



Heading: **Teacher Council Meetings, How Are We Doing?**

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Kurt Francom:

Hey, if you think Leading Saints is just a podcast, well, that's a big mistake. We are so much more than a podcast. We've established online a Leading Saints community. That's right. If you go to leadingsaints.org/Zion, you'll be pushed towards a community online where the discussion is really happening. Sure, you're going to listen to this episode. You'll get some great tips and ideas and hear a thought-provoking discussion, but the conversation doesn't end there. We go over to the Leading Saints community and talk further there. You can make comments, you can ask questions, and we'll probably do some follow-up live streams with maybe the same guest. But a lot is going on at the Leading Saints community, so check out the show notes for the link leadingsaints.org/Zion and join the Leading Saints community. So you're checking us out as maybe a potential podcast you could start listening to. I know many of you have been listening for a long time, but let me just talk to the newbies for a minute. What is Leading Saints? What are we trying to do here with this podcast? Well let me explain. Leading Saints is a non-profit organization, a 501c3 is what they call it. And we have a mission to help Latter-day Saints be better prepared to lead. Now, of course, often means in the context of a calling. It may mean in your local community, your work assignments. We've heard about our content influencing all sorts of leaders in all sorts of different contexts. We invite you to listen to this episode and maybe a few others of our 500 plus episodes that we have out there. Jump in and begin to learn and begin to consider some of these principles we talk about on the Leading Saints podcast. Here we go. As many of you heard, we have a lot going on over the Leading Saints community. This is like an online place where the Leading Saints community can gather and talk about concepts. You don't just have to wait on me to talk to somebody and record an episode, but let's

get the conversation going about various topics. related to church leadership. And so I'm going to share with you a live stream we did. This was very informal, just gathering anybody who's interested about or has a calling connected with Sunday School. Let's get together online, share ideas, best practices, what you're doing, what's working, what's not. And that was part of this live stream for Sunday School presidencies. Now these are open to really anybody. You don't have to be in a Sunday School presidency. to participate, and a really fantastic conversation came out of it. Now, we went about an hour plus talking and sharing ideas. I'm going to share a half hour with you here, some of the high points, and then come watch the full recording in the community. It's there for your consumption and learning. And then we'll continue to do more of these live streams, not just about Sunday School, but other leadership callings. So we talk about, there's a great discussion that happens just about the purpose of Sunday School, also about teaching council meetings and parent-teacher council meetings. There's so much to consider. How are we doing this? How are we fitting it in the busy schedule of church? Are you doing it during second hour, during the week? what's working and have a great conversation that way. So tune in, listen in, and then come back over to the Leading Saints community if you want the full unedited conversation and discussion. the Sunday school presidency live stream and we're going to have people filing in here. So as you're coming in here, put your name and maybe if you've had a, if what you're, maybe just say what your calling is and whether it's Sunday school or not, it doesn't really matter, but that is going to be the focus of our conversation. And hopefully we have something to learn for everybody. And we're, we tried a few different things with live streams. We've done some on various topics and the recordings are out there. I, I, I think they're easy to find, but we've done one of these for bishops or bishoprics. I think we did an elders quorum. We've done Relief Society. Relief Society one, we had like 80 plus Relief Society presidents from around the world. That was really cool just to get some discussion going. Definitely, this is a participatory experience. I'm just curious, and again, this is an open forum, which we'll talk. I want you to feel like you can speak open and freely. I think the more authentic we can be, just like in Sunday school, right? The better an experience it is. So, you know, we can learn from each other, and that's what Leading Saints exists. We never pretend like we have all the answers. But we hope to learn from one another. So I'm just curious if anybody would be open to unmuting and just sharing like why you're here. Is it because you're here to learn? Is it because you have a specific question? Do you feel just overwhelmed in the Sunday school calling? Is there a specific concern you're dealing with? So who wants to go first?

Joshua:

All right, Joshua, let's hear it, man. I figured nobody else. It's typical Sunday school, right? I know. Hey, I'll wait. I don't mind silence. I'm really just here because I have enjoyed the podcast that you put on. And I thought, hey, live stream, awesome. I've got time. I want to jump in and see. And I'm the bishop in my ward and I've been Sunday school president and kind of felt like, I don't know what that calling, like, what am I supposed to do? It kind of overlaps young men's, young women's, Relief Society, elders quorum. So I just wanted to, I'm here to learn, I guess. Awesome.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, that's interesting. I think I never, I always hesitate to quote the handbook or to paraphrase the handbook because I don't know if something's changed. But yeah, definitely like the Sunday

School President, I think it frames it as you are in charge of all teaching and learning at church and at home, right? And so you can be a resource there. So that's sort of suddenly feels really heavy. Right. And Sunday school is a little bit, you know, from administrative thing, it's sort of like, okay, we call our teachers and do our thing, but anybody can expound on that or have further thoughts or can add to that question or concern or, or how do you approach it as a Sunday school person, as far as what you do, Martha, go ahead.

