

MARCH 2017

School Ministry Mailing



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School Ministry Mailing Contents

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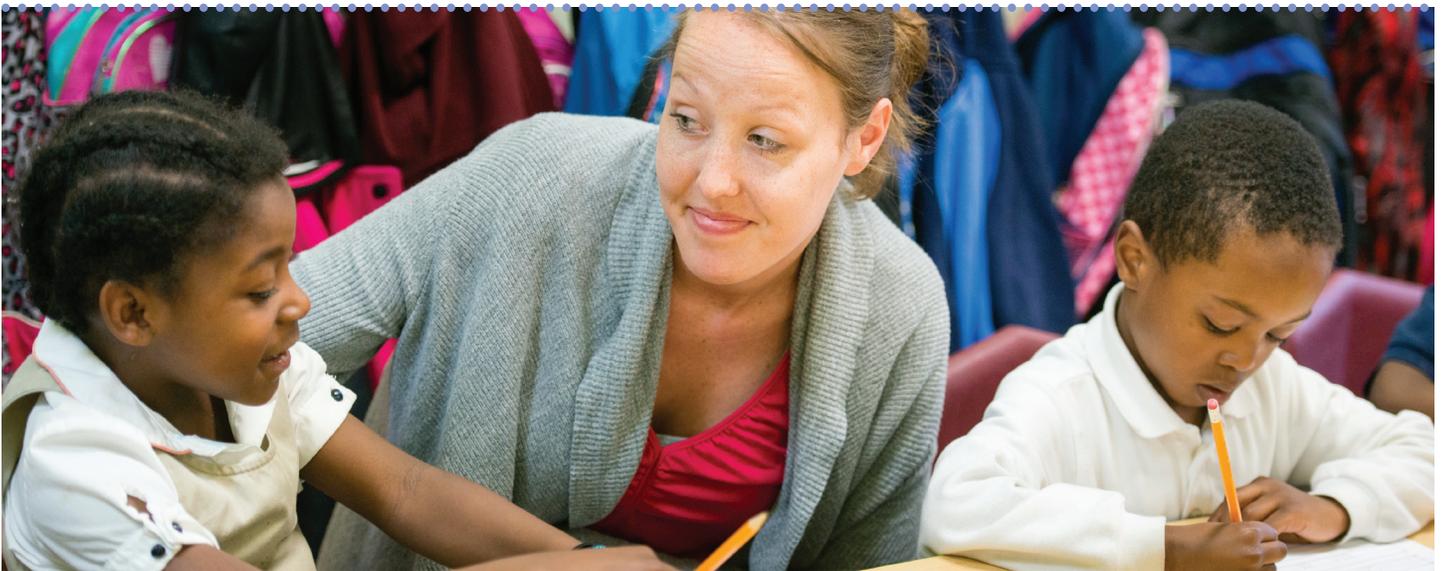
Alight



FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS

THE STATISTICS, TRENDS AND IMPACT

PART 2: What If All of Our Lutheran Schools Would Just Go Away?



LAST MONTH, I shared the historical context of Lutheran schools. In this month's issue of Alight, I will share statistics and trends that are impacting the future of schools in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. How would our Synod be different in a world without Lutheran schools?

The LCMS currently operates 2,068 schools. For a variety of reasons, more than 500 of our schools have been closed in the past 10 years. Currently, we operate 1,173 early childhood centers, 804 elementary schools and 91 high schools. If all of those schools closed, it would dramatically impact the lives of the students attending our schools. Approximately 190,000 students — early childhood through grade 12 — would be presented with the challenge of finding educational alternatives. Many would choose public schools where the curriculum is often infused with secular humanism. Luther's prediction that "the schools will provide the very gates of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures and engraving them in the heart of youth" could certainly be hastened.

Approximately 20,000 dedicated teachers serve Lutheran schools. About one-half of those teachers are commissioned church workers on the roster of the Synod. The elimination of 20,000 contributing participants in the Concordia Health and Retirement Plan would have a significant impact for those who remain actively engaged in service to our church (both commissioned and ordained), as well as for those who have retired.

Many of our schools have been granted construction loans from Lutheran Church Extension Fund. If all of our schools close, loans related to school building projects would default or need to be assumed by associated congregations or districts. This would create a nightmare of repayment problems.

In the past, Lutheran schools were often operated largely to serve children of Lutheran congregations. In some cases, this is still true, but now many of our students enroll for reasons other than the religious instruction that is presented throughout the day in our schools. Many students enrolled in Lutheran schools do not have a church home and may even live outside of any

relationship with Jesus Christ. Regardless of a family's motivation for enrollment, God's Word is taught in its truth and purity every day in every classroom. In some of our schools, students hear God's Word presented to them for the very first time. Today, as a result, amazing evangelical opportunities abound in our schools. Last year alone, 2,336 children were baptized as a result of the Holy Spirit working powerfully among our Lutheran teachers and their students. A world without Lutheran schools would eliminate those potential contacts within our community.

The evangelical component of our schools represents a tremendous opportunity but also presents a challenge to maintain our Lutheran ethos. The need has never been greater for Lutheran teachers and administrators with the training, understanding and ability to guide their schools through the cultural changes we are facing. At a time when we are closing schools, there is more need than ever to provide our students and families with a strong Lutheran core. The culture of our nation is becoming more and more secular and materialistic and has moved away from even the most traditional Lutheran values presented in our schools. Our schools identify and develop future leaders with strong Lutheran core values who may influence the future of our church. Closing our schools eliminates this dynamic opportunity for our church body and the local ministry community.

A pastor who serves a congregation with a school has a tremendous opportunity to engage school families regardless of their religious context. When a pastor becomes significantly

engaged with a school, its students grow to know, love and respect him, viewing him as "their" pastor. This provides many opportunities to share Jesus' love and mercy with families in our community.

