

Use “The Scene” to introduce “Leadership,” the Young Teen Sunday school lesson for February 5, 2012. The lesson is found on page 63 of *Young Teen Teacher* by Standard Publishing.

the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

Spelling bees. Spelling tests. A list of spelling words. The discipline of proper spelling has unquestionably been accepted as a part of a good education. But a larger-than-life misspelling has caused leaders of a New York school, a government agency, and a private business to scramble, each trying to blame the others for an embarrassing error.

On January 24, 2012, the *New York Post* published a photograph of 8-foot-high letters outside of Marta Valle High School on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Stenciled on the road outside of this place of learning was the misspelled sign *S H C O O L X-NG*. Adding to the embarrassment was the fact that the lettering had been in place for one and a half school years. The stencils were in place after road repairs were completed in July 2010.

“It’s sad,” said Derek Pacheco, a Flushing securities-industry worker who passes by on his way to work. “It speaks volumes about the dumbing down of American culture.” Marta Valle High School’s PTA president, Linda Surles, blamed school officials more directly. “Nothing surprises me anymore at this school,” she said. “What’s ironic is that the principal has probably painted the lunchroom and rooms inside over about five times since 2010. She’s probably spent \$100,000 in paint doing and redoing the inside of the school, but she doesn’t notice this right outside her door!”

Others shift the blame from the school to the Department of Transportation (DOT) who supervised the road repair. But a DOT spokesman said that an outside provider, not the city, made the error. “We are contacting them to correct the error promptly,” the spokesman promised. No comment was made as to why state employees did not report the problem when inspecting the sign in September 2010 and 2011.

The company who did the actual lettering was Alphabet Signs, a distributor of pavement stencil products. Yet the president of that company, Daniel Keane, also would not accept the blame. “In the subcontractor’s defense,” said Keane, “street stenciling is always a team effort. Other utility workers, road flaggers, and supervisors were probably also on site at the blocked-off street. One has to wonder who did the final inspection.”

The proper spelling of *SCHOOL* has been restored to the street marking. But the spelling of *X-NG* was not replaced by the more accepted spelling, *X-ING*, or the preferred spelling, *CROSSING*.

As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above news story to read. After all teens have had the opportunity to read the article, discuss it in this way:

Consider the reaction of the various leaders described in this article. How did they deal with the attention caused by the misspelled sign? Why do you think they responded as they did? How do you think they should have dealt with the issue?

Think of the best leaders you know. What characteristics do they have that cause you to think so highly of them? In your opinion, what other characteristics should be present in a good leader?

We need responsible leaders in schools, government, and business. But we especially need strong leaders in our churches. Paul told Timothy of specific characteristics church leaders should have. We’ll look at those today and see how they apply to our own lives.



MEETING GOD FACE-TO-FACE

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