Martha:

Hi guys. Before I got called to be a Gospel Doctrine teacher, this was in January this year, I actually watched your podcast with Dan Duckworth on creating a transformational Sunday school. And I was grateful for the calling because then I was able to implement a lot of the things I learned on that podcast. Yeah, that's why I'm here too. I'm grateful for the time that I could be here this morning. It's eight o'clock for us here. So, yeah, I thought I'd join.

Kurt Francom:

Eight o'clock in the morning. Is that right? Yeah.

Martha:

Yeah.

Kurt Francom:

Nice. Tomorrow. Nice. Very cool. Anybody else want to speak to that as far as why you're here?

Yeah, Chris, go ahead.

Chris:

Oh, yeah. So I think, you know, that my wife and I are missionaries in the 12-step addiction recovery program, and we need a couple of community on Thursday nights and My goal is to have a church-led 12-step meeting. I mean, that would be, for me, like the perfect world.

Kurt Francom:

So tell me more. What do you mean by that?

Chris:

Well, if people came to church willing to share their gospel experiences, So in a Sunday school class, and I've been taught in a gospel doctrine class for a couple of years, two, three years, and then I was called to be Sunday school president the first of the year. And the first thing we did in January is we had a teacher council meeting for all the teachers, anyone called as a teacher in our ward, including elders quorum and Relief Society presidency, primary presidency and the bishopric. So we had a teacher council meeting outside of the two hours, two hour block. And we had about 31 or 32 people in that meeting and chairs in a circle. And we just had a great hour long discussion about teaching and what we would like it to look like as a ward. And the consensus is we want people to come and share their experiences with whatever they're reading, whether it's the scriptures for Sunday school, whether it's a conference talk, Realtors Quorum, or Relief Society. And the consensus is, once again, that the so-called teachers in our ward are better called facilitators as opposed to teachers. So we come prepared, having studied, but we are there to facilitate discussion above all else. And it's been really, it's been good and it's been powerful. And we have some great, great teachers in our ward, really blessed that way.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. I'm curious, just putting out there the teacher council meetings. Is that something I'm curious of how that's going? Is that going well? Does anybody feel like they have that dialed in or you have a good cadence with the teacher council meetings? Yeah, Terry, go ahead.

Terry:

We've struggled with getting people to set aside the time for a teacher council meeting. We've tried to hold them on Sunday nights or the third hour after the block, things like that. But generally, it's a struggle to get people to sit together. Chris, I'm jealous that you could get 30 people in a room to talk about teaching.

Kurt Francom:

Chris, I'm curious, what's the setup of your teacher council meeting? How do you go about that?

Chris:

Well, look, the first one we had in January is because, you know, we were newly called Sunday School Presidency, and I had the really good support from the Bishopric, and especially from our first counselor, who's, you know, over the Sunday School and the Teaching of the Ward. Since then, last month, we had another series of teacher council meetings during the second hour. So one week we did elder reform and real society teachers. The next week we did Sunday school teachers. The next week we actually had a teacher council meeting for the primary teachers. And in each of those, we invited the presidencies of each organization to attend. And once again, most of that was spent in discussion. How's it going? What support do you need? What's working? What's not working? You know, just really, how's it going? Do you feel that people in your classes are coming prepared that they read the conference talks? Have they read the Come Follow Me section of the Doctrine and Covenants for this week? And how do we encourage people to do that? That's really the big question, is how do we enhance home study?

Kurt Francom:

DJ, were you going to say something?

