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**SCHOOLS**

LDS theology places great importance on the acquiring of knowledge. This knowledge includes not only religious truth but truth in the sciences, arts, and humanities as well (*TPJS*, p. 217; D&C 131:6). Congruent with that value and throughout its history, the Church has established and operated numerous schools and universities to provide educational opportunities for its members.

Comprehensive higher education is offered at Brigham Young University (campuses at Provo, Utah; Laie, Hawai‘i; and Jerusalem, Israel) and Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho. Correspondence study is also available at the secondary, college, and adult education levels through Brigham Young University. The LDS Business College in Salt Lake City offers postsecondary instruction in business and related fields. Full-time primary and secondary schools currently are owned and administered by the Church in the South Pacific and Mexico, providing education to approximately 10,000 students.

In the Pacific islands, two high schools, one large elementary school, and four meetinghouse elementary schools are operated in Samoa, two high schools in Tonga, one technical college and one elementary school in Fiji, one high school in Kiribati, and the Church College of New Zealand in Hamilton. Initially established to provide an educational opportunity for the Maori people, the college in New Zealand presently is a high school with college preparatory courses. Local teachers are hired on a full-time basis, and in a few cases full-time missionary couples with educational experience also provide instruction.

In Mexico City, the Benemerito campus offers secondary education (the last two years are college preparatory) and is the largest of all primary and secondary schools in the Church (2,300 students). The Juarez Academy in Juarez, Mexico, provides a high school education, and is the only remaining academy of those established between 1875 and 1911 (see ACADEMIES).

The Church’s schooling enterprises arose in response to concerns over the secularization of the schools, the need for trained teachers for public schools and trained leadership in the Church, LDS youth’s participation in other denominational schools, and youth leaving home for their schooling. The establishment of schools, and subsequently an educational system, drew the Church into a relationship with state public school systems
in the United States. This relationship divides into five periods:

**Origins (1830–1846).** Educational efforts were hampered by frequent and difficult moves from New York to Kirtland, Ohio, to Missouri, to Nauvoo, Illinois, and finally, to the Great Basin. As was customary in the frontier, most education was provided at home by parents teaching their children the basic skills of literacy and a general understanding of the scriptures and religious values. As early as 1831 efforts were made to collect and write books for schools (D&C 55:4); subsequently, some formal schools were established. Most prominent among these was the school of the prophets, established first in KIRTLAND, OHIO, in 1833, involving fewer than twenty-five adults in instruction intended to prepare them for religious missions and other assignments. Subjects taught included geography, English grammar, Hebrew, literature, philosophy, politics, and theology. Later, in Illinois in 1841, a system of LDS common schools and the University of the City of Nauvoo were established under the direction of the University of Nauvoo Board of Regents. Tuitions and a basic child and adult curriculum were established, but the program’s objectives were largely unrealized as persecution forced the families to move to the West.

**Early Utah Period (1847–1869).** The first schools in Utah were conducted in tents and log huts. At the outset, schools were taught by private teachers who advertised, charged fees, and gathered a few students around them. The University of DESERET was established in 1850 in Salt Lake City to train teachers for schools; however, it survived only two years because few could afford to pay tuition. For the next twenty years, schools throughout the state were held primarily in Church meetinghouses, loosely organized on ecclesiastical lines, sparsely financed by member tuition, and sometimes by Church supplements, or local tax funds in the late 1860s. Church leaders encouraged parents to send their children to school and pay the tuition, usually a few cents per week. The children, however, often worked with their families on farms and ranches and could attend classes only intermittently. Church–state relationships were not an issue because no government-sponsored territorial school system existed at the time. The curriculum reflected Church belief. Most materials, however, had to be imported from the East, and teachers generally lacked formal credentials. Often they were only slightly more knowledgeable than their students.