Without Lutheran schools, many of our congregations would grow older at a faster pace. Our schools provide an abundant core of families with children who can potentially become engaged with their sponsoring congregation(s). It is critical that a congregation be welcoming and winsome toward school families, no matter their religious affiliation or status. At a time when many of the families using our schools are not affiliated with the LCMS, we must invest time and effort in warmly welcoming all families, whether they are church members or not.

The decline in the number of Lutheran schools is a cause for concern for our Synod. A world without congregation-sponsored schools is a symptom of a church body in steep decline. Congregations with schools are alive with energy and vitality. A congregation often is known in its community through activities related to its school. It is my prayer that our national church body will gain a renewed understanding for the importance of our schools and embrace the opportunities that abound when schools are allowed to flourish.

Terry L. Schmidt
Director of School Ministry
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

“Without Lutheran schools, many of our congregations would grow older at a faster pace.”



PHOTO: LCMS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD

Alight

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March 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			Ash Wednesday 1	Read Across America Day 2	Alexander Graham Bell born, 1847 3	National Grammar Day 4
Boston Massacre Anniversary, 1770 5	Michelangelo born, 1475 6	Unique Names Day 7	National Proofreading Day 8	Barbie Debuts, 1959 9	International Bagpipe Day 10	Johnny Appleseed Day 11
Daylight Saving Time Begins 12	Planet Uranus Discovery, 1781 13	Albert Einstein born, 1879 14	Andrew Jackson born, 1767 15	Absolutely Incredible Kid Day 16	St. Patrick's Day 17	Play-the-Recorder Day 18
St. Joseph, Guardian of Jesus 19	Act Happy Week 20	Pocahontas dies, 1617 21	Tuskegee Airmen Activated, 1941 22	National Puppy Day 23	Harry Houdini born, 1874 24	The Annunciation of Our Lord 25
Make Up Your Own Holiday Day 26	Quirky Country Music Song Titles Day 27	American Diabetes Association Alert Day 28	National Mom and Pop Business Owners Day 29	Pencil Patented, 1858 30	Eiffel Tower Anniversary, 1889 31	

Visit lcms.org/worship to find resources and information connected to the church year.



Computer File



How Do You Pick a Device?

Schools today have more choices than ever when it comes to choosing a personal computing device for students to use to enhance their learning in the classroom. From laptops to desktops, iPads to Chromebooks, or Apple to PC, the options are endless. So, how is a school to choose what is best and most appropriate to acquire for student use? Thankfully, if a school is working to answer this question, they are not the first to go through it, nor will they be the last. There are countless resources and best practices that other schools have discovered in their journeys to implement devices to enhance learning. This month, we investigate the question of how to choose the “right” device for a school or classroom setting.

Why Do We Need Devices in the Classroom?

Take a look around you. Do you see anyone working on or interacting with a device? Most likely, you will see someone poking at a cellphone or tapping on a tablet. You may even be sitting at a computer reading this article. In today’s world, almost everyone interacts with some type of device on a daily basis, either for work or entertainment. Thus, students today need to become familiar with the idea of effectively and appropriately utilizing technology in all aspects of their lives, and that begins in the classroom. More importantly, student learning can be greatly enhanced by adding devices into the classroom, as it allows for students to engage with and learn

from the world around them in ways not previously possible. That said, it is important to remember that devices are not the “magic bullet” to improve learning in the classroom, nor should they be utilized for the entire time students are there.

Who Needs to Be Involved in the Decision-Making Process?

When choosing a device, it is essential to have the right individuals at the table to research and make the best decision. From the very beginning, the school administrator and the staff members responsible for technology implementation need to be involved. This small group will be essential in determining the core requirements from a technical and budgetary standpoint. However, the main individuals to involve in this process are the teachers who will be integrating the device into their curriculum and classrooms. They are the ones who know what they expect the device to do, and they are essential in shaping the type of device chosen. However, not everyone can be involved in every step of the process. When there are too many individuals involved, the process can move slowly. Often, the larger group is not able to reach a consensus. Thus, it is important to remember that while everyone’s voice should be included somewhere in the process (through surveys, discussions, etc.), only the essential decision-makers should be involved in the final choice.



What Device Do We Need, and How Do We Choose?

So, what device is the device that will work for you? Honestly, this is the wrong question to ask in the beginning. In reality, the process should start by asking: What do we need a device to do? This question allows for the technological needs to be defined without biasing the decision-makers toward a particular device that may not meet the requirements for classroom use. Some questions to guide this process are:

- Does the device need a long battery life so it can run the entire day without recharging?
- Is a camera needed in order to record or take pictures?
- Would the device need to be “rugged” or protected by a case in order to survive the rigors of a normal school day?
- Does the device need to run a specific set of apps or programs that are currently used or that may be used in the future?
- What are the upkeep, replacement and insurance costs for each device beyond the initial purchase price, and are there any recurring costs?

These and many other questions need to be answered before beginning to actually look at specific devices, such as iPads, Chromebooks or laptops. Once the baseline requirements have been set, then you are able to select a device that best fits the needs of your specific situation. Remember, throughout this entire process it is essential to keep an open mind and not settle on a specific device without due diligence and research.

Do All Students Need a Device?

One of the more interesting questions schools contemplate when coming to a decision is whether each individual student needs their own device. The answer, as with the question above, is relative to each specific school location. Whatever will work best for your specific school location is the best answer to the question. However, the following options should be considered:

- **BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE (BYOD):** This type of system allows for students to use their own devices and is a version of a one-to-one device situation. BYOD is hard on the teachers but easy on the pocketbook of the school.
- **ONE-TO-ONE:** One device for each student in the school or classroom.
- **TWO-TO-ONE:** One device for two students to share in the classroom. Two-to-one is hard to implement and is falling

out of favor in many situations due to the challenges of use and shared time.