DJ:

Yeah, so similar to what other people have said, we hold it during second hour, but there are two principles that are really important. Number one, in the handbook it says that the board council actually should be setting the topics for those. And so we get board council involved in determining what the topics are going to be for those. And the second, so that also by default gets buy-in from the presidencies of the organizations where these teachers reside. And then the second thing we do is we just make it sort of an expectation. It's like on this Sunday, this is the when you're gonna have teacher council. And so we'll get substitutes to come in for all the primary teachers. They know what's happening and they just know they're supposed to go there. And the same thing with the instructors for the other courses. If we have to hold it on a Sunday when they're supposed to teach, we'll get a substitute. If not, we just make it clear that they're expected to be there. And when you have the council the way that it's supposed to be, when it's a true council, when people can put in their two cents, and we actually learn from each other. We find that people want to do it. They can't wait a quarter for another one. They keep asking to do it, you know, more regularly than once a quarter.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, I appreciate that. You know, the true counsel, like Jared says in the comments here in the chat, my experience with teacher council meetings that most of our ward members do not want to attend if it is second hour. And it also seems more like a lecture style with the Sunday school

presidency teaching a lesson rather than counseling together, right? That's sometimes we can make the teacher council experience a terrible learning environment. We're trying to stimulate a positive learning environment, right? So I appreciate that, like keeping it really a council where you're talking and sharing ideas and perspectives, and maybe there's a little bit debate in there, you know, stimulating revelation. DJ, I am curious, kind of a follow-up, a really helpful insight of, you know, the ward council should be setting the topics there. I'm just curious, like, what are some of those typical topics that maybe become for the ward council? And is that something maybe the, are you the Sunday school president in your ward? Is that?

DJ:

I'm the state Sunday school president now, but I'm talking about my experience in a bishopric when we kind of focused on Sunday school.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. So what were some of the topics that would come up and do you, you would just, someone just bring that up in word council meeting and to determine what topics the teacher council meetings could be here.

DJ:

Yeah. So we'd have the executive secretary, you know, send out a little note that says, Hey, here's what we're going to talk about at world council. And one of the items would be potential topics for the round, not round table, the teacher council. Right. And so they would then go to their folks and ask. So some of the things that come up are. how to get students to not just be playing on their cell phones, how to do engagement, right? Because it also, especially with teenagers, you know, it's kind of hard to tell what they're doing. With the primary, sometimes it was, are very good questions. Like if they're studying this at home with their parents, Like it feels redundant for us to cover this when they come in, because they seem to already know all the answers and the stories. Right. And so those are legitimate concerns that people have. And as they bring those legitimate concerns to their presidencies and those get passed along and we, we hit their topics. then people really want to go to these things, right? We also use Slido. I don't know if you've ever heard of that, but anything that lets people submit anonymous questions that you can then address. You know, people definitely want to hear their questions answered. And sometimes the questions that they put on there, they wouldn't have the courage to ask in person, but they're genuine and sincere questions or concerns that they have. And when we see that these things get addressed, they want to come to these meetings when they are what they're designed to be.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, that's a great point that I mean, just like Sunday school, I mean, any I guess gathering is that if people come knowing they're expecting a high value experience or covering topics that are actually relevant and applicable to either calling, I mean, like, you know, Jared said, sometimes they don't even want to come because it's like, well, you know, I'd maybe rather go to elders quorum or or Sunday school or whatever, or I want to see this friend or that friend. But it's like I actually this is a great value. I'm going to make sure I don't miss this. That's great. Jeff, did you have a question or comment?

Jeff:

What I was interested, I just figured out how to get my picture on, so I wasn't able to say what I'm interested in in planning out today. It kind of fits in here. I'm new into the, as a counselor, into

a state, into a presidency in my ward, and We're doing the teacher councils, but recently I've been asked to do the parent councils. I'm just curious if anybody else is doing the parent councils. And we had our first quarterly parent council, but the feedback from it was, I'm in the transition of going from teaching mode to facilitating, right, and learning that. So the feedback that came back is, holy mackerel, it seems like a long time between quarters for a parent council. And so the bishopric and the ward council has kind of come back and said, hey, maybe we could run these more often. Now, I worry a little bit that it takes away from the other classes that people want to go to, right? But they're going to have them now monthly for at least a period to where people get to know each other and feel comfortable. That's what I just wondered if anybody else was working with the parent councils that suggested for us to have and how they found success in that or what the issues might be that I can kind of shorten the learning curve. Awesome.

Kurt Francom:

I'll just hear some parent councils. Chris, I don't know if yours is related to that or if you want to add, we can come back to this or whatever. I'll make sure we come back to this if it's not about it.

