

Teachers Are the Key - So Recruit!

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Who is teaching is of greater importance than what is being taught.

The late spring and summer months are the time to find and prepare teachers for the upcoming school year. We are looking for a particular type of person. Someone who participates in the liturgical life of the church on a regular basis, who interacts well with the youth, who is willing to learn more about the Orthodox faith and teaching, who may be a professional teacher.

Our Church Schools need teachers who are sensitive to both the meaning of the Orthodox faith and the message as expressed in their lives. They want to share the faith and in a way that their students can best learn.

This is not an easy task and we sometimes try to talk an individual into teaching a class. We may say that it is time for their “tour of duty,” and in a way that is one way to think about helping in the church school program, but not a reason to push someone into the classroom. It is my personal belief it is better to combine classes rather than have someone teach who is not committed or has been coerced. To settle for someone we need to “talk into” teaching can do more harm than good to our parish programs. Our youth are too important to us and to the Orthodox Church in America to settle for the uncommitted.

Look for faithful people and offer them the necessary training they need to do the job. This requires the Priest and the Church School Director to commit to providing the needed training and assistance to these faithful people so they may participate in the Church’s Teaching Ministry.

In addition to new teachers, all **volunteer teachers must be offered training** in the skills they need to perform their duties. The parish priest is responsible to oversee the education within his parish at all levels. This added demand is twofold. [1] To teach the basics of the faith himself or by a learned member of the parish. [2] To ensure the Church School Director arranges for teaching training. Either way, **all teachers need to continue learning the Orthodox faith.**

What are some options for teacher training?

1. Teaching the faith by the priest or learned layperson.
2. Professional teachers in the parish – regardless if they commit to teach a class – can offer teacher training sessions on: [a] lesson plans, [b] crafts, [c] bulletin boards, [e] cooperative learning.
3. Retreats led by the parish priest, clergy from the Metropolis or a monastic can enhance the spiritual life of the teachers & increase their knowledge about the Orthodox faith.
4. From the Archdiocese Department of Religious Education - *Teacher Training Smart Pages*
5. Invite the Director of the Metropolis Office of Religious Education.

To increase the pool of potential teachers,

- ★ **Pray and then**
- ★ **Invite people, especially, parents of the students,** to help with special projects, serve as classroom aides, help in the church school office with attendance or other areas, work on bulletin boards, and pass out snacks or any other task that does not require a long-term commitment.
- ★ Give yourself and others the opportunity to observe how they work with teachers and the youth.
- ★ Invite them to teacher training sessions or retreats.
- ★ Reach out to a future teacher to co-teach a class or serve as a substitute teacher.
- ★ Throughout this observation period, ask God’s guidance in leading you toward the person(s) He wants in your Church School program.

Finally, pray to recognize the people He sends you. Happy recruiting!