- **ROLLING CARTS:** A cart or a number of carts scattered throughout the building at strategic locations for classes to check out and use when necessary. This is a struggle for classrooms, since it deepens the digital divide for the students whose teacher may not fight for cart time.
- **CENTERS/CLASSROOM DEVICE:** A small number of classroom devices for use in centers or a single classroom device for the use of the entire class.

Implementing Your Choice

Congratulations, you have picked a device! Now what? Once you have chosen a device, there are a few best practices to remember as you work toward implementation that will help the process run smoothly:

- Buy one or two devices first, and give them to a teacher and student to put through the paces to make sure they will work for your situation and requirements. This quick and easy “beta test” will show any weaknesses and may help guide any further changes in the decision.
- Remember that every other school plans to purchase devices and upgrade technology over the summer months, so plan accordingly. Order well in advance of the needed date. There have been years when certain devices like Chromebooks were on backorder for multiple months due to high demand, so be sure to check with your supplier early in the spring to see if they anticipate any issues with shipments in your indicated window.
- Allow for the devices to arrive at least two weeks before the start of school so that they can be unboxed, registered, recorded, tagged and go through any other processes necessary for their integration into the student body. Some schools plan on delivery the week after school lets out so they have plenty of time.

As you move toward full integration of your chosen devices, always remember that the devices are only there to enhance the classroom curriculum and teaching. Investment is needed in the teacher as well. There will be problems, setbacks and technological issues, but keep moving forward and investing in your strategy. And as always, remember to check to see what others both inside and outside of Lutheran education are doing to see if their best practices can work for you as well.



PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

Computer File

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Early Childhood DEVOTIONS



FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7

LIFE TOGETHER

FOCUS: GOD ACTS AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME

“Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock” (Is. 26:4).

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

BIBLE STORY: MATT. 26:36FF; MARK 14:32-42; LUKE 22:39-46



BEFORE YOU TEACH

This month’s story is a most significant moment, both in the biblical narrative and in the history of the universe. Gethsemane begins the last day of Jesus’ life. It is the beginning of the heart and soul of the Christian message: Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross. In this auspicious

moment, Jesus says to His disciples, “The hour has come.” We have prepared for the phrase throughout this season’s lessons. We have seen God step into the lives of His people to rescue them at just the right time.

The biblical narratives have been leading us to this final journey to the cross. At this critical moment, Jesus places this awesome “time” into His Father’s hands. “Not my will, but Yours be done,” He says. This “hour” — God’s hour — redeems all people for all time and at just the right time according to His will. Our time is in God’s hands too. We are God’s redeemed children. Let us use the time God gives us to do what He has planned for us from the beginning of the world — honoring Him and serving each other in Jesus’ name.

Greeting

Welcome each child into the classroom every day. Say, “Good morning, child of God! I am so happy you are here to learn and play again today.”

Gathering

Signal children to gather in or around your worship area. Teach and sing “Gather ’Round the Cross.” (Tune: “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”)

Ga-ther ’round the cross, fold our hands, be still, Jesus calls us, Jesus loves us. Let us do His will.

Tell the Story

Each time the children hear the bold words spoken, guide them to engage in the corresponding actions: “Jesus” (cross index fingers), “pray” (fold hands) and “watch” (hand, palm down, touching forehead).

Jesus and His disciples went to a place called Gethsemane. He said to His disciples, “Sit here while I **pray**.” Taking Peter, James and John along with Him, He began to be deeply distressed and troubled. “My heart is filled with sadness,” Jesus said to them. “Stay here and keep **watch**.” Going a little farther, Jesus fell to the ground and **prayed**, “Father, everything is possible for You. Take this suffering and death from me, if it is Your will.” What Jesus dreaded was not dying, but taking the sin of all people upon Himself. After **praying**, Jesus returned to His disciples and found them sleeping. “Simon,” He said to Peter, “Are you asleep? Could you not keep **watch** for one hour? **Watch** and **pray** so that you will not be tempted to be unfaithful during this frightening time. Your spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

Note: Throughout the year, you will need the songbooks *Little Ones Sing Praise and Songs of God’s Love*, both available from Concordia Publishing House (CPH), St. Louis, Mo.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVOTIONS • Vol. 21 • No. 7 • March 2017

PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOTO, GETTY IMAGES, THINKSTOCK, LIGHTSTOCK

Once more **Jesus** went away to **pray** the same thing. When **Jesus** came back, He again found them sleeping because they were very tired. They had not **watched** and did not know what to say to Him. Once again **Jesus** went away to **pray**. Returning a third time and finding that they were not keeping **watch**, **Jesus** said, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look! Here comes my betrayer.” Then Judas, one of the disciples, came forward and kissed **Jesus** so His captors would know which one was **Jesus**. **Jesus** was arrested and later died on the cross, taking with Him your sins, my sins and the sins of the whole world for all time. Then three days later, something amazing happened. **Jesus** rose from death according to God’s plan and at just the right time. **Jesus** is alive!

PRAY: Dear Jesus,
For me You died my life to save.
Surprise! You rose up from the grave.
Forgive me for the wrong I do.
Help me to live my life for You. Amen.

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

Pre-K & K: “[Christ] died for all”
(2 COR. 5:15A).

Grades 1 & 2: “[Christ] died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 COR. 5:15).



Activities

CREATE: You will need 9-by-12-inch black construction paper, 9-by-6-inch white construction paper, varied sizes of cross patterns, scissors, glue and pencils.

Children trace patterns and cut crosses from white construction paper. They then arrange and glue crosses on black construction paper to create a pattern. Black and white offer a striking contrast when used together, creating a strong visual image as together you reflect on the darkness of Jesus’ death (Good Friday) and the light of His resurrection (Easter).

