

Building Combined Activity Groups

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The purpose of church activities among senior primary and youth is to help them to discover their eternal identity, build character and resilience, develop life skills, and fulfill their divine roles as sons and daughters of God. Achieving that purpose is significantly enhanced when the youth can do that together in fellowship with faithful friends. The Orange Stake is introducing a structure that will help to fulfill these objectives while fostering healthy relationships.

Wards tend to go through demographic bubbles of lean and fat years in terms of the numbers of primary and youth. Ward boundaries could not change quickly enough to accommodate those fluxes in the size of primary and youth programs. We desire to provide an environment with steady participation in a healthy-sized group of children and youth. Children and youth benefit tremendously by being in a larger group. Every saint needs a friend, a responsibility and to be nourished by the good word of God. Larger groups enhance opportunities for faith-based leadership and friendship.

In order to build those friendships, the Stake is announcing Building Combined Activity Groups. There will be two family wards meeting at each building forming a Building Combined Activity Group. All senior primary activities and youth activities will be organized at the Activity Group level. For example, the Beehive classes from the same building will meet as a unified group of Beehives.

Mutual and Activity Nights

Effective immediately, all primary and youth non-Sunday activities will be held on a two-ward basis formed around the building that they attend. The activity groups will be identified as follows:

- Newport Building Activity Group
- San Juan Building Activity Group
- Yorba Building Activity Group

Many parents have children in both primary and youth programs. When a family has a primary activity on one night and a youth activity on another night, the family's time is occupied both nights in driving to and supporting those activities. Therefore, all senior primary activities and all young men/young women activities will occur on Wednesdays. Consolidating activities on one night will free the family to be able to choose how to spend other family and activity time more effectively.

Because of the large number of groups that will be meeting, senior primary children and youth have priority over the buildings on Wednesday nights. Those groups include senior primary boys, senior

primary girls, Deacons, Beehives, Teachers, Mia Maids, Priests and Laurels. Relief Society, Elders Quorum, and ward activities should be scheduled on Tuesday nights or weekends.

Joint Activities

Joint activities with all young men and young women at each building meeting together should be held at least monthly. The second Wednesday of each month is reserved for these joint activities. Reserving the second Wednesday of the month for joint activities will also make it easier to schedule cross-building combined activities when desired. Under the direction of building leadership, additional joint activities could occur on the first, third and fourth Wednesdays as well. For example, a building may choose to have young women of all ages meet together on the fourth Wednesdays, or the Mia Maid and Teacher groups at a building may schedule a special joint activity to practice etiquette. We encourage creative groupings and pairings that provide even greater opportunities for friendship, bonding and leadership.

Stake Combined Activities

The fifth Wednesday in a month (which occurs four or five times each year) will be a stake-wide combined youth activity. This only applies to youth activity groups. Primary activity groups will not be expected to plan combined activities with the same frequency.

Scouting Transition

Currently, all cub scouts stake-wide are meeting on Tuesday nights at the Yorba building. The practice of cubs meeting on Tuesdays may continue through the end of 2019. Because cubs from all buildings are meeting together weekly, they do not need to separate out into Building Activity Groups until 2020.

Similarly, the 11-year-old scouts and deacon-aged scouts are meeting as stake-wide groups on Wednesday nights at the San Juan Building and Yorba Building, respectively. These programs may continue as planned through the end of 2019. (Deacon-aged scouts should still plan on participating in Building Activity Group joint activities each second Wednesday, effect immediately.) Starting in 2020, these boys will join their respective Building Activity Groups as described above for their regular weekly meetings.

Planning

Helping our youth learn to lead is a key component of the youth activity programs. Much of the leadership experience that our youth will have will take place during the planning process for activities and events. Holding regular planning meetings and preparing our youth leaders to be successful in these meetings is as much a part of their youth experience as the activities themselves. Please do not overlook or shortchange this critical component of youth development.

Note: All references to “leaders” in this document refer to the young people leading our quorums and classes. All references to “advisors” refer to adult advisors, presidencies, and bishoprics.

