

# Rotation.org's Real Teacher Training Resources



Printed from [www.rotation.org/blog](http://www.rotation.org/blog). Rotation.org is a non-profit, volunteer-led community of teachers, educators and pastors sharing great lesson ideas and resources, and supporting the creation of creative Sunday School resources like this one. The following two resources were written by Christian Educators Neil MacQueen and Heidi Weber, with contributions from Luanne Payne, Amy Crane, Anne Camp, and Carol Hulbert.

## Point of View

Traditionally, “teacher training” in many churches has been a euphemism for “planning and a pep-talk,” with very little in the way of actual teacher training. While planning and pep-talks are nice — actual, real, and AMAZING teacher training is about sharing and improving teaching skills.

**To help with teaching training, we've created two resources at rotation.org (and in this doc):**

1. The first is a real teacher training event to get teachers talking and sharing. And its activities and discussion MODEL skills they can use in the classroom.
2. The second post describes how to train teachers throughout the year as they teach, using an approach we call “Lampstanding.”

Supporting Members of Rotation.org are adding new insights and suggestions to these resources at [rotation.org/blog](http://rotation.org/blog). That’s the Rotation.org way — tapping the power of community to share great ideas.

## Lesson plans that have built-in training tips

While we’re on the subject of training, we’d like to point out that BY DESIGN **many of our Rotation.org Writing Team lesson plans have “training nuggets”** built right into them.

These lesson plan training nuggets describe the “how and why” of certain activities and techniques your teachers will find in their lesson plan. Traditional curriculum is almost totally devoid of such helps, but our Writing Team believes they are essential to helping teachers learn new ways of relating God's Word to their students.

# A Teacher "Be-Attitude" Training Event



## Intro

What do we mean by "real" teacher training?

**The following are nice things ...but they are NOT real teacher training:**

- Serving bagels and coffee.
- Going over the curriculum, schedule, and policies.
- Having the pastor deliver a biblical "pep talk."

Passing out curriculum and giving pep-talks are what pass for "training" in a lot of churches, and are perhaps why actual training has fallen on hard times and attendance at them is sketchy in many churches. The following event not only seeks to train, it seeks to restore teacher confidence that their time will be well spent.

**The following "Teacher Be-Attitude" Training Event does these things:**

1. It gets teachers talking.
2. It models teaching techniques!
3. And it gives both teachers and leaders the opportunity to share their insights and advice.

Yes, you may need to add your bit of planning, policy, and pep talk; but leave that "stuff" for the end of the event (or a handout) so it doesn't crowd out the opportunity for real sharing and real training.

# The Teacher Be-Attitudes Training Event

## 1. Introductions



After a very brief introduction of today's agenda and the leaders, get right into the Teacher Be-Attitudes activity. Avoid "going around the room" and putting people on the spot to introduce themselves. They'll learn this soon enough. (Nametags are a good idea, though).

## 2. Form Into Sharing-Pairs\*



Have everyone find a partner in the following manner.

- Invite the teachers to form a line based on how many years of Sunday School teaching experience they have. Most to the right, least to the left.
- Then assign pairs by matching the most with the least experienced teacher until everyone is paired up, then have them sit together.

\*Share-Pair is a familiar strategy to creative public school teachers. It works great with any size group because it gets kids sharing with each other and not just the teacher, allows everyone to participate, and is good at bringing forth a variety of responses, instead of just one or two voices from the whole group. It creates a sense of structure and with a little tweaking can even feel like a game. There are a hundred variations of share-pair.

## Sunday School Teacher "Be-attitudes"



**Be Prepared Be Dependable Be Faith-filled Be Kind**  
**Be part of a Team Be Joyful Be an Example Be On Time**  
**Be a Student Be Creative Be Prayerful Be Yourself**  
**Be Flexible Be a Listener Be Approachable**  
**Be...**

### 3. The Be-Attitudes "Pair Sharing" Exercise



Hand out copies of the Be-Attitudes graphic with these instructions:

**a. You have one minute to silently look at all of the Teacher Be-Attitudes** and decide which of the Be-Attitudes are your personal answers to the following three questions. After you have picked yours, I'll give you the signal to start sharing with your partner.