Note: For younger children, pre-cut white construction paper crosses of various sizes.

Early Childhood Devotions

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SING: “Jesus Came from Heaven” (LOSP, P. 92) and “Do You Know Who Died for Me?” (LOSP, P. 93)

DO: Engage children in speaking and dramatizing the finger play “Who Could Take Our Sins Away?” (From *Fingers Tell The Story* © CPH, 1989)

Who could take our sins away?
Not you, not you, not I.
(Point to one another then self.)

For our sins we could not pay —
Not you, not you, not I.
(Point to one another then self.)

Jesus took our sins away —
Yours and yours and mine.
(Point to one another then self.)

Thank You, Jesus, thank You!
(Make the sign of the cross and fold hands.)



Live the Story

Although willing in spirit to follow the commands of Jesus, our sinful nature causes us to “fall asleep” like the disciples. When once asked which of the commandments is the most important, Jesus states that second only to loving our Lord is the command to love our neighbor (MARK 12:33). In many schools today, character development is being taught as a curricular subject. We in Lutheran schools must be vigilant in helping students recognize that our character is shaped by the love and forgiveness we have in Jesus. We teach and apply God’s commandments to our actions, framing all behaviors in light of the Gospel.

Sending

As each child exits, say, “Jesus died and lives again for you and all people! Tell this good news! Share the joy you have in Jesus with others!”





Family Matters



A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS

Upon This Rock: The Rock of Consistency

At a church workday, a man introduced his friend — a first-time visitor — to the rest of the group in the following manner: “This is my friend, Roy. He and his family attend the late service, sit on the left side, center aisle, third row back.” This was followed by laughter and other similar introductions, as many of the men realized that they and their families had similar seating patterns at church.

It seems to be human nature to want to find consistency in our lives. We see predictable patterns in the seasons of the year; there is the need to eat consistently and get regular sleep. We find that daily, weekly, monthly and yearly calendars provide patterns that guide us in the familiar routines we call life.

Yet, there are some who bemoan these patterns as the foregone conclusion of a boring life. In this day and age of hype and extreme activity, the last thing we want to be seen as is boring! We don’t want that for our individual lives, and we don’t want to be seen that way as parents — to be labeled as a “dull dad” or “monotonous mom.”

The problem is that we have associated a lack of activity in our lives in an inappropriate way. A lack of activity can be peace or welcome contentment, neither of which is a synonym for boring. Likewise, a lack of amusement does not necessarily mean boring. We might ask: Is pizzazz always better than peace? Is commotion favored over calmness?

While we often laugh at our habits — our lack of variety becoming predictable and thus amusing, and our fear of “turning into our parents” — there is great value in developing and finding patterns of consistency in our home, especially for our children. Children need consistency

in their lives: in sleeping and eating, in social and spiritual activity, in times of being still and quiet. Some of the first things we did as parents were to help our infant child find consistency. How relieved we were when they would start to sleep on a regular basis, especially through the night!

One might call a pattern of acceptable consistency “contentment.” This is something that St. Paul speaks of in **PHIL. 4:12**: “I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.”

This kind of earthly contentment can only be found in Christ. It is a contentment that comes in knowing that our sins have been forgiven through the death of Jesus on the cross.

It is a contentment that comes through the assurance of the gift of eternal life declared through the resurrection of Christ from the dead. It is a contentment provided by the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit, as He guides our lives day in and day out.

May we find contentment in the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, which leads us to consistency in our daily lives as parents and leaders in our homes.



“... there is great value in developing and finding patterns of consistency in our home, especially for our children.”

FAMILY LINKS: Activities for families to reinforce Bible story truths in the home.

Gather the family together in a comfortable place in the home for a time of family interaction and Bible study using the outline below.

OPENING PRAYER: Have the person in the family who has their birthday closest to today offer an opening prayer.

FAMILY DISCUSSION TIME:

Give each member of the family an opportunity to share their responses to the following prompts:

- Something fun that you did yesterday.
- Something you did today that you really liked doing.
- Something you hope to do tomorrow.

FAMILY BIBLE SEARCH:

As a family, look up **HEB. 13:8** and read what it has to say about consistency.

- 1) Who is consistent in this verse? (*Jesus.*)
- 2) In what way does He remain consistent? (*Jesus stays the same.*)
- 3) What stays consistent about Jesus? (*His care and love for us; His willingness to forgive our sins.*)
- 4) Why is this important for us to know? (*Answers will vary.*)



CREATING MORE FAMILY CONSISTENCY:

Get a whiteboard or large piece of paper, along with a pad of medium-size sticky notes and something to write with.



- 1) What are some ways that your family is consistent? (*List them.*)
- 2) Have these been good and helpful? Or not so good? (*Answer honestly.*)
- 3) What are some things that you would like to see your family be more consistent about? (*List them.*)
- 4) Hand out several sticky notes to everyone in the family. Ask them to write down one thing per sticky note that they will try to be more consistent about in the coming month. (*Parents or older siblings can write down the items for children who aren't able to write at this time.*)
- 5) Put up the sticky notes in a prominent place in the home. Arrange them in the shape of a cross on the refrigerator, the door into the house from the garage or someplace that everyone will see often.
- 6) Pay attention to them during your family's "comings and goings" over the next month. Ask each family member how he or she is doing in becoming more consistent.

CLOSING ECHO PRAYER: Have an adult or older sibling read the prayer below, section by section, with the rest of the family echoing each phrase.

Dear Jesus, thank You for living a perfect life, consistent and without sin. Thank You for dying on the cross for our sins. Thank You for the gift of eternal life. Help us to be more consistent in our love for You. Help us to be more consistent in our care toward others. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

Family Matters

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Growing in Governing



GROWTH TOPICS AND DISCUSSIONS FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL GOVERNING BOARDS

Today's Lutheran School

“May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like gentle rain upon the tender grass, and like showers upon the herb. For I will proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he” (DEUT. 32:2-4).