The leaders planning the activities are presidents of the beehive, mia maid, and laurel classes, as well as the presidents of the deacon and teacher quorums, along with the first assistants in the priest quorums.

Helping them to plan and carry out activities and teaching them these critical leadership skills are the adult advisors and bishopric representatives of both wards.

Monthly Building Activity Group Planning Meetings

The youth leaders and adult advisors in each Building Activity Group will meet at least monthly to plan the Wednesday night activities and other youth activities and events. We anticipate this Building Activity Group planning meeting will start with everyone together to plan second-Wednesday joint activities and then breakout into separate age-level groups to plan activities for the remaining weeks.

These group planning meetings will be presided over by a bishopric member from each ward. (If the bishop chooses to delegate this to a counselor, he should send a counselor with delegated keys relative to budget, activities, etc. such that decisions can be made in the meeting itself.) Adult advisors will train the youth leaders to plan each activity by first coming up with a spiritual theme and goal that is critically needed by this group and then deciding on an activity that will achieve the inspired goal.

Annual Building Activity Group Calendar Meeting

We additionally recommend an annual calendar meeting to map out high level themes and activities for calendaring purposes and to assign quorum and class responsibilities for upcoming events. Activity costs should also be discussed at this meeting to provide input for the bishops regarding budget allocation. This meeting can take the place of the annual activity calendaring meetings that previously took place at the ward level.

Each monthly joint activity should have an assigned youth leader who takes stewardship for planning and executing the activity. Conveniently, there will be twelve quorum and class presidents in each Building Activity Group, and one could be assigned the joint activity responsibility for each of the twelve months of the year.

Bishops Youth Committee Meetings

Bishops Youth Committees (“BYC”) should continue to function separately, although since activities will not be planned in the BYC, they can now focus more on reactivation, teaching, learning leadership principles and service.

Quorum and Class Presidency Meetings

Ward class and quorum presidencies will continue to meet regularly (ideally weekly) but those meetings can now be significantly shortened since they won’t involve planning activities. Instead, those weekly presidency meetings will focus on planning topics of instruction, learning leadership principles, reactivation, executing ward assignments (such as bishop assignments for sacrament, caring for the needy, seminary setup, or trash duties), and following up on assignments for the combined and joint activities.

Chart of Meetings

Meeting	Scope	Presides	Attends	Frequency	Length
Activity Group Calendar Meeting	Building	Bishopric members from both wards	Ward bishopric representatives, Youth quorum and class presidents and 1 st assistants to the bishops, Ward youth auxiliary presidencies	Annually	60-90 m
Activity Group Planning Meeting	Building	Bishopric members from both wards	Ward bishopric representatives, Youth quorum and class presidents and 1 st assistants to the bishops, Ward youth auxiliary presidencies	Monthly	60 m
Bishop Youth Committee Meeting	Ward	Bishop	Youth quorum and class presidents and 1 st assistant to the bishop, Ward youth auxiliary presidents	Monthly	60 m
Quorum and Class Presidency Meeting	Quorum or Class	Quorum or class president	Quorum or class presidency, adult advisors	Weekly	15 m

Staffing

Each ward is responsible for providing at least one advisor at each activity for each quorum or class grouping and each advisor is responsible for getting to know and helping the youth in the combined quorum or class grouping. Even if a ward has no youth in a particular quorum or class, the ward is still responsible for sending an advisor to each activity. This is critical to ensure two-deep adult supervision on activity nights. Advisors from both wards should develop Christlike love for each member of the combined group regardless of ward affiliation.

Wards should still call and set apart young men and young women auxiliary presidencies. The role of these presidencies is unchanged from what is described in the Church Handbook. If a ward has sufficient leadership, additional youth advisors can still be called, to help ensure that faithful and reliable adult staffing is available for every Mutual activity. Wards should also ensure that Sunday quorums and classes have two-deep adult staffing. If the young men and young women presidencies are functioning without additional advisors, bishopric members or parents can provide the additional staffing needed for classes on Sunday.

