

#4 Key Teaching Resources: Well-Trained and Supported Teachers

Teaching is a big responsibility and often a tiring one. Many teachers burn out from frustration or lack of support. We try to train our teachers so they will be well prepared. And, we try not to overtax them by asking for a commitment from them that is greater than is reasonable or spiritually good for them.

We Mentor Our Teachers

We try to mentor all new teachers, so that they see a teaching model before they start teaching themselves. This gives us a chance to observe their teaching before they teach to see if they are suited to teach. And, it allows them to try out teaching before committing to a class. As new teachers watch more experienced teachers, they can become familiarized with the curriculum and with effective teaching skills. This brings both greater continuity to the classroom and greater success among new teachers, which in turn helps our children learn.

We Model Teach for Our Teachers

At least once a year, we model-teach in each classroom. We walk the teachers through lesson preparation before class, then have them watch us teach the lesson. Afterwards, we talk about what went well and what could have gone better. This give-and-take of loving criticism fosters an atmosphere of humility and teachability as well as helps us become better teachers. As teachers (and perhaps even more importantly as fellow believers in community together), we think it is important to model soliciting, giving and receiving this kind of healthy criticism. How will we grow if we are not willing to ask others to help us see not only areas in which we do well, but also those in which we need to grow?

We Observe and Encourage Our Teachers

We try to observe teachers for their encouragement at least once a year, seeking to give helpful feedback that will make for a teaching and learning.

We Teach Classroom Management Skills As Well As Provide Teacher-friendly Curriculum

We try to carefully choose materials that will help our volunteer teachers understand what to teach and how best to teach it. We also give our teachers tips on how to manage children's behavior in ways that help everyone learn and foster respect for the teacher and for the other students.

We Have Our Teachers Teach in Teams

We form teams of teachers that partner together/switch off teaching a particular class of children. A typical team of Sunday School teachers at CHBC commits to one year of teaching. But because they are part of a team of four teachers, with only two teaching any week, they are really teaching twenty-six Sundays rather than all fifty-two Sundays of the year. This allows for teachers to teach a full year without getting burned out and provides built-in substitutes. In our other classroom settings, we have 2 to 6 teachers teaching at a time (depending on class sizes and ages of children). This also allows less experienced teachers to partner and learn from more experienced teachers, making hands-on teacher training a regular part of the classroom experience. It also creates the opportunity for teaching responsibilities within the classroom to rotate from week to week.

We Train Our Teachers

Once a year, we hold training sessions for particular groups of teachers, such as preschool teachers, or elementary school teachers. We also have coordinators who oversee the large number of volunteer teachers who teach in the Praise Factory preschool and elementary school classes. A coordinator helps train new teachers for two, non-consecutive months a year (non-consecutive so that they do not get burned out, themselves!). They also help other teachers prepare and often team teach with them these months. The encouragement, advice and model-teaching of these coordinators often makes the difference in everyone's experience in the classroom. And, often makes the difference in whether a new teacher signs up for other teaching opportunity! Coordinators like these are simply invaluable!

We Give Our Teachers Deacon Support

Each Sunday, our Deacon of Children's Ministry faithfully checks in with our Sunday School teachers and Praise Factory teachers (both preschool and elementary classes). He is on hand to find any needed supplies, extra volunteers or other help a teacher might need. He keeps an eye out for issues that would be important for the rest of the Children's Ministry team to know about, usually communicating these through a weekly e-mail. A deacon volunteers for three years. This long term commitment allows the deacon to gain quite a bit of institutional knowledge as well as becomes a familiar, reliable face to teachers and parents.

We Limit Our Teachers

Out of spiritual care for the teachers, the elders have set limits on how much any one member can spend teaching the children.

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| Childcare teachers: | Volunteer 1 Sunday a month |
| Sunday School teachers: | Volunteer 1 year at a time, on a team of 4 to allow for substitutes |
| *Praise Factory teachers: | Volunteer for 2 nonconsecutive months a year (Sunday am service) |
| *Great Commission Club: | Volunteer for 2 nonconsecutive months a year (Sunday p.m. service) |

*Non-consecutive months so that no volunteer will miss a worship service for more than a month.

We Are Willing to Shut Down Programs to Protect Our Teachers

Because we have only one Sunday morning service and one Sunday evening service, the elders are especially careful about how much time members spend away from regular preaching. If we have a consistent, month after month, lack of volunteers, our elders may suggest that we shut down a particular program for a time. They have decided that this action is best for the spiritual welfare of the teachers, who too many times are asked to miss yet another service just to keep a program going--to their own spiritual detriment. We want to support our parents, but not at the expense of over-taxing and under-feeding of the rest of the body. Our elders have developed an order of priority of programs, making child care for infants and toddlers during the two Sunday morning and evening services the top priority.

CHBC Handout on Teaching Roles and Limits (As Set by Elders)

Children's Ministry roles

- Caregiver
- Hall Monitor
- Sunday School Teacher
- Sunday morning Teacher
- Sunday evening Teacher

We have several categories of teachers and caregivers (caregivers work in the nursery only). Each has different commitments and schedules of service and no one person does more than one thing.

1. **Caregivers** are basically nursery workers (**no curriculum**) for children age 2 and below. They serve on a rotating schedule throughout the year; they are on separate teams (one Sun AM, one Sun PM, one Wed PM) each of which **serve once every four weeks**. (Since some months have 5 Sundays/Wednesdays, we are careful not to say "once a month.") In this way caregivers only miss one service of one type once every 4 weeks.
2. **Hall Monitor:** volunteers who patrol the childcare areas and public spaces in the church to ensure the physical safety of the children. Hall Monitors may be called upon to help with child evacuation and emergency response to unauthorized persons in childcare areas.
3. **Sunday School Teachers** (before the morning service) – these teachers are on a team of 6 per class; they rotate among themselves so that 2-3 of them are teaching on any given Sunday. They commit for an **entire year*** but within that year they are rotating among themselves. The consistency comes in the fact that in one year the kids will get to know 6 people and see them consistently throughout the year.
4. **Sunday morning Teachers** (during the morning service) – these teachers are also on teams; they commit to **2 non-consecutive months in a year**. This has less consistency for the kids (they will see/interact with lots more people throughout a year in these classes) but it reduces the amount of time these teachers miss the morning service. These teachers are also freed up to attend all the evening services and Core Seminar (adult Sunday school). The only classes we have during the AM service are for pre-K (3-5yrs old) and grade school (Praise Factory, K-3rd grade).
5. **Sunday evening Teachers** (during the evening service) – these have the **same team/commitment schedule as the Sunday morning teachers**, except they are teaching in the evening. (K-2nd grade is the only class we have on Sunday nights; everything else is nursery.)

By doing all of this we balance consistency for the kids with spiritual shepherding/feeding of the volunteers.

**We use "school calendar" year, which is September to August.*