The writer in Deuteronomy speaks of teaching with a beautiful metaphor. **It is what we do.** The content of these verses is fitting as well. God's Word is powerful. **He is faithful!** Are today's Lutheran schools any different than those of yesterday? In some ways, they are the same: Christ is proclaimed daily! In others, they are very different. For our schools today, keep the following components in mind as the governing board continually evaluates the program of education:

- **A Dynamic Board**

Take a look at the constitution of your ministry. What does it allow? Look for the right people. Who will serve your mission the best and most effectively? Will you have a combination of generations, including those who have no children in your school? Every member has a crucial role in assisting to carry out the school's mission.

- **Policy Manual**

The new evidence-based accreditation process encourages every school to have such a manual. The policies are of critical importance. They give guidance, provide limitations, share procedures and lend accountability for the administrator and board. They are dynamic volumes and living documents. The contents can be legal safeguards that provide proper documentation in today's litigious society.

- **Legal Safety Nets**

Go back to the Supreme Court's 2012 decision that came down 9-0 in support of the Ministerial Exception. It is considered one of the most important rulings made in

the history of the court for Christian organizations. One of the factors in that ruling is documentation and its importance. All schools must make sure proper policies are in place for legal protection.

- **Enrollment Priorities**

Years ago, schools began re-enrolling and enrolling sometime in the spring, and new applications had to wait because congregation members had priority. Most evangelism plans have changed this. We are now more mission-minded. We also have moved our enrollment dates to the start of the calendar year (or even earlier) and have changed enrollment policies to reflect these important shifts.

- **Special Needs**

If your school believes in the goal of “success for every child,” then it should consider the ministry of a resource room, which can assist teachers of students who may be part of a spectrum of special needs. Gifted/talented programs can also be considered.

- **Marketing**

What is the marketing plan? Is the website dynamic? Should the plan include social media? Most likely, the No. 1 effective way to market today is to hire an admissions specialist. But creativity and use of technology may be key.

“**Today's Lutheran school is multifaceted and needs to be governed with vision, policy and the lens of the school's mission.**”

• Evangelism Plans

Being missional begins with a structured plan. Being deliberate furthers the Gospel message of salvation, as the staff takes a microscopic look at every way to allow the Holy Spirit to work through and in our teachers and students.

• Working with Parents

Parents today are consumer-minded. They are on the lookout for value, whether in academics, athletics, the arts, the culture of the school, spirituality or something totally unique. Lutheran schools can't be all things to all people. We do best when we stick to our niche ministry and make it one of excellence. But strong school-to-home communication is noticed and honored.

• Customer Service

First-time visitors demand this, and those who are part of current school families desire it as well. It cannot be assumed; it must be taught. Take a look at a company that does it right: the Disney Institute. Check out *Be Our Guest: Perfecting the Art of Customer Service*.

• Evidence-Based Accreditation

The new process is a win-win for our boards and schools. Accountability in the form of evidence means “the proof is in the pudding.”

• Technology

We live in a high-tech world. As students move on from our schools, they must be savvy in the ways of technology. Teachers also need to be modeling it in all areas of lesson planning and engagement.

• Curriculum Specialist

This is not just a fancy title. A staff member must be the lead in dynamic curriculum; utilization of standards, including technology; faith formation; and project- and service-based learning opportunities. Professional development prepares and pushes action toward implementation and continual improvement.

• Healthy Team

Work hard to build strong relationships, create healthy habits and look for congregational and school family support for a positive, uplifting and Spirit-filled culture.

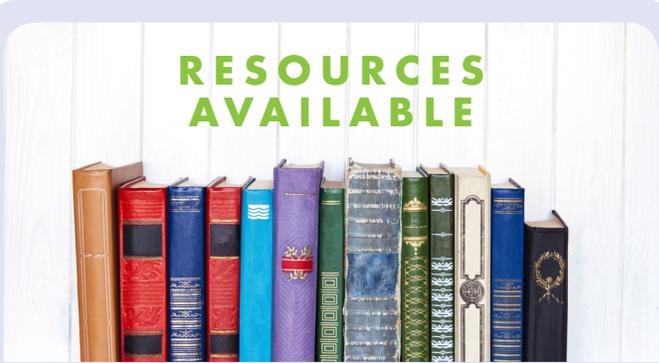
• Pastor-Principal Relationship

These two key players should spend time together each week in dialogue, prayer and planning. Unity!

• A School Growth Plan

When we are deliberate, good things happen. Having a plan in place cannot guarantee growth, but it can create new opportunities to continually teach and learn and ultimately — by utilizing data and implementing solid best practices — assist with enrollment increases.

Today's Lutheran school is multifaceted and needs to be governed with vision, policy and the lens of the school's mission. Putting specific practices in place can help everyone involved to hold on to a faith-filled future.



RESOURCES
AVAILABLE

- Lutheran Special Education Ministries, based in Farmington Hills, Mich.
- *Protecting Your Ministry*, a free legal resource from the LCMS and Alliance Defending Freedom
- Dr. James Galvin, Chuck Evans and Mission Enablers, which can assist with a school growth plan
- *Be Our Guest: Perfecting the Art of Customer Service* from the Disney Institute

