

A Comprehensive Plan for Teacher Development 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
<i>Bible</i>	
<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. 	<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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 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.
<i>People</i>	
<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.
<i>Christian Heritage</i>	
<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.
<i>The United Methodist Church</i>	
<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
<i>Theology</i>	
<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.
<i>Teaching</i>	
<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.
<i>Faith Language</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know that the word <i>Christian</i> 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.
<i>Curriculum</i>	
<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.
<i>Classroom Environment</i>	
<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.
<i>Living the Faith</i>	
<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
<i>Outside the Group Meeting</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I read the plan in the curriculum. 	Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I create learning experiences appropriate to goals and learners that lead to transformation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I prepare for my group by the previous day or night. 	Prepare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do long-range planning with short term implementation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I know the purpose of Christian education. 	See the Big Picture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of Christian education is fully integrated into my life mission.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I look for a connection to make a life application. 	Connect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I develop ways to help group members find their own applications.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I use United Methodist curriculum as written. 	Select resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I adapt and supplement resources appropriately to enable transformation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am aware that there are differences in theology and that the UMC has a theology. 	Be aware of theology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can recognize what theology is implicit in curriculum; I have the ability to determine appropriateness.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I ask, "What do I believe?" 	Think theologically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I help others think theologically.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I model the disciples' example. 	Model Christian living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I model Christ's example.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I pray for my class while planning. 	Pray for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I live a life of prayer conscious of the needs of my group members.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I know the spiritual disciplines listed in the <i>Book of Discipline</i>. 	Practice spiritual disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I integrate the spiritual disciplines into my life.
<i>Inside the Group Meeting or Setting</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I create a physically safe environment. 	Develop physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I establish physical environments that encourage and empower group members to take responsibility for learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I accept any student response. 	Develop emotional environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I establish emotional environments for questioning, searching, and pushing boundaries.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am quiet while group members talk. 	Listen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
<i>Inside the Group Meeting or Setting</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I acknowledge the differences in people. 	<p><i>value diversity/variety</i></p>	<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. 	<p><i>use appropriate teaching process to get desired results</i></p>	<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. 	<p><i>Tell the "story" to be heard</i></p>	<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. 	<p><i>Help learner connect story with life application</i></p>	<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. 	<p><i>Make "lesson" memorable</i></p>	<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. 	<p><i>use variety of teaching methods</i></p>	<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. 	<p><i>Pray with group members</i></p>	<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. 	<p><i>include teaching and practice of spiritual disciplines</i></p>	<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 proceeding 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 over all 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?

Some Helpful Resources

These books are published by Discipleship Resources and are available from UpperRoom Books at (800-972-0433), online at www.upperroom.org/bookstore, or from Cokesbury.

Keeping in Touch: Christian Formation and Teaching

By Carol F. Krau

Keeping in Touch focuses on practices and processes teachers need to develop and strengthen to create environments for nurturing persons toward Christian discipleship.

What Every Teacher Needs to Know About...

The Bible

Christian Heritage

Classroom Environment

Curriculum

Faith Language

Living the Faith

People

Teaching

Theology

The United Methodist Church

By the Christian Education staff of the General Board of Discipleship.

This series of ten booklets is based on the "What Every Teacher Needs to Know" continuum found on pages 2 and 3 of this leaflet. Each booklet provides basic knowledge to help teachers reach the "do no harm" level of the continuum and offers suggestions for continued growth. The booklets are available in sets of ten for any individual title or in a set with one booklet of each title.

A free workshop model for using this series in a teacher orientation session is available at <http://www.gbod.org/education/wetnk.pdf>.

Foundations: Shaping the Ministry of Christian Education in Your Congregation

By the Christian Education staff of the General Board of Discipleship.

Grounded in "Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task" as stated in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, *Foundations* is a statement of the biblical and theological foundations of Christian education. It assists congregations in developing a vision for effective faith formation.



The Ministry of Christian Education and Formation: A Practical Guide for Your Congregation

By the Christian Education staff of the General Board of Discipleship.

