TEACHING FOR UNDERSTANDING

by:
Brian B. Santiago

Teacher Applicant

Students are better able to believe the lessons that we teach when they truly understand it. Thus, it is important for teachers to plan, study, and execute the lesson well so they can teach clearly. The more complete and clearer the presentation of our lessons are, the better the opportunity for our students to apply it in their lives. You cannot teach what you don’t fully understand.

Our responsibility as teachers is to study our lessons and prepare every time we stand in front of the class and face our students. We should expound or enlarge on and explain clearly the contents of our lessons. Expounding the lesson means that you explain each meaning of the terms and statements simply and clearly. We should use dignified but simple language to help our students, especially those with special needs, understand the lesson. Teachers are to ask questions to confirm whether the students really understand the lesson and accept what is being asked for them to do.

It may be helpful to list down unfamiliar terms that might be difficult for your students to understand. Teaching for understanding includes making sure that words, phrases, and ideas are clearly explained so that our students understand it better. The following tips might be helpful:

• Know the meaning of each words you are using.

• Identifying unfamiliar words that may be new to our students. For example, the word, distance is understood differently by a student and a physics or a math teacher.

• Ask students to restate what you have discussed earlier.
In preparing for a lesson, it will be helpful to find those words that may be difficult to understand. Take down notes and try to define those words in simple ways. Test your definitions with students both of the fast-learners and those with special needs. When we do that, we will have a better experience in class.

References:

1. “What I Want My Son to Know before He Leaves for His Mission,” Ensign, May `996, 41.