**The three Be-Attitude questions:**

1. The Teacher Be-Attitude that is one of your strengths.
2. The one that is your weaknesses, or that you'd like more help with.
3. The Teacher Be-Attitude you think is especially important or challenging, and why.

**b. Once you've decided on your choices,** turn to your partner and in just two minutes per person share the Teacher Be-Attitudes you chose as your answers to the three questions. Have the person who is wearing the *most blue* go first.

*Yes, that's short! But of course you will fudge on time as needed, and there will be time for follow-up.*

**While they are sharing...** (1) Post an enlarged copy of the Be-Attitudes on a flipchart or list all the "Be's" for all to see. You'll mark this up in the follow-up discussion. (2) Write or post the three pair-sharing questions for all to see.)

**After four or five minutes,** tell the pairs to wrap it up in 30 seconds, then reconvene the group to "Glean from the Pair Sharing."

### 4. Glean from the Pair-Sharing



**Leader:** After the Pair-Sharing, reconvene as a group and go to the list of Be-attitudes you have put on display. **Ask the group to share their answers.** "Let's see which Teacher Be-attitudes you chose as your strengths, weaknesses, importance, and why." **Circle and "Keep Score"** of which Be-attitudes seem to resonate with teachers. It's not important that every single teacher shares every single answer. Mark up the list noting which Be-attitudes teachers seem to have chosen the most. Zero in on the tough ones, asking for advice from the group, and interjecting your own insights. Note the Be-attitude(s) that people didn't seem to choose, and ask why. Keep it moving. Not every discussion point needs a resolution today.

**Sharing Tip:** Don't let talkative teachers dominate (including yourself!). At some point, toss a fun prop toward someone who is not saying much and tell him or her it's "his turn." Have him throw it back to you so you can toss it to another teacher, or let him toss it to someone else to answer. (You're training!)

**Also note** that one of the "Be's..." is not complete. Ask if anyone created their own "Be" and ask them to share it. If you have time, or as you listen to participant sharing, write in possible completions of that final "Be."

## A few insights and follow-up questions about the Teacher Be-attitudes:

- Preparation includes prayer and immersing yourself early in the lesson scripture. What preparation reminder works best for you.
- Dependability includes being there when you don't feel like it. How does it also mean being there for another teacher? a student? a parent?
- What does "on time" mean in terms of our schedule? How does "being on time" relieve preparation and help you focus on kids?
- "Be an example" of what? Are you the Bible they read? Are you the Christ they encounter? Where else in the church do they see and learn from you?
- What does it mean to be "creative"? Is creativity limited to the "activity"? What about being creative in your welcome, approach to Bible reading, reflections, and prayers?

Your notes here:



## 5. Acting Out the Pair Sharing Insights

**The Leader Says:** In a moment, I will give you and your partner two minutes to prepare a very very short skit demonstrating one of our Teacher Be-Attitudes to the whole group. You are to come up with a ten-second example **illustrating both a "right" and a "wrong" way to "Be" that attitude in the classroom.**

😊 Here are the Teacher Be-attitudes we will be acting out: (Assign ONE to each pair, and yes, if you have more than four pairs there will be duplicates. Remember to include all the leaders/administrators, too. Feel free to change up your list.)

1. The Right and Wrong Way to be Prepared
2. The Right and Wrong Way to Be Part of a Team
3. The Right and Wrong Way to Be a Listener
4. The Right and Wrong Way to Be Approachable

### Why act out the insights?

Here's a list to share with your participants AFTER the skits.

- We learn better and remember more when we move, laugh, and share in creative ways.
- It models a great discussion technique every teacher can use with her students!
- Acting together builds teamwork and breaks down barriers.
- It creates teachable moments. Short improvisational skits present an opportunity for the teacher to prime her students with suggestions and to follow up the skit with insightful comments.