Forming new friendships among the youth will take time, effort and overcoming of many obstacles. Particularly in the initial phases, primary and youth, as well as their advisors, will begin with a ward identity. The tendency will be to break off into ward-based activities. This should not happen. The goal is to help the Building Activity Group to form a new, unified identity. The well-intentioned impulse of adult advisors when thinking of activities, even casual ones, will be to take the boys or girls in their own ward to go do something as a quorum or class group. That will only reinforce the ward identity and work counter to the goal of unity in the Building Activity Group. We want to achieve a larger group identity, one large enough to include a friend for all and real, meaningful leadership opportunities.

Adult advisors must make the effort to minister to all of the youth in the Building Activity Group. This will require a paradigm shift for advisors who only feel a stewardship over the youth from their own ward. Callings and stewardships are expanding to include love and responsibility for all youth in each building. Adult advisors and youth leaders, alike, should engage with, get to know, love, build up, and

serve the youth from both wards. From time to time, behavioral issues will crop up which should generally be handled by the advisors from that youth's ward in conjunction with the youth's bishop and parents.

Budget

Senior primary and youth activity budgets will now be separated from ward budgets into a single budget for each Building Activity Group. The funding for these budgets will come directly from the stake and will be based on primary and youth attendance in each of the participating wards. The Building Activity Group budget will be further broken down into categories for primary boys, primary girls, young men, and young women. Allocation of budget funds into each of the categories will be at the unified discretion of both bishops with input from the ward primary and youth auxiliary presidents as discussed at the annual calendar meeting.

As a result of this change, ward budgets will be reduced correspondingly and will now only cover ward activities, adult activities, and other administrative expenses. Funds should not be transferred between the ward budgets and the Building Activity Group budgets. These accounts are considered separate and independent.

Stewardship for managing the Building Activity Group budgets and associated financial transactions will fall to the agent bishop for each building. The Building Activity Group budget will appear as a new item on their ward budget. Understand that these funds are for running the building combined activity programs and should never be mingled with other ward budget accounts. Expenditures from the Building Activity Group account must be authorized by both bishops before being paid.

Funds collected and paid for authorized summer activities for youth from both wards will also be handled by the agent bishop's ward. These must use an "Other" account as is the current financial policy.

Accumulation of Budget Funds

Building Activity Groups should operate within their allocated annual budget. Budgets cannot be augmented with funds from ward budgets or direct donations from members. Advisors are discouraged from funding activities out-of-pocket without seeking reimbursement. (This well-intentioned act sets an unrealistic expectation for our youth and an unsustainable practice for those who follow in the callings.)

Building Activity Groups should not intentionally accumulate budget funds. Leaders should make an effort to make the best use of each year's budget and not attempt to cut back one year so they can splurge the next. Expense reimbursements should be submitted in a timely manner and not held until the end of the year to "see if there is enough money left."

To encourage this behavior, we will put in place a policy that at no time will a Building Activity Group account balance be higher than five times the most recent quarterly allotment. This will be checked each quarter, and any excess funds will be automatically transferred to the stake.

Activity planning requires detailed budgeting and teaches the principle of living within our means. Difficult decisions must sometimes be made as to how precious budget money is spent. This will be excellent preparation for missionary service and difficult young adult decisions with limited means. Sometimes, it is the adult advisors who are most vested in the trappings that can lead to overspending.

If adult advisors have a positive attitude, the youth will not miss the extra decorations or complain when they are served budget-friendly food.

Fundraising

If the activity budget does not have sufficient funds to pay for an annual camp or similar activity, advisors may ask participants to pay for part or all of it. If funds from participants are not sufficient, the bishops in a Building Activity Group, with approval from the stake president, may authorize one group fund-raising activity each year that complies with the guidelines in Section 13.6.8 of Handbook 2. In no case should the expenses or travel for an annual camp or similar activity be excessive. Nor should the lack of personal funds prohibit a member from participating. The Bishops need to help to find a way for all youth to attend.

