personal or family needs. The Outreach Partner coordinates any mission projects and intentionally looks for and extends invitations to persons not currently attending a particular class.

## Other Partners

Assisting or substitute teachers and class officers.

## Steps in Building a Support Teaching Team

1. Decide what kinds of support will be most beneficial to you as a teacher.
2. Invite persons from your class (parents, adult class members) in the church who may have minimal involvement. Stronger teams are those persons who can develop a sense of commitment to each other, to the Lord, and to the students they seek to serve.
3. Meet regularly with your team. Teams function best when they have an opportunity to build each other up. A monthly meeting scheduled for an hour or so is optimum.

Great Teachers can benefit from the support of a great Teacher's Team.

Reprinted with permission. Team Teaching by Joe Cookston appeared in Leader Newsletter August/September Issue.

# REAL MEN DO TEACH

## AN ABSENCE OF FATHERS IN FAMILIES

"More children will go to sleep tonight in a fatherless home than ever in the nation's history."

Nancy Gibbs, BRINGING UP THE FATHER, Time magazine, 6/28/93, pg. 53.

## MEN PRESENT A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE

It's not better, but it's necessary. Children need the influence of both men and women in their life.

## MEN HAVE A NEED TO PASS THE TORCH

It is within the heart of every man to pass something of value and worth on to the next generation. The problem today is that many men just don't know how.

## MEN NEED A MINISTRY OF FULFILLMENT

Quite plainly, children have a pure, expressive love for God that adults usually don't have.

Children's ministry may not always be easy, but you'll always know you are making a difference for eternity.

## GOD BLESSES FAITHFUL MEN IN MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN

The bottom line, men who have utilized their time with children have learned lessons of faithfulness in service which cannot be achieved through any other dimension of Christian ministry.

## MEN'S MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN IS PROPHETIC IN NATURE

The last thing to happen (Malachi 4:5-6) before God judges the earth is that Elijah the prophet will come, not as a judge or priest. He will come as an emissary calling men to turn their heart back to their children and in response the children will love their fathers.

What God wants are men great enough to be small enough to be used.

Excerpted with permission from Children and Family Newsletter: Getting Men On Your Children's Ministry, TEAM, by Darrell Fraley.

The goal of the Teacher's Team concept is for every lead teacher in the educational ministry of a congregation to have a team of support persons, each person with a specific role. These roles vary according to the age level of the learners, whether adult or preschool, older youth, or middle elementary.

## Roles of the Teacher's Team

The following roles are suggestions for the Teacher's Team:

### Prayer Partner

One person covenants with each teacher as a prayer partner. Teachers relay to their Prayer Partners concerns for students and their families, concerns and burdens that the teachers themselves may carry, and outreach concerns for new students, new conversion and new growth. Potential prayer partners come from the ranks of senior citizens and persons not able to be involved actively.

### Craft Partner

At times, effective teaching requires additional materials and resources for the classroom. The Craft Partner gets a list of materials and resources that a teacher needs in the weeks ahead and finds or makes and has them available for the scheduled teaching session. Such materials may include:

- preparation of charts or graphs
- cutting out flannelgraph figures
- locating for purchase any specialized craft materials
- composing visuals or overhead transparencies
- searching for particular songs on cassette tapes or CD's

# PREVENTING DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

Adapted from a workshop designed and used by Dr. Joyce L. Thornton, Winebrenner Theological Seminary, Findlay, Ohio. Supplemented by the staff of the Christian Education Department.

## THE SITUATION:

Johnny is acting up again in the 3rd grade classroom! Ms. Gardner, his teacher, wants you to call in his parents, then expel him from Sunday School. A few of the parents think Ms. Gardner should be able to handle it, and maybe she needs to be replaced. What will you do?

## THE CHALLENGE:

Reduce discipline problems by focusing on preventing behavior challenges without alienating parents, teachers, or children.

## THE STANDARD SOLUTION:

Introduce teachers to measures that help prevent discipline problems. Begin by involving your teachers in the following one-hour training workshop.

## GOALS:

1. Identify causes of discipline problems they face;
2. Explore measures needed to prevent discipline problems; and
3. Suggest ideas for improvement in the area in which they feel most vulnerable.

## IDENTIFY CAUSES:

1. As participants arrive, direct them to tables of four to five persons. Ask each person to complete on a strip of paper the following statement: "Discipline problems occur in my classroom because \_\_\_\_\_." Ask tables to discuss their responses, then tape the sheets on a wall or flip chart.
2. After three minutes, ask one person from each table to report the most commonly mentioned cause(s) of discipline problems identified.

## SOLUTIONS:

### A. Prevention vs. Diagnosis

1. Ask participants to distinguish between prevention and diagnosis.
2. Explain the importance of being a "disciplines" teacher "preventer" rather than a teacher who must discipline.

### B. Preventive measures used by the disciplined teachers for preventing discipline problems

#### 1. Preparation

- a. Contextualize lesson materials, gearing toward student needs.
- b. Develop a class schedule.
- c. Build flexibility into lesson content and activity time-frames.

#### 2. Presentation

- a. Utilize personal experience.
- b. Utilize highly interactive learning methods.
- c. Utilize the five senses of each student.

#### 3. Partnership

- a. Develop a pastor/teacher relationship with learners.
- b. Visit in each learner's home frequently. Are the parents a positive role-model for the child?
- c. Schedule opportunities for informal, group relationship building and guided conversation.
- d. Know what your students are exposed to on a daily basis.
- e. When necessary, approach parents from a positive perspective rather than negative, i.e. "Johnny is a very bright student who gets bored easily. Could you talk to Johnny and see if there is a better way to involve him in the class?"