## 6. Closing Teacher Be-Attitude Prayer



Standing in a circle, have participants pick a "Be-Attitude" they need help with -and form it into a one-sentence prayer request: "***Holy Spirit, help me be....***"

Following that requesting-prayer, have each form a thanksgiving prayer, "***Holy Spirit, thank you for being....***"

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### Training Event Tips:

- **Get maximum attendance** by inviting every teacher to use Doodle.com's free scheduler to decide on a date and time everyone can attend.
- **Set up your space to be comfortable**, and in a way that participants can easily see and interact with one another.
- **Limit planning and policy**, such as "The Child Policy Talk," to just a few minutes toward the end of the event. Put details on a handout you can quickly emphasize and they can read later.
- **Put in writing things that can be read later** and that do not need (much) discussion. Hand out all the papers at the end of the time so they aren't a distraction.
- **Make sure the pastor is part of the event**, but tell him/her that you want him to attend as a participant –interjecting insights and appreciating attendees in a personal way. If you want them to provide some "biblical insights for teachers" let them do so as a follow-up to all the training --as what they might share should reflect what they've heard.
- **Take photos and videos** with your cell phone and share them so that teachers who missed out and other church members can see what a good time you had and what a great job you're doing!
- **Create a handout of "resources"** including Rotation.org, key pages from your curriculum (such as the overview), a copy of a multiple intelligences illustration, and any favorite teaching resources you may have collected in the past.

### Insights from "How & Why" We Pair-Shared

By using random fact-matching to assemble each pairs and deciding who should talk first, we are reducing the anxiety some people feel about "being picked or rejected." It's also a great way to get students to expand their circle of relationships beyond their usual friendships.

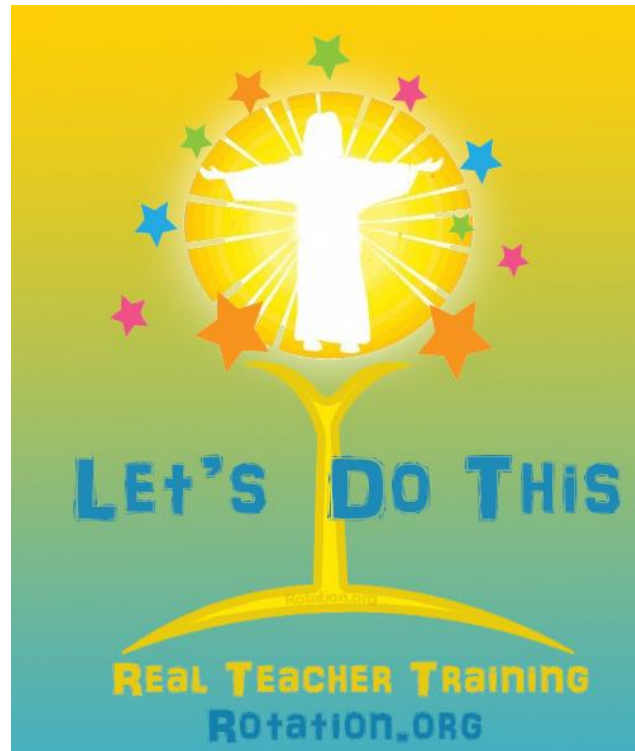
Notice the progression from silently thinking to pair-sharing, to whole group sharing in this exercise. This allows shy students to warm up and speak where they are most comfortable. The progression to group level discussion allows the teacher to first hear what students are thinking and lets students hear from other students. This also takes the pressure off of the teacher to "produce" and gives them the opportunity to respond to student questions and insights, before introducing some conclusions of their own -or that of the lesson plan.

The time-limits not only keep things moving, they encourage participation "before time runs out," and keep certain talkative folks from dominating.

