Using Breakout Groups in Church Teaching

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Teachers have a deep-seated desire for students to learn. Because of this, they are constantly looking for the best ways to teach — ways that stimulate the minds of all of the students, not just a select few. Teachers teach for the mass, but also focus on the one. It is a difficult balance to focus on each individual while still being able to help the entire class learn and grow together. In a gospel setting, teachers want their students to feel the spirit because that is the one sure way that they will all learn. Then, how can teachers best bring in the spirit while teaching? When teachers have control of the class discussion, they can guide the discussion in the way the spirit is telling them to. It is their stewardship and they are able to receive that necessary revelation. However, when they lose control of the situation, any topic — tangential or otherwise — can come up and the spirit can quickly leave the room. The teaching has become ineffective.

When breakout groups each read different sections of scripture, the other students don't know what happened in that section. Even with a brief summary, it's not as effective as focusing the entire class on one section of scripture, reading it together, discussing it. When breakout groups are set up, time is wasted, and students are rarely set up in properly sized and oriented groups. Groups are generally too large to encourage personal and thoughtful discussion. Groups are usually set up in columns of students, not clusters. This means that the students who are supposed to be discussing an issue together are generally the worst suited for a group discussion without having to move their seats. And moving seats is another time-sink. Students care about learning, but also the social aspects of church (girls, etc.).

What are the consequences of using breakout groups on student learning?

Pros: (theoretically) everyone is involved in breakout groups, better learning without, more control of discussion, better spirit in the room, more effective use of resources.

Cons: distraction, students not participating, students not understanding what other students read, class size can be a major issue.

Using breakout groups (A) <u>stymies</u> (v1) student learning (B) because using breakout groups (A) <u>makes</u> (v2) ineffective use of class time (C).