This book provides practical help to lead planners through the many tasks and responsibilities involved in the ministry of Christian education. Topics covered include planning and organizing for Christian education; recruiting, nurturing, and supporting teachers; selecting resources; budgeting; and evaluating your ministry.

It also includes more than twenty-five pages of reproducible charts, forms, sample letters, and checklists.

Loving God With All Your Mind: Equipping the Community of Faith for Theological Thinking

By Thomas R. Hawkins

Loving God With All Your Mind incorporates the newest research in learning and brain science to provide practical help for teachers and leaders. It will assist leaders in making meaningful decisions about the educational systems in their church.

iTeach

iTeach is a free monthly e-mail newsletter that provides short articles on issues related to the continua in this leaflet. The articles can be distributed to teachers, used in teacher training, reprinted in newsletters, and so forth. To subscribe contact Diana Hynson at dhynson@gbod.org.

The Christian Education Staff of the General Board of Discipleship

Richard H. Gentzler, Jr.

Director, Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministries
877-899-2780, Ext. 7173, rgentzler@gbod.org

Rick provides resources and training support for leaders and teachers concerned with aging issues and education and ministry with older adults.

Melanie Gordon

Director, Younger Children's Ministries
877-899-2780, Ext. 1762, mgordon@gbod.org

Melanie resources congregational ministry with younger children including weekday ministries.

Mary Alice Gran

Director, Older Children's Ministries
877-899-2780, Ext. 7143, mgran@gbod.org

Mary Alice resources congregational ministries with older children including abuse prevention, discipleship building, planning, and teacher training.

Susan H. Hay

Director, Ministries with Youth
877-899-2780, Ext. 7069, shay@gbod.org

Susan resources local congregational ministries with youth including faith formation, abuse prevention, and training of adults who work with youth.

Betsey Heavner

Director, Congregational Leader Formation
877-899-2780, Ext. 7295, bheavner@gbod.org

Betsey helps church leaders deepen their spiritual lives and increase skills for leadership. She manages the L3 Incubator™ and the Church Vitality Indicator.™

Diana L. Hynson

Director, Learning and Teaching Ministries
877-899-2780, Ext. 7053, dhynson@gbod.org

Diana resources conference leaders in the areas of teaching and learning, small group ministry, coaching, teacher development, and mission education.

Carol F. Krau

Team Leader, Congregational Leaders
877-899-2780, Ext. 7171, ckrau@gbod.org

Carol provides resources for developing spiritual leadership for in congregations and for creating and sustaining congregational systems for discipleship.

Bill Lizer

Director, Young Adult and Single Adult Ministries
877-889-2780, Ext. 7005, blizer@gbod.org

Bill works to equip, empower, and connect leaders in young adult and single adult ministries. He is the GBOD contact for all singles ministries issues as well as leaders of young adult ministries within the United States.

MaryJane Pierce Norton

Team Leader, Family, Life Span & Latino Ministries
877-899-2780, Ext. 7170, mnorton@gbod.org

MaryJane provides resources, training, and networking opportunities to leaders in family and marriage ministries. She also does workshops, writing, and research in faith formation through the life span.

Susan Ruach

Team Leader, Conference Leader Formation
877-899-2780, Ext. 7142, sruach@gbod.org

Susan provides training and networking opportunities for annual conference leaders. She is the GBOD contact for Directors of Connectional Ministry.

Deb Smith

Director, Middle Adult Ministries
877-899-2780, Ext. 7135, dsmith@gbod.org

Deb provides resources and training for leaders and teachers in middle adult ministries. She also provides resource and networking support for high-potential metro churches.

Julia Kuhn Wallace

Director, Ministries with Small-Membership Churches
877-899-2780, Ext. 7086, jwallace@gbod.org

Julia provides resources and networking support for leaders of small membership churches.

Kevin Witt

Director, Camp and Retreat Ministries
877-899-2780, Ext.7082, kwitt@gbod.org

Kevin provides resources, training, and networking opportunities for Christian camp and retreat leaders. He also, writes and engages in collaborative efforts to expand experiential learning as a powerful avenue for developing Christian spiritual leaders of all ages.



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