Chris:

It wasn't related to what Jeff just shared, but I was just going to bring up, I don't know how many of Our teachers, and this would include others who are on religious side and even primary, have read the introduction of the Come Follow Me manual this year. Because on page one and page three are awesome explanations of what teaching looks like in the church now. And that's kind of what we based our teacher council meetings on. is what it says in Come Follow Me manual. So just a suggestion. I don't know how many people have even looked at it, but it's great stuff.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, I love that. And that's an easy way to kind of keep the discussion grounded or focused of starting every teacher council meeting. Like, hey, let's review those pages at the beginning of the Come Follow Me manual and remind ourselves, you know, just exactly what we're trying to do. Right. Any other thoughts on parent council meetings? And I assume, does the handbook mention those or is that an outgrowth of something, a different tradition. It's there. Cool. Anybody else attempting the parent council meeting? Essentially, as I understand them, these are, you know, those who are parents to teenagers or younger, that it's an opportunity to say, hey, why don't we get together and talk about teaching in the home, kind of a teacher council meeting. But for for those, they're teaching in the home.

Matt:

Matt, go ahead. Yeah, we've tried to do it. We've tried to encourage our state to do it. And I've kind of been on the soapbox of trying to do it. And one of our, we've had a couple of stakes do it because I think it felt like we're at a point where as we've gone to this third hour process, when we removed this third hour, if you listen to Elder Cook's talk, when he initially talked about this, it wasn't that the third hour goes away. It's that it's not done in home, that it's done in home. And what it's turned into is, it turns into, you get it, and you can see a drop in gospel knowledge and participation. Before I was in my stakeholding, I was a deacon's quorum advisor, and you could see a massive change and a lack of, it was such a huge learning curve going from second, going from the previous model, where it was a third hour that where the children, the primary kids had a full hour of teaching. And now they're go to maybe 20 minutes of lesson. And then

when they go from a lot, they go in, and they're also not even 12. They're not 12. They're like 11. And they come into are expected to go into Sunday school and young men's or in young women's where you're there for an hour. And in some instances, you're supposed to participate. And so there's been a lot of learning curve on that. And so we've tried to work with our primary and with our and our youth to try and make that transition, because it's a really hard transition between those in that space.

Kurt Francom:

That's great. Really helpful. Anybody else, any other thoughts on parent council meetings or do you have maybe a different topic? DJ just posted a great link to the church news about teacher council meetings for parents written by the Sunday School General Presidency. That's great.

Matt:

Matt, go ahead. Yeah, I feel it's hard. Sometimes it's hard to get past the idea, the model of I was in a previous ward. I was the Sunday school president and that ward was very pro as a Sunday school president, you're in charge of teaching in the entire throughout the organization. And you're like, I would even go to I was going into every meeting and all of the getting out but it's hard to get past this idea of there tends to be a little bit of a I don't know of downgrade of thought of Sunday school where it's not in my mind I feel like Sunday school is one of the most one of the most important parts of the block but it tends to not get promoted as well and to be hyped up as well as it should be. And it's hard to get sometimes get stakes and boards past that mindset of, you know, you're as a Sunday school president, you're the you're glorified bell ringer, you know, you're making sure that you make sure the trains run on time, not going to stop and trying to really understand how you can level up your teaching.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. Yeah, that's an interesting dynamic that we face is that, you know, that time we have at churches is limited and everyone kind of wants a piece of it, right? Obviously the sacrament, they're not going to cancel that or, you know, rotate that through as needed, but that's paramount. But, you know, that second hour is sort of like, and you see with Fifth Sundays of like, you know, suddenly Maybe the family history committee. Oh, we want to do a family history class during the second hour, right? And then you have these teacher council meetings. And again, I think it emphasizes just the importance of that in-home study where, you know, like, was it, I forget exactly who said it, but it's like, you know, maybe These parent council meetings, they're needed, but man, once a quarter just seems like too few, right? And if you did it more often, knowing that at home, that learning experience has been accentuated, then even better, right? But then it's just tricky with that second hour that so many kind of are battling for the focus. And yes, Sunday school should be a focus. And then it's every other week and it gets tricky.