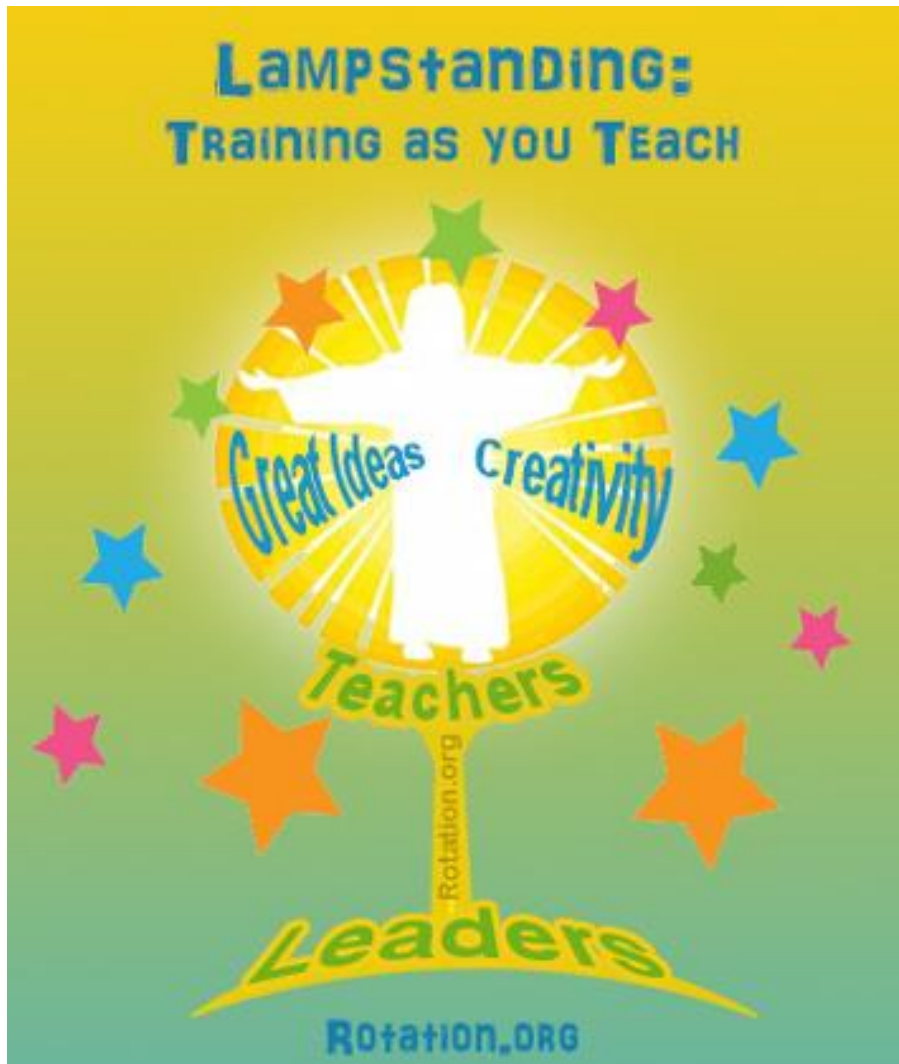
## Other Training Opportunities

Create another "training event" to address important issues with experts covering the following topics. In some churches, attendance at such "training" is mandatory.

- Recognizing and dealing with behavioral issues and discipline.
- Child Safety.
- At-risk children.
- Child developmental stages and strategies.
- Multiple Intelligences and Attention Spans, best and varied learning practices.



## Lampstanding: Training as You Teach



### Training should not just be an event.

Events are great, and your Rotation.org resource team has even written an interactive training event at [rotation.org/blog](http://rotation.org/blog). **But what about the rest of the year?** For better or worse, *most* training is "on the job" --and that type of training can be great IF you have someone helping you, showing you what to do (or learning alongside you), cheering you on, and helping you share what you learned.