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Insights & Ideas



FOR TEACHERS OF CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7

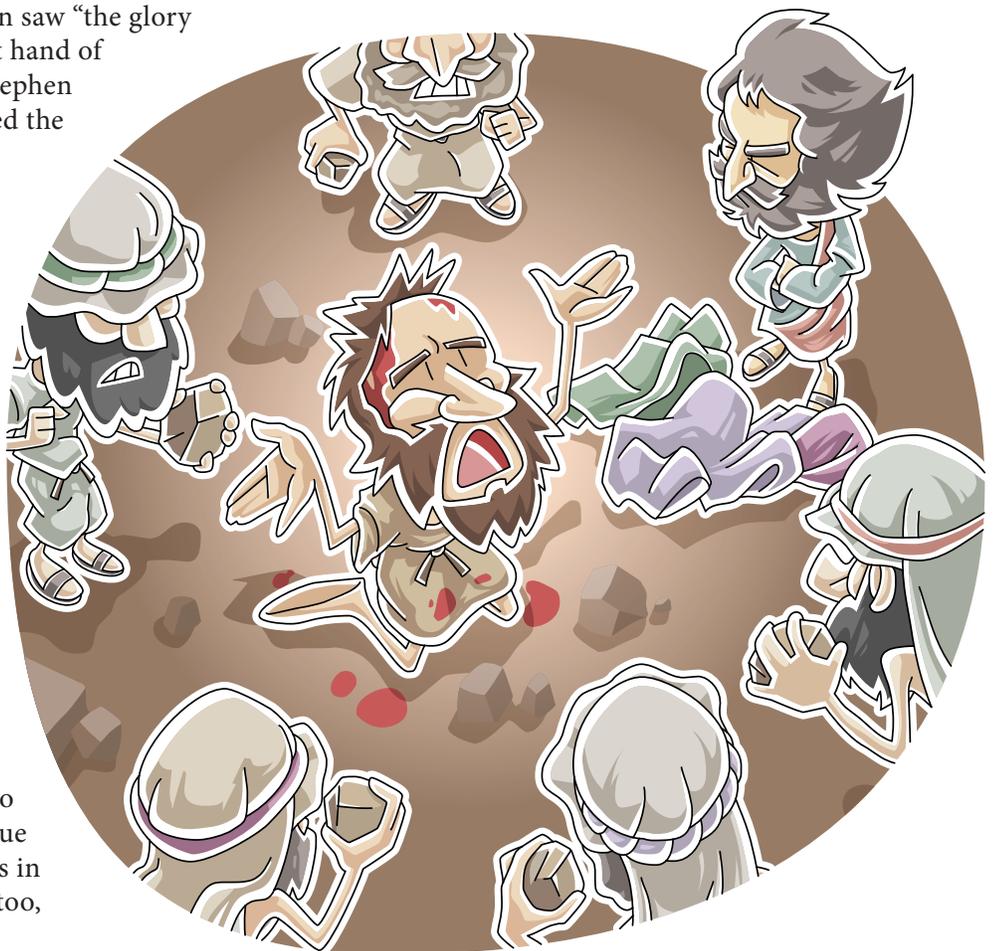
Stephen Stoned

Acts 7

Stephen gives us a powerful witness in the midst of suffering. Stephen, a leader of the Early Christian Church in Jerusalem, knew what was on the horizon for him. He knew this was the end of the line. Yet even in this moment, Stephen was able to boldly declare the Word of God because he was secure in God's promise to save him. He angered some of the most powerful people around — to put it mildly. Yet as these furious heathens began pelting him with stones, Stephen saw “the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” Despite his impending death, Stephen confidently prayed, forgave and awaited the loving embrace of his Lord, Jesus.

We all have hardships and difficult moments. There are many days when you have likely wanted to yank out your hair as the stress and rigors of classroom life drain you emotionally, physically and spiritually. When life gets hard, you have to know where to look. So much time and energy is wasted looking for help in all the wrong places — self-help books, material gain, better health and so on. Even amid the terrible circumstances of his imminent brutal and painful death, Stephen was able to look to Jesus. He was able to face what was before him with confidence. So may it be for us, that we would know where to look when life gets hard. As we continue to trust in the power and reign of Jesus in our lives, no matter the situation, we, too,

can give a bold witness to the grace of God. On Christ, the solid Rock, we stand in suffering and in uncertainty. “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (JOSH. 1:9).



Spiritual and Social Living

Look at some Bible stories from a children's Bible with your students. Stories to include are Daniel and the lions' den, the fiery furnace and Peter in jail. Discuss how all of those people must have been afraid, but in all of those stories God was with them in the form of angels.

This is exactly what God also did with Stephen. Stephen tried to tell others about Jesus, but not everyone wanted to hear what he said. The people stoned him to make him stop, but God was with him. Do you think God is with you when you are scared? (Yes.) Hurt? (Yes.) Telling others about Him? (Yes.)

Expressive Arts

Make paperweights. Decorate stones using paint. Stones can hurt us, but by making them our own, they become something that no longer hurts but gives us strength instead. Remember: Be bold like Stephen. God is with you!

Wellness

Play hopscotch with rocks.

Communication Arts

Read the book *If Rocks Could Sing* by Leslie McGuirk to your class. This book is a collection of rocks that the author has found. The rocks look like alphabet letters. After reading the book, take a nature walk to allow the students to find rocks that look like letters too. Challenge the class to collect all 26 letters.

*Note: This book says "G" is for ghosts. Please use your best judgment or change to another word.

Discovering the World

After reading the Book of the Month, *Let's Play*, create a magnet activity. To create a magnet activity, you will need:

- A dowel rod with a magnet attached to the end
- Wooden discs, painted yellow, blue and/or red
- Magnets
- Paper
- Dot painters
- A Sharpie

To create, attach magnets to the colored discs. (Make sure they are opposite magnets from the dowel rod.)

Next, use the Sharpie to make different loopy lines on each piece of paper. (This will mimic the book.) Use the dot painters to decorate the paper.

Have your students explore the science of magnets by placing the disc on top of the paper line and the magnet dowel underneath. Move the dowel so that the top disc will move to follow the black line.