Parents and advisors should encourage youth to engage in individual efforts to raise money for summer camps. Projects that help youth earn money on an individual or family basis are not considered Church-sponsored fundraisers and do not require special approval. The following chart can help to understand the distinction between group and individual fundraisers:

Group Fundraiser	Individual Earning
All youth in Building Activity Group participate	Individual youth or families participate
Requires approval of both building bishops and stake president	No special approval required
May be advertised as a Church fundraising activity	Should not be identified as a Church fundraiser, but youth can let people know they are earning money for a church camp
Church buildings may be used for approved group fundraisers	Church buildings cannot be used
Funds collected may only be used for a single summer group activity as allocated by the bishops	Funds may be used by the individual or family for any worthwhile purpose (don't forget to pay tithing)
Bishops should consult with stake president for use of excess funds	Excess funds may be used for mission, college, or anything else
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money collected must be promptly deposited into the church account using a donation slip • Checks should be made out to the ward • Money should never be deposited into a personal account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money can be deposited into a personal account • Money should not be deposited into a church account unless it is being donated with no strings attached
Parents help and support the fundraising activity	Parents encourage, facilitate, and support the effort to earn money
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult advisors assist youth leaders in planning and executing the fundraising activity • Advisors ensure money is handled properly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult advisors encourage and may facilitate the effort to earn money • Advisors should not hold or handle youth's personal money
Examples include auctions, garage sales, car washes, dinners, bake sales	Examples include babysitting, yardwork, housework, flag routes, part time jobs

Especially in the case of families struggling financially, advisors should not only encourage but also may help facilitate personal fundraising projects for individual youth.

If organized fundraising is approved, it must occur on a Building Activity Group basis with a meaningful opportunity for all youth to participate. Old practices of fundraising money being tracked to individuals

will be discontinued. Donating to and participating in fundraisers are both charitable acts and should come with no expectation for compensatory returns. Bishops are responsible for the appropriate distribution of funds relative to the needs of the youth in the Building Activity Group.

A fundraising event should not collect more money than is needed to fund a single summer camp or activity and any equipment that may be required for that activity. Excess funds may not be used to fund other activities, supplement the annual budget, or carry over to the next year. Members cannot receive refunds if excess funds are collected. Bishops may consult with the stake president on how to handle the happy problem of having a fundraiser that is too successful.

Other Activities and Events

This policy will apply to all activities organized by the primary and youth auxiliaries such as activity days, senior primary boys and youth activities. In addition to the usual Wednesday night activities, the Building Activity Group will also apply to temple baptisms, weekend campouts, super activities, high adventure trips, group service activities such as feeding the homeless, etc.

The intent is for the activity elements of the program to be fully integrated, while the individual quorum and class identities are retained for Sunday instruction, ward service assignments, ministering assignments, missionary work, etc.

Bishops' youth firesides are not an activity, and need not be combined, but they could be. The Temple Readiness and Priesthood Preview annual meetings for incoming Beehives and Deacons is not considered an activity and may be held separately or combined. Primary activities which are specifically geared toward the Sacrament primary program should be held separately.

Ward activities which are traditionally planned by the primary or youth auxiliaries, such as Halloween parties, should not be funded from Building Activity Group budgets. If wards decide to combine for these events, expenses should be paid from both ward budgets as agreed by the bishops.

Implementation

These rules apply immediately. All previously planned activities decided or announced prior to the announcement of this combined activity initiative should be reevaluated and replaced with jointly planned activities. We understand that this may be disappointing to those who have planned activities through the end of the year. We hope that best ideas and most detailed plans will survive the change and be incorporated into the new building combined activities.

How these changes are received and implemented by the adult advisors will greatly impact how the initiative is perceived by the youth. This is an exciting time! We pray that all will approach the announced changes with faith and a positive attitude, so that the expected blessings may have no delay in raining down upon the children and youth of the Orange Stake.