The following "Paste in My Hair" Teacher Training Blog post describes a way to do just that --how to improve and expand teaching skills as we teach throughout the year --*by raising up great ideas and great expectations.*

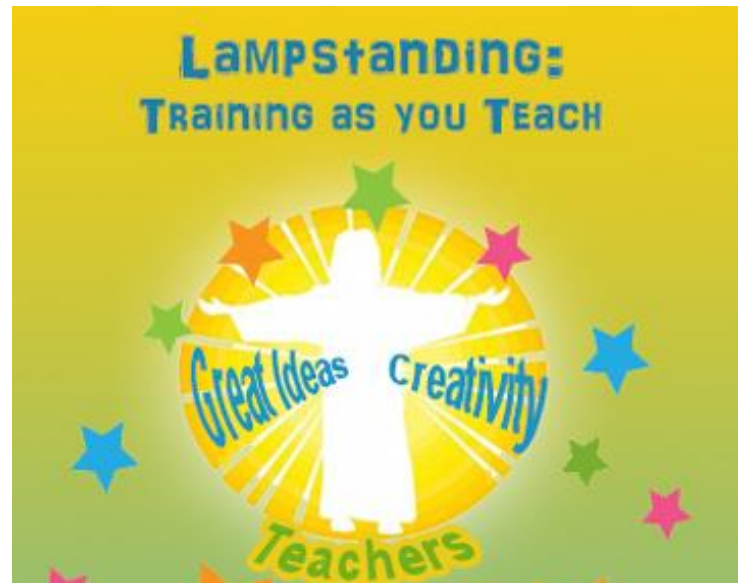
***We call it "Training by Lampstanding."***



## Lampstanding in brief:

1. In Lampstanding, the leader raises the teacher's awareness of key creative opportunities coming up in their curriculum. They raise up the expectation that certain activities and techniques *should* happen, and then they raise up their level of support to help the teacher *make it happen*.

2. Lampstanding means the teacher's "enlightening" experience is raised up not just to shine on their students, but to shine as an example to other teachers. Lampstanding is way for teachers to teach other teachers.



## The Problem of "BUSHEL-SMOOSHING"

The problem that lampstanding addresses, other than the need for on-going training, is that a lot of "bushel smooshing" has been going on in Sunday School. In fact, "Bushel-Smooshing" is the opposite of Lampstanding.



### Examples of "Bushel-Smooshing"

- Leaders who hand out lesson plans to teachers and don't follow up on what the teacher may need help with and don't debrief how the lesson went.
- Teachers who take the "path of least resistance and simplest preparation" --avoiding creative ideas they are unfamiliar with or know will require extra effort.
- Video, music, and drama resources going unused.
- Worksheet and arts & craft activities being over-used.
- A teacher who "stays in their lane" subjecting students all year long to the teacher's learning preferences and blindspots.
- Leaders who are too busy administrating the program to be working with the teachers.
- Teachers who have great ideas to share but no support for sharing them.
- Teachers who don't realize they know how to do something other teachers will want to learn.

**Bushel-Smooshing** eventually leads to teacher and student depletion and darkness.

Whereas, **lampstanding** offers a friendly, supportive (and biblical!) approach to help teachers succeed at being more creative and successful in their lessons, and share their inspiring light with other teachers.

Let's get into a few more "how to" details.

## Lampstanding is...

1. Setting creative expectations higher, instead of hiding them politely under a bushel.
2. Raising up awareness of the creative techniques in upcoming lessons to make sure the teacher sees them for what they are trying to accomplish, instead of how much work they will be.
3. Providing resources to help teachers, lessons, and techniques shine. This includes being there to help prep and assist the day of the lesson you have identified.
4. Following up afterward with teachers about what they learned and would change.
5. Sharing the results with others.

Lampstanding is also leading by example... identifying new things that will stretch your skill-set and theirs, and after doing them, sharing the light.

**Leaders:** Lampstanding is not heavy-handed; it's caring leadership, and *sharing* leadership. It's sharing what you think is exciting in an upcoming lesson plan and offering your hands-on support. It's about expecting and equipping teachers to flourish, and raising up the results to inspire others.

**Teachers:** "Lampstanding" is about building on your gifts, getting the support you need, and realizing your insights can be a blessing to others --all in an effort to evangelize our kids.