POTATO CHIPS

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 potato, sliced paper thin
- ½ teaspoon salt

Pour the oil into a plastic bag, add the potato slices and shake to coat. Coat a dinner plate lightly with cooking spray. Arrange potato slices in a single layer on the plate. Place the plate into the microwave and microwave the potatoes for 3-5 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove from microwave and toss with salt or any other seasoning. Let cool.

Book of the Month

Let's Play by Herve Tullet

It's only a yellow dot ... but what a dot it is! It begins a spectacular ride of color, motion, shape and imagination, filled with the artistry and delight that we know and love so well from *Press Here* and *Mix It Up!* by the same author. In this book, prepare to leap into a completely new dimension: emotion. Connecting not only to the mind but also to the heart, this dot expresses an extraordinary sense of humor, fear, joy and more as it pushes, lurches, wiggles and slides its way through — and even off! — the pages.



Words of Affirmation

These are words that children desire to hear multiple times a day — words that lift them up instead of breaking them down.

- “I am proud of you.”
- “You have some amazing gifts.”

Insights & Ideas

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NLSA POWERFUL PRACTICES



Grace Lutheran School, Pocatello, Idaho

Take out your pen, it's Signing Day for the class of 2020!

Grace Lutheran School opened its doors to the Pocatello, Idaho, community over 60 years ago. Since then, the school has delivered on its mission to “promote excellence in education and to nurture each child in an environment of compassion reaching out with the love of Christ.” A 25-year-old vision became reality as the congregation in Pocatello announced the expansion of its educational ministries to include grades 9–12 over the next three years. In honor of this monumental undertaking, Grace launched its newest tradition: Signing Day!

Signing Day was held for the first 14 enrolled high school students in January 2016, complete with confetti cannons, news media and “letters of intent.” Spotlights cascaded across the crowds, and each student was cheered by the applause of over 400 onlookers in the heyday hoopla surrounding their choice to “sign” with Grace Lutheran High School. The T-shirts, baseball caps and smiles on parent supporters supercharged the public announcement of the very first class of GLHS. Opening day, Aug. 22, 2016, launched a full program, including rigorous academics, theater and music, a variety of athletics and schoolwide service projects.

Christians are a distinct minority in southern and eastern Idaho, but that has not stopped the body at Grace in boldly stepping out and launching Grace Lutheran High School. Grace has a long history of Lutheran education, and it has built a strong reputation not only in our community but also across the state. Recognized as a Blue Ribbon School and with principals with national honors, Grace is the largest elementary school of the LCMS Northwest District

as a fully accredited pre-K–8 school. With the addition of grades 9–12 (with one grade being added per year), Grace will become Idaho’s first “diapers to diplomas” private Christian school. Blessed by counsel from fellow pioneers in the West like Trinity Lutheran School in Bend, Ore., and Faith Lutheran Middle School and High School in Las Vegas, Grace Lutheran High School opened its doors in August as a ministry of the congregation. It all falls on the faithful and generous folks at Grace in a ministry for which only God could receive the credit!

Construction on a new high school facility, which is on the same campus but physically separate from existing buildings, moved quickly. The building will include a full-size high school gymnasium with locker rooms and seating for 700-plus. Three typical classrooms, a 1,500-square-foot science lab and a music room will be finished in Phase 1. Phase 2 will include four additional classrooms in the basement as needed, totaling 28,000 square feet. A third phase will include a cafeteria/lunch room, as well as four additional classrooms, allowing for as many as 300 students.



Building Bridges into Our Community

Grace, Pocatello, was blessed with a unique opportunity to reach into the community through a creative ministry mindset. A partnership was formed with the Pocatello-Chubbuck Auditorium District (PCAD) to build and lease a 40,000-square-foot multipurpose events center. The one-of-a-kind facility is a community dream, as it will open doors for athletics, conferences and trade shows to be drawn to Pocatello. A key mission of the auditorium district is to increase the offering of activities in Pocatello, inviting guests to the community in hopes of enhancing economic growth. PCAD is one of only three auditorium districts in the state, and it receives funding from a bed tax that is passed on to guests who stay in local hotels. Other than usage fees, PCAD receives no additional funding, so working within its budget and constraints was an initial task of the project.

The relationship with PCAD began several years ago as Grace attempted to purchase a vacant medical manufacturing facility, in hopes of renovating and relocating the church and school there. The excess square footage would be leased to PCAD for the events center. The purchase did not come to fruition, and both entities were on the hunt for other options. Over the next several years, Grace and PCAD remained in communication and were able to structure a construction and lease plan that would work for both groups. The structure of the lease allowed

PCAD to rent an affordable building, while providing Grace with a third source income. This income stream will allow Grace to enhance ministry now and for many years to come.

The process of leasing to a public entity is one that involved complete transparency with both groups. PCAD has a strict set of rules that it must follow, so the lease had to be structured in a way that would accommodate those requirements. Once that was in place, the tasks shifted to working with City of Pocatello officials to change zoning, hold public hearings and grant conditional use permits — all the while keeping good relations with neighbors adjacent to the project. Communication, communication, communication proved to be very critical as we kept the process rolling forward. Once we received the green light from the city and had building plans in hand, we broke ground on the Mountain View Events Center, also known as the “MEC,” Dec. 16, 2015. After nearly 10 months of construction, the MEC opened its doors to the public in the fall of 2016.

All along, the idea of a third source of income was one that helped motivate and drive the project. However, the relationship and bridge into the community has been an added bonus, which is equally important. As a community partner, we have the entire community excited and cheering for the project. To add icing on the cake, we were able to

host Idaho Governor Butch Otter on campus, as he was touring southeastern Idaho and celebrating economic growth and development. Not only did he make a stop by the MEC for a public speech, he made a second stop on campus at the new high school to champion the successes there as well.

We are incredibly blessed by the opportunities that have come our way, by being able to collaborate with others, think outside of the box and understand there is more to it than just money.



