

## PONDER AND PROVE

“As I pondered over these things... the eyes of my understanding were opened” (D&C 138:11).

“He will give unto the faithful line upon line... and I will try you and prove you herewith” (D&C 98:12).

### PURPOSE

In the Learning Model cycle, Ponder and Prove is the time to deepen, consolidate, and gain confidence in what the student has learned, and to prepare for additional instruction. After establishing a foundation for learning through preparation and teaching one another, both you and your students will take time to ponder. It is in pondering your learning and proving your understanding that lasting insights and spiritual impressions are gained.

### DESCRIPTION

While Ponder and Prove can seamlessly extend and crystallize understanding, this overview will consider their unique purposes separately.

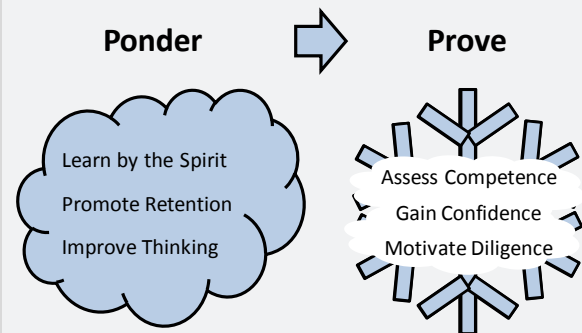
#### Ponder

Pondering involves such activities as individual and group reflection, recording learning, noting questions, seeking follow-up learning, and considering additional needs. If the word *ponder* has seemed elusive, consider the benefits to be found reviewing notes while articulating key ideas, questions, answers, personal feelings, and related examples. Whatever the particular pondering activity may be, focus on the following goals:

- **Learn by the Spirit.** While those not accustomed to doing so may feel it is odd to try to learn about secular subjects from the Holy Ghost, the Prophet Moroni taught that “by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5). As Oliver Cowdery learned, you must do more than simply ask (D&C 9:8), which highlights the need to prepare and teach one another. But, when you have done your part, if you will ponder, listen to the Holy Ghost, and record and act upon the insights you receive, He can add to and quicken your understanding, line upon line (D&C 88:11; 2Nephi 28:30).
- **Promote retention.** Many instructional theories suggest that you enhance your understanding and are most motivated when you consider the relevance of learning in light of personal experience, related knowledge, and potential applications. Similarly, the gospel teaches to

liken what you are learning to your own circumstances (1Nephi. 19:23). Further, when you review, organize, and apply learning, you can gain competence in new skills and commit new knowledge to long-term memory.

- **Improve how you think.** On one level, you ponder the particular subject you are studying. On another level, you analyze your studying and thinking habits and how you are approaching the task of learning and teaching. This higher process of awareness can help you to identify ways to improve not only your understanding of a particular subject but also how we learn and teach one another.



#### Prove

Proving involves trying out ideas, teaching others what you have just learned, providing and requesting feedback, verifying that new knowledge fits with your beliefs, demonstrating competence, and standing accountable for what you have learned and taught. As you engage in proving, consider three objectives:

- **Assess competence.** In the absence of timely feedback, you don't know if you are approaching your goals (see Learning Outcomes) or drifting from them. *Proving* invites individualized feedback that helps you make course corrections as needed and gives much-needed reassurance when you are doing well (see Assessments).

- **Gain confidence.** To become disciple leaders in their disciplines, students need more than just knowledge or even ability; they also need to develop confidence in their ability to add value wherever they go. *Proving* activities allow students to demonstrate their competence and receive the commendation and encouragement that will build confidence.
- **Motivate diligence.** You reap good or bad consequences according to your actions (D&C 6:33). Generally speaking, you are more motivated to be diligent when you know you'll be held accountable. *Proving* activities (such as tests) provide opportunities for students to give an accounting of their learning and teaching stewardship; looking forward to such opportunities from the beginning can help you commit more fully to prepare for them.

### EXAMPLE

An instructor kicks off the semester with a discussion of the Learning Model. A few days into the course, the instructor takes a few minutes at the beginning of class to demonstrate a note-taking method that facilitates pondering. As students prepare and teach one another in class, they note subject details on the right side of the page and reserve the left margin for personal insights. Each day after class, students take some time to review their notes and summarize key ideas and follow-up questions in the left margin. Study groups spend their time comparing and discussing left-margin comments and questions. They appear to be truly interested in learning.

Teaching one another in class regularly involves opportunities for students to apply what they are learning to solve real or simulated problems. Both the instructor and students participate in evaluating others' solutions and approach using a rubric (see Rubrics). Periodic exams and projects require diligent and consistent effort, but seem a natural extension of regular learning activities. Several students have commented in their blogs that their left-margin notes have helped them prepare for exams and improve how they study.

### TIPS

- **Align with outcomes.** *Prove* activities should always focus on learning outcomes. *Ponder* activities should also start with outcomes, even if students choose to take them further.
- **Make it authentic.** Pondering and proving in realistic scenarios is a natural companion to experiential learning and teaching at BYU-Idaho.
- **Show them.** Don't assume students know how and why to ponder. Give them opportunities and show a few examples from time to time. Help students improve their study skills by using the free services available through [Academic Learning](#).
- **Make time.** It's easy to over-plan teaching activities or underestimate how much preparation is really required for a class. If you don't carefully reserve time for pondering and proving, it rarely happens. Make time.

### PITFALLS

- **Insufficient preparation.** Ensuring enough preparation time both before and after class is difficult to gauge.
- **Over-structuring.** "Busywork" pondering assignments can limit or crowd out more genuine pondering.

### CAMPUS PRACTITIONERS

Ponder: [Tom Croasmun](#), [Dana Johnson](#)

Prove: [Richard Clifford](#), [Eric Gee](#), [Greg Roach](#)

### KEY ARTICLES

[Schneider, W. \(2000\). Research on memory development: Historical trends and current themes. \*International Journal of Behavioral Development\*. \(24\), 407-420.](#)

[Wiggins, G. P. \(2004\). \*Assessment as feedback\*. New Horizons for Learning. Retrieved June 25, 2008.](#)

Worthen, B. R., White, K. R., Fan, X., & Sudweeks, R. R. (1999). To use or not to use alternative assessment? In *Measurement and Assessment in Schools*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

### OTHER RESOURCES