CHURCH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM (CES)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has established educational programs throughout the United States and in some ninety other countries to provide an effective combination of religious and secular education to its members. The primary aim shared by these programs is to assist students in gaining an understanding and personal witness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ at the same time as they pursue their secular studies. Latter-day Saints are taught by their leaders and their scriptures to seek after truth in every sphere.

CES comprises the various educational programs of the Church. Brigham Young University, Brigham Young University—Hawaii Campus, Ricks College, and LDS Business College provide higher education balanced with religious instruction for students attending these Church-owned institutions. Seminaries offer weekday religious instruction for high school students, and Institutes offer similar instruction for college students attending non-LDS colleges and universities. Extensive adult and continuing education programs with headquarters at BYU provide educational opportunities for those not officially enrolled in the formal institutions. In addition, the Church maintains a few elementary and secondary schools in less developed nations.

Educational Philosophy. Since the early days of the Church, leaders have placed a strong emphasis on education. The Prophet Joseph Smith, in discussing the purpose of earth life, consistently stressed learning. He said that one of the fundamental principles of Mormonism is to "receive truth let it come from where it may" (WJS, p. 229). Revelations given to Joseph Smith state that "the glory of God is intelligence" (D&C 93:36) and that "whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection" (D&C 130:18). Other revelations further emphasize the importance of both religious and secular learning.

Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly . . . in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand; of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms [D&C 88:78–79].

Brigham Young, the second president of the Church, advanced the same concept, teaching that "all wisdom, and all the arts and sciences in the world are from God, and are designed for the good of His people" (JD 12:147). These ideas and scriptures have become the foundation of the educational philosophy of the Church (see EDUCATION: ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATION).

History of Early Educational Institutions. As the Saints moved to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, they established elementary and secondary schools in each settlement. Schools of the Prophets were organized for adult leaders beginning in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1833. In 1840, a university was established in Nauvoo. During their trek to the Rocky Mountains the Saints conducted elementary classes in the temporary camps. In the fall of 1847, just three months after the first company of pioneers arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, schools were organized. Three years following, in 1850, the University of Deseret was founded. (In 1892 the territorial legislature changed the name to the University of Utah.)

Beginning in 1875, the Church established academies throughout the intermountain United States and some in Canada and Mexico to provide elementary and secondary secular and religious education. To coordinate the programs and growth of the academies, a General Church Board of Education was organized in 1888, consisting of selected Church leaders. Karl G. Maeser was named the first superintendent of Church schools, a position that later became the Commissioner of Church Education. By 1907 the Church Board of Education was responsible for the administration of some thirty-five academies.

About 1890, with the increased availability of free public high schools, attendance at Church academies declined. Some closed their doors, and others were reorganized as junior colleges. By 1931 only Juárez Academy in Mexico remained as
an academy. At that time the Church began transferring its junior colleges to state governments. However, it retained Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho, and Brigham Young Academy in Provo, Utah, which developed into Brigham Young University.

As an increasing number of LDS youth began to attend public secondary schools, Church leaders recognized the need to provide a religious curriculum to complement regular secular studies. In 1912 the Church began building seminaries on Church-owned property adjacent to public high schools, where students could take a daily class in religion. Some public districts released students for an hour for this purpose; other students attended early morning classes before school started. To facilitate the religious training of students attending non-LDS colleges and universities, the Church established institutes of religion adjacent to college campuses beginning in 1926. The success of seminaries and institutes resulted in the spread of these programs to many parts of the world.

Organization. In 1989 the Church Board of Education decided to decentralize the administration of all CES programs and the position of commissioner was abolished. Direct administration of Brigham Young University, Brigham Young University—Hawaii Campus, Ricks College, and LDS Business College was taken over by the boards of trustees legally established for each institution. These boards all have the same membership as the Church Board of Education. They are comprised of the First Presidency and other General Authorities and officers of the Church as assigned, including specifically the presidents of the two women’s auxiliary organizations. By virtue of their assignments to each of these boards, these officers serve each institution concurrently. Also, the operation of seminaries, institutes of religion, religious education in adult and continuing education programs, and the operation of elementary and secondary schools of the Church is guided by the general Church Board of Education.

Church Schools, Seminaries, and Institutes. Members of the Church are encouraged to take full advantage of public education opportunities where available. However, in some areas where there is a high concentration of members and few public education opportunities, the Church Board of Education has established elementary, middle, or secondary schools in which both secular and religious instruction is offered. Some 9,300 students attend Church schools located in Mexico, Kiribati, Fiji, Tonga, Western Samoa, and New Zealand. While serving as Commissioner of Church Education, Neal A. Maxwell explained the objectives of these schools: “Literacy and basic education are gospel needs. Without literacy individuals are handicapped—spiritually, intellectually, physically, socially and economically. Education is often not only the key to the individual member’s economic future, but also to his opportunities for self-realization, for full Church service and for contributing to the world around him—spiritually, politically, culturally and socially” (Annual Report, 1971).

Where public education is readily available, CES offers seminary and institute programs to supplement secular education with religious teachings. During the 1988–1989 school year, 253,361 high school students participated in seminary, constituting 55 percent of all eligible LDS youth. Institute enrollment was 125,534—54 percent of those eligible. Courses in seminaries and institutes center around the reading and study of the Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants and Church history, and Pearl of Great Price. The teachings of these courses emphasize the reality of a living God, the resurrected Christ, the visitation of heavenly beings in restoring the gospel and Church of Jesus Christ to Joseph Smith, the continuing nature of revelation, the teachings of living prophets, and the Gifts of the Spirit. Students in seminary and institute are taught that personal religious knowledge can be obtained by seeking individual revelation, living the principles taught by Christ, and witnessing the results of doing the will of God.

The CES Salt Lake office is responsible for maintaining the quality of the curriculum and teaching staff of seminaries and institutes. Full-time teachers within the United States and Canada are required to have a bachelor’s degree and to participate in an intensive training course at BYU or at one of the approved institutes. The training procedure varies somewhat in areas outside the United States and Canada where there are fewer Church members.

Bibliography


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Revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith supplement those of the New Testament to indicate that the church of the Firstborn consists of those who have the inheritance of the Firstborn and become joint-heirs with Christ in receiving all that the Father has (Rom. 8:14–17; D&C 84:33–38; see HEIRS OF GOD). The Lord said, "If you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; . . . I . . . am the Firstborn; . . . And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn" (D&C 93:20–22). The church of the Firstborn is the divine patriarchal order in its eternal form. Building the priesthood family order on this earth by receiving sealings in the temple is a preparation and foundation for this blessing in eternity (see GOSPEL OF ABRAHAM).

When persons have proved themselves faithful in all things required by the Lord, it is their privilege to receive covenants and obligations that will enable them to be heirs of God as members of the church of the Firstborn. They are "sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise" and are those "into whose hands the Father has given all things" (D&C 76:51–55). They will be priests and priestesses, kings and queens, receiving the Father’s glory, having the fulness of knowledge, wisdom, power, and dominion (D&C 76:56–62; cf. 107:19). At the second coming of Jesus Christ, the "general assembly of the church of the firstborn" will descend with him (Heb. 12:22–23; JST Gen. 9:23; D&C 76:54, 63).

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


**IVAN J. BARRETT**

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**CHURCH GROWTH**

See: Vital Statistics

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**CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS, THE**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the official name of the Church established on April 6, 1830, at Fayette, New York, under the