NLSA Powerful Practices

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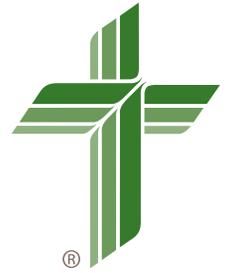
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Parent Pages



RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

UPON THIS ROCK: Asking the Right Questions

Once children hit elementary age, getting them to talk about school is like picking popcorn out of shag carpeting. Yet, encouraging your children to talk about their experiences and learning is important for the development of good social skills, self-evaluation and abstract thinking. It also offers an opportunity to integrate faith into everyday life.

When children first start school, a simple “How was school today?” is all it takes to get a flood of stories and comments. Young children relate recent memories as a way to process them. They simply tell it the way they remember it and are often unable to make judgements about the event. They are concrete thinkers, and their storytelling reflects this.

As children grow older, they are able to think about what happened during the day and assess the situation. Thinking abstractly, they are able to contemplate what could have happened differently, how another student might have felt about a situation, or what might have improved the outcome of a particular event. They can apply this same thinking to the academic skills they have learned. This process is called metacognition, or thinking about learning, and it is a skill that makes for stronger learning and smarter students.

The questions we ask children can also build a healthy perspective. For example, we can encourage taking personal responsibility rather than blaming. A healthy perspective influences not only future learning, but also decision making. If a student is able to see that a lack of time spent studying is the reason for a poor test grade, then he is more likely to study for the next test. Whereas, the child who insists the teacher just doesn't like him is not going to see any advantage in putting effort into

studying. Parents can influence a healthy perspective by asking the right kinds of questions.

Here are some questions to try:

- **What did you do today that made you think hard?**
- **What problem did you work on today?**

These questions encourage students to value effort and work. When we focus only on performance, we run the risk of encouraging children to think, “I must not be smart if I have to work hard.” We want children to realize that hard work often means more learning.



“ When we dwell in the shelter of God, we live in a place of safety. Research indicates that people who attend church regularly are 2 ”

- **What mistake did you make that taught you something?**
- **How did you think about your work and improve it today?**

These two questions also focus on the process of learning rather than the finished product. The advantage to these is that they encourage students to self-evaluate. Elementary-age children are just at the beginning of being able to do this, and middle-school children need a reminder to connect the correction of mistakes to improvement, rather than a lack of competence.

- **Did you apologize to or forgive someone today?**
- **How did God help you change your behavior today?**

These questions encourage accountability. They are good ways to let your child know that because we are sinners living in a sinful world, we will have to contend with our own sin and the sin of others. The resulting discussions are a gentle reminder of God's forgiveness and mercy.

- **Did you congratulate or comfort someone today?**
- **Did you find someone who needed kindness today?**

These questions encourage empathy, or the ability to recognize the feelings of others. It is not natural for children to think about the feelings or perspectives of other people. This is a skill that is learned and practiced over the process of brain development. The skill of empathy improves with this kind of gentle nudging.

The discussion that results from these questions encourages your child to think in new ways and with a

different perspective. You also reinforce strong values about learning, expressing your faith and caring for others. When we integrate the faith value of compassion, we encourage not only kind behavior, but brain growth as well. God's world is most certainly a beautiful and intricate creation!

Martin Luther used a particular question in his Small Catechism that encouraged further thinking: "What does this mean?" It is a simple question that leads the learner to seek a deeper answer. Jesus was the best practitioner of this educational technique. Consider some of His many questions:

- **"For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?" (MATT. 5:46).**
- **"And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" (MATT. 6:27).**
- **"Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" (LUKE 10:36).**
- **"Do you understand what I have done to you?" (JOHN 13:12).**

Jesus' questions encourage us to evaluate and empathize. His questions are designed to help our faith grow. Use them to create unique family devotions that encourage deeper thinking.

For Further Study

Make it a family activity to write and use your own "What does this mean?" questions.

Parent Pages

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Professionally Speaking



The Lutheran Distinction

- O**UR CHILDREN are being brought up in a world that says:
- Moral absolutes do not exist; truth is determined by the majority (hence the many polls).
 - The Bible *may* define truth, but there are many truths.
 - However, any system that claims the truth is oppressive.
 - There is no such thing as a six-day creation.
 - Salvation is earned.
 - Tolerance is acceptance of all.

Years ago while in St. Louis, I read an article in the *Metrovoice* quoting Ken Ham: “It is in the minds and hearts of our children that the battle will be fought... Christians must understand the nature of the change that has occurred in our culture — especially in our education system. No longer do secularists just mock Christians from afar. In public schools and the media, they are now actively campaigning to indoctrinate children in an anti-God philosophy — to teach them to be secularists and atheists. These secularists are no longer passive. They accuse Christians who are training their children in biblical truths of being child abusers.”

Lutheran schools respond to Postmodernism. We need to be unique, we need to stand out, we need to be of the work of teaching the faith.

Teaching the faith is an effort that needs all hands on deck. While we work diligently to have an academic curriculum that draws families in, our schools are set apart because they are Lutheran. Now I know that “Lutheran” may mean very little to the general public in some parts of our country. However, the Lutheran theology needs to permeate the culture and teaching of our schools. To do this, embracing our rich understanding of life in Christ is essential. Lutheran Christianity is not Roman Catholic or mainstream American church in a box.



Austin Sanders and Samuel Kim share a hymnal before the procession at Living Faith Korean Lutheran Church in Cumming, Ga.

After reading a blog post by a newly converted Lutheran (see thegloballutheran.wordpress.com/about), the author suggests nine topics that are key to Lutheranism’s distinction in the world of Christianity. Feel free to read his whole post, but here are five of his points, along with my thoughts on their ramifications for our schools.

Lutherans Use the Historic Liturgy

“I bring up this one first because it seems to me that for some on the outside, the