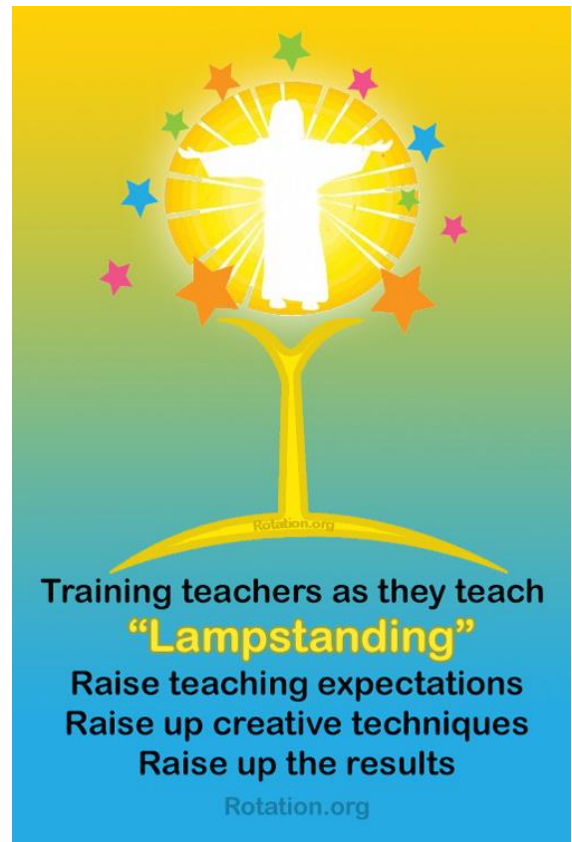
## A Strategy for Getting Started with Lampstanding

**1) Raise expectations among the teachers.** Let them know through training events, communications, one-on-one, and your presence alongside them in the classroom, that you want them to embrace creative approaches rather than avoid them, and that you will be there to support them.

**2) Find a teacher who wants to be the first to be lamp-standed.** Work with him or her to identify, plan, and lead upcoming creative opportunities in their lesson plans. Then LAMPSTAND the DAYLIGHTS out of that upcoming lesson and the results so that others can see and be drawn to its light. LAMPSTAND the teacher's insights and successes to others via conversations, email, handouts, and discussion at your next get-together. Be there with your cellphone camera to "*catch them in the act of being awesome*" and share that with your congregation.

## Seems so simple, right? (LOL)

Well, it is *if you do it*, and there's nothing like putting names and dates on a calendar to get something done. So why not gather a willing teacher by your side, pull out your calendars and lesson plans now, and make a plan to ***do some Lampstanding together.***



## Finding Lesson Plans and Activities Worthy of Lampstanding

Some curriculum out there simply does not challenge your teachers, let alone your kids. It's "read and talk about this, and color or paste that." In a word: **Yuck.**

But the better curriculums do have some variety, and a sharp leader or teacher will be able to spot the opportunities in them for lampstanding.

If you're looking for some REALLY CREATIVE lesson plans to stretch your teacher with, then look no further than our own [Writing Team Lesson Sets](#). **Whether you're a traditional program or Rotation Model Sunday School**, the Team's "extra creative" lesson sets offer you many different approaches to the same story: Art, Drama, Games, Videos, Music, "Science," Software, Cooking, and Movement.

You can also read the [Workshop Manuals](#) and workshop forum resources we've written for various workshops. These are full of techniques. Read the [Creative Bible Reading and Discussion](#) thread. Read the [lesson plans](#) people are sharing to see how they are creatively teaching.

**The following is not a commercial, it's the truth.** During our 2015-2018 rewriting of all the [Rotation Writing Team lesson sets](#), we purposefully emphasized including a VARIETY of ways to read the Bible, discuss questions, do interactive reflections, pray, etc. You can see throughout those lesson sets sharing a variety of techniques that can be used with almost any Bible story. You can also just teach with the Writing Team lessons in the sets to GET those techniques happening in your classrooms. We also added "teaching tips" in a bunch of the lessons to explain to the teacher the "why" of doing something a certain way. Yes, our Writing Team lesson sets *train* teachers.

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*Lampstanding was written by Rotation.org  
"Paste in My Hair" Christian educators  
Neil MacQueen and Heidi Weber, with  
contributions from Amy Crane. For more  
great lesson ideas, resources, and personal  
support, visit Rotation.org.  
We're here to help.*

