

Tips for Teacher Training

Whether veterans, novices, or somewhere in between, all of your Sunday school teachers can benefit from teacher training, especially when you begin using a new curriculum. Use the following suggestions to plan the first teacher-training session of the year. Add, change, or delete sections depending on the needs, experience, and size of your group. Remember that the tone of the session can help set the tone for the whole Sunday school year!

- Decide the best time to hold the training session. Would evenings work best, or are teachers more likely to attend after church or on a weekend afternoon? At this time, also arrange for a greeting from your pastor and members of your church committee.
- Invite teachers to attend teacher training several weeks before the session. Make sure they know what will happen during the training and why their presence is important. If your congregation is a first-time user of Witness, or if many teachers are new, emphasize the importance of this meeting.
- Remind teachers about the teacher training by mailing postcards, sending e-mail, or making phone calls during the week before the session.
- Prepare for the training event. Become familiar with all of the materials, create a schedule for the whole year, and assign session numbers (including bonus sessions) to each week. Use the planning pages within the Planning Guide and share the plan with all teachers and staff. Consider having a light meal or refreshments. Be sure to provide childcare.
- Decorate the gathering space with posters from the teacher class kit, and be ready to play music from the Witness CD in the background. Ask children and youth from the congregation to provide welcoming art by creating drawings or cards that you can post around the meeting space.

- Welcome teachers as they arrive and provide nametags, remembering that some teachers may not know everyone, especially if they are new to the congregation or to teaching.
- Distribute materials to each teacher so they can review their teacher guides, learner resources, and teacher class kits.
- Begin your training session with prayer. Invite teachers to offer celebrations and concerns about the upcoming Sunday school year. Many teachers may be uncomfortable asking kids to offer prayer requests. Make this prayer time an easy practice time.
- Do an icebreaker. Ask teachers to describe a vivid Sunday school moment from their childhoods or invite them to comment on their favorite piece of kids' artwork on display. If you are just beginning to use Witness, choose a "Ready for the Story" activity from one of the sessions.
- Introduce the Witness curriculum. Emphasize that the name of this curriculum emphasizes evangelism, outreach, and Faith Traits. Encourage teachers to read about the curriculum in the beginning of their teacher guides.
- Review Witness features. For some teachers, the curriculum (and maybe teaching itself!) is new. Spend time explaining features of the teacher guides, learner resources, and teacher class kits. Point out the parts of Witness that nurture teachers, including the Bible Backgrounds, Factoids, Teacher Prayers, and Questions for Reflection. Take turns reading some of the Teacher Boosts found on "Live the Story" pages in the teacher guides. Show how the "Session at a Glance" table on the first page helps them with planning.
- Make an art project together. Some teachers are hesitant about leading art activities with learners because they doubt their own artistic skills. Choose a "Kids Create" activities from a lower-level teacher guide or some Brain Builders from an upper-level session. Emphasize fun,

flexibility, and originality for art projects, and affirm everyone's creations.

- Review features of your church building. Point out classrooms, other meeting spaces, the kitchen, bathrooms, supply closets, offices, and other important locations. Some teachers may benefit greatly from a tour of the church but are hesitant to ask because everyone else seems to know everything already. If your church has a library, clarify procedures for using it and for ordering or donating new resources.
- Address all necessary safety concerns. Using the suggestions from the Planning Guide, let teachers know about registration procedures, emergency plans, locations of phones, and fire extinguishers. Show items contained in first-aid kits.
- Ask teachers whether they have questions. Be prepared to talk about art supplies, class materials, registration lists, schedules, substitute teacher lists, Web-based resources and support, and many other topics. If team teaching is part of your structure, make sure partners understand how the process works.
- Close with prayer. Thank God for the gift of teachers and ask for a safe and vibrant Sunday school year that will help learners and teachers grow closer to God. God bless you and your congregation as you continue in your ministry to children and their teachers!