**Protestant–Mormon Rivalry (1869–1890).** The period was initiated with the establishment of St. Mark’s Episcopal School in Salt Lake City in 1867. Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, and Congregationalists soon followed with their own schools, especially after the completion of the railroad in 1869. Their object was not only to serve their own people but also to convert the Latter-day Saint children attending their schools, although few were converted. Many LDS students did attend, however, because the quality of education they offered was often superior to what Latter-day Saint residents could provide in their own schools. The establishment of non-LDS territorial school officials of a taxSupported public school system in 1890 with its prohibition of sectarian religious teaching and administration initiated the demise of de facto Church influence in most of the schooling. For a time afterwards, the Church sought to maintain its own school system by establishing secondary school academies modeled after the Brigham Young Academy. Eventually, however, other sources of education became available, the expense of providing education became prohibitive, and the Church relinquished its efforts to provide a comprehensive system of education for all its members.

**Establishment of Supplemental Religious Education Classes (1890–1953).** The Church initiated a policy of providing released time religious instruction concurrent with the regular offerings of the state public education system. Beginning in the 1920s, Church academies, or high schools, were either discontinued or turned over to the state. Some academies that had achieved junior college status were sold to the state in the 1930s.

**Growth and Expansion (1953–1990).** During this period, seminaries and institutes were established in all fifty states and many foreign countries. Much of this growth was realized because of decisions not to build additional universities or junior colleges, and to endeavor to establish schools where educational opportunities could not be provided by the local government. Currently owned schools were maintained only until the time that
local government could assume responsibility. Schools in Indonesia, Chile, Tahiti, American Samoa, and Mexico were closed as improved public school programs became more available to members of the Church in those countries. In 1965, the Church schools outside the United States administratively became part of the Unified Church School System. Presently, the schools are administered separately from the institutions of higher education.

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SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS

Between 1833 and 1884, Church leaders from time to time organized schools for instructing members in Church doctrine and secular subjects and for discussing political and social issues relevant to the Church’s mission. Although they varied greatly in form and purpose, these schools were called Schools of the Prophets, or sometimes Schools of the Elders.

The first such school met on January 23, 1833, in Kirtland, Ohio, in response to a revelation (D&C 88:119–33) instructing the Church to prepare priesthood members to carry the gospel to the world. Following prayer and an outpouring of spiritual gifts, the Prophet Joseph Smith invited each man present to receive the ordinance of washing of feet and a blessing. They ended their daylong fast by partaking of the Lord’s Supper, after which they sang a hymn and were dismissed.

The School of the Prophets met in Kirtland through the winter and early spring of 1833, usually in a room above Newel K. Whitney’s store. Joseph Smith presided, and Orson Hyde was the instructor. Enrollment was limited to selected priesthood holders and probably never exceeded twenty-five. In accord with the revelation about the school, members were initiated through the washing of feet, then reaffirmed their commitment and mutual goodwill by exchanging a formal salutation at the commencement of each class. School usually convened at sunrise and dismissed in late afternoon. Instruction focused on scripture and doctrine, though some time was devoted to secular topics such as grammar. During the February 27, 1833, meeting, Joseph Smith received the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom (D&C 89), which thereafter was binding upon members of the school.

The school ended in April 1833, when spring weather permitted active missionary work to begin, and never reconvened. Instead, a series of educational efforts expanded on the original idea and took on added responsibilities. Two of these later schools, known as the School of the Elders or School of the Prophets, convened in Jackson County, Missouri, during the summer of 1833 and in Kirtland, Ohio, from late fall to early spring in 1834–1835 and 1835–1836. These had larger enrollments than the first School of the Prophets and, in addition to the spiritual preparation of priesthood members, taught students an expanded secular curriculum, including penmanship, English, Hebrew, grammar, arithmetic, philosophy, literature, government, geography, and history. These later schools did not observe the earlier initiation rite and formalized salutation. Parley P. Pratt led the Missouri school, and Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, and William E. McLellan taught in Kirtland. During the 1834–1835 school year, students in Kirtland heard the lectures later published in the Doctrine and Covenants as the Lectures on Faith.

Following the closure of the School of the Elders in 1836, the School of the Prophets did not meet again until the Church moved west. In December 1867, President Brigham Young reorganized the School of the Prophets in connection with the University of Deseret. The Church’s First Presidency presided over a theological class of ecclesiastical officers and selected priesthood holders that served as a forum for the discussion of questions related to the spiritual and temporal concerns of the Church. The class later separated from the University, and branch classes were established in major LDS communities throughout the Intermountain West. Total enrollment eventually ex-