# Tools For Peak Performance

by Ty Rose

Recruiting, training, and supporting our volunteers is a challenging job. Our first-time volunteers face special challenges in teaching children.

Wouldn't it be great if we could give them the kind of support and encouragement they needed to move from enthusiastic beginners to peak performers and discover the joy of teaching children?

When volunteers enter a ministry, they pass through four stages of development. And no matter which stage the volunteers are in, using appropriate support strategies will help them eventually become peak performers. Here's how it works:

## Stage #1: Enthusiastic Beginners

In the beginning stage, these volunteers have a high degree of commitment to the ministry, but lack the skills of a seasoned teacher. Enthusiastic beginners are ready to jump in with both feet and do whatever is needed; they are a great asset and often bring a fresh outlook.

**Enthusiastic Beginners need direction.** Show them how to prepare their lessons and effectively use the curriculum. Help them understand the group characteristics and how to lovingly direct and discipline the students in their class. They are already excited about doing their jobs, so help them build good teaching skills!

## Stage #2: Disillusioned Learners

Beginners may soon become disillusioned when they realize that some students aren't as interested in the day's topic as the teacher is, or what today's lesson may need to be adapted to connect effectively with their class. At this stage, reality sets in. They may lose confidence as they find they lack the skills they need, and their enthusiasm begins to wane.

**Disillusioned Learners need a coach.** Give them pep talks and help sharpen their teaching skills. Because their competence is low and their commitment is fading, they need enough attention to keep from becoming discouraged and quitting.

## Stage #3: Reluctant Contributors

These persistent volunteers have passed through the valley of discouragement and have acquired the skills needed to run a class effectively. However, they lack the enthusiasm they once had for teaching. Perhaps they've taught the story of Jonah so many times it's no longer exciting to them.

**Reluctant Contributors need support.** Give them a big booster shot of vision to help them rekindle their love for the ministry. This, too, is an area where many people drop out of teaching, so support is crucial.

## Stage #4: Peak Performers

These volunteers have mastered the challenges of learning experience. Peak Performers are excited about the opportunity to help children grow in their understanding of God and their relationship with Jesus Christ.

**Delegate to Peak Performers.** Having a volunteer staff full of Peak Performers would be a little taste of heaven! These volunteers have the competence and commitment to accomplish any task you give them. Let them help you in working with volunteers in the other three stages.

Understanding these four stages will help your ministry more effectively reach the children that God has entrusted to your care.

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# THE TEACHING & LEARNING PROCESS

Ministry to children is enhanced when we understand and plan experiences to meet the following basic steps in a child's learning process.

## *Listening* Secure the attention of the student.

An essential and basic learning task is listening or giving attention. The teacher seeking to initiate the learning process must first get the attention of children. Gaining interest often involves motivating the student through both the room environment and student activities which introduce the material to be studied. For example, a simple poster with several questions to be answered links to a game which will help students discover the definition of a key vocabulary word. The poster and game combine effectively to gain a child's attention and "want to" at the beginning of a learning experience. Most children listen better when they are alerted to something specific they should hear: "There are three things you need to do in playing this game. Listen carefully to make sure you don't miss this one."

## *Exploring* The student investigates a problem or subject.

This step involves the careful investigation of a problem or subject. The student needs to become an explorer, involved in the search for something not yet known or experienced. He is not a passive listener or mere spectator but a central and active participant. Much of the exploration children need to do involves using the Bible or other study aids. Exploration may also involve posing questions, defining problems or suggesting possible approaches to dealing with life situations.

## *Discovering* The student discovers what the Bible says and understand its implications for his own life.

As a result of the listening and exploring processes, the student discovers what the Bible says. Then, guided by the Holy Spirit, the student understands the Bible's implications for his own life.

Discovering God's eternal truths in His Word is an exciting process. Too often, the teacher is the only one who makes these discoveries. Although the teacher may excitedly share them with the students, why shouldn't the joy of discovery also be the child's as he is guided by a skilled teacher? Time constraints may limit how many discoveries children can make during a session, but time should not be given as an excuse for simply trying to "cover the material" without involving children in the process.

## *Appropriating* The student identifies what God expects in daily situations.

Once the child has discovered the meaning of the Scripture passage, he needs to think in a personal way about the truths involved. The student must relate the meanings and values discovered to his own experiences. **Bible knowledge that is not being examined for its personal implications is not accomplishing its God-intended purpose.**

Guide the child's task of appropriating, or making Bible truth his own. Bring up a real-life problem to solve on the basis of a Biblical truth. For example, "Josh loved baseball and was playing the last inning when he realized that it was past dinner time. He knew his parents would be waiting for him, but he did not want to leave the game. What does the Bible tell us about this kind of problem?"

Personally appropriating the Bible truth of a particular lesson enables the student to recognize the meaning for his or her own feelings and behavior.

## *Assuming Responsibility* The student changes his behavior or feelings in order to obey God's Word.

This is the crown of the learning process, the place where the previous tasks—listening, exploring, discovering and appropriating—culminate. Here, God's truth actually changes and molds a child's thinking, attitude and behavior. Our children must be led to actually do certain things on the basis of what they have been experiencing (in the previous steps of the learning process). The true test of learning comes when a child voluntarily uses what he has learned in new situations. This may involve practicing a quality of behavior in the middle of class activities (being kind, sharing, forgiving, etc.) At other times, it may be best to have students plan specific actions to take during the coming week.

Listening, exploring, discovering, appropriating and assuming responsibility are not simply activities in which students are to be engaged but are inseparably bound together with Christian teaching/learning goals and objectives. Through the Holy Spirit's guidance of a thoughtful teacher the spiritual dimension of a child's personality can continue its growth and development.