Brent:

So Brent, go ahead. Yeah, it's an interesting one. In our ward, we've got 100 people attending and 700 people who don't feel welcome to attend for one reason or another. So big numbers of less active. And I did get a question from the primary president about parents. Is there a way to get the kids to be more prepared for when they're in class? She said, air quotes, it would make my job easier if they arrived prepared. And I about came uncorked a little bit because I was just so grateful that those primary kids were there. And I have a feeling in some of those cases it's the only gospel instruction. So I kind of savored that they were there and were getting to get

some gospel instruction rather than maybe the ideal of they're holding family home evenings seven nights a week and sending their kids church prepared so it makes Sunday school president or the primary president's job easier. So it's an interesting thing. From the Sunday school president role, I've been working with people to make sure to teach your lesson around just a little nugget that they can take home and have a discussion with their family around the dinner table or maybe with their family members that are not attending church. So a really memorable little nugget. And instead of what did you learn at Sunday school and whether it's a youth or an adult, and they say, I don't know, we just talked about a bunch of stuff today, get a little nugget. So our, our teaching at church can also carry back home, but I haven't figured out a way to get it to go from home and come back and make a primary president's job easier. So that's my two cents.

Kurt Francom:

Interesting. Jeff, what would you like that?

Jeff:

Yeah, I don't want to keep going back to the parenting councils. No, you're good. That's fine. And I appreciate that link that was sent. I haven't read it. I can't multitask like that, but I will read it and definitely probably gain from that. But when I was first given this assignment, I called up to our state person and I said, hey, is there any wards in the state that are doing this? Because it is a secondary thing. We put a lot of focus on the teacher councils at the ward. but the parent council I hadn't heard much about. And he said, oh yeah, matter of fact, this Friday they're having one over at our ward in another part of our state. So I went and I visited that and they did meet on a monthly basis. And it was, you know, kind of young parents with all the same issues of raising kids and things like that. And yet they made it into almost a date night. type thing. And so I thought that was really good. I went back to the handbook and I didn't really see where it might say something in this article, but I didn't really see where it encouraged it on a non-Sunday. But for these people, it was looked at as something exciting. They even had the kids, all the kids came and were playing in the in the gym and everything while they had this lesson, or this, not lesson, but this sharing time on what sort of issues were going on. But I really thought that that was really cool, that they were having it on monthly. It was the same group. People could get added to as they moved into the ward or as they decided they wanted to do or heard good things about it. So there were no restrictions on it, but it was a group of people that really got together as friends. and as kind of co-parents with the same sorts of issues. So I don't know if any, I was coming to see if any of you had had experience, you know, with the Parent Council, and I do see the benefits of it, but like you said earlier, one more thing on the Sunday to take people away from other things that are just, you know, important as well, I wasn't sure that, you know, that was the route. And then the feedback from the bishop to have it more often, I was kind of surprised at that because it suggested quartering. But you can imagine that teachers getting together quarterly is fine because, yeah, it gives you a chance to overview the issues of the thing. But parents, you know, and knowing one another and having some sort of energy of the whole group, it is pretty hard to go, you know, every three months and kind of, oh, yeah, now, who are you? That sort of thing. You never seem to get Pinocchio.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And definitely parents are, you know, in best case scenario, they're, they're teaching the gospel in the home every day, maybe, or at least every week where, you know, a gospel

doctrine or a elders quorum teachers, you know, maybe in a quarter, maybe they only teach twice at that. Right. And I love this concept of just, you know, creating something outside the Sunday block that's there as a resource. And because I, I'm sure there's many parents who think, you know what, I feel pretty good about pretty confident about what I'm doing in my home, or I don't necessarily need that. And that's okay. Right. But those who feel like I could really use that, and it's more of a social function, and maybe more a little more casual, there's there might be a reason to go that route. So I appreciate that, that thought. DJ, go ahead.

DJ:

I just wanted to say that we've had some success with those simply because people have opened up and gotten rid of this misconception that everybody else is just sitting there holding hands, singing Kumbaya, and having this wonderful time. And people share, they're like, yeah, it's a constant fight to get my kids to stop messing with toys that they brought or just to pay attention. And one of the things that I shared that really hit me hard when I figured it out is about a year ago,

Kurt Francom:

Hey, thanks for listening to this episode. We're actually going to cut it short a little bit. If you want to listen to the entirety of this conversation, head on over to the Leading Saints community. You can find the link in the show notes and you can watch the extended cut there. And I think you'll benefit from it. So come join us over at the Leading Saints community.

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley:

It came as a result of the position of leadership which was imposed upon us by the God of heaven who brought forth a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When the declaration was made concerning the only true and living church upon the face of the earth, we were immediately put in a position of loneliness. A loneliness of leadership from which we cannot shrink nor run away and to which we must face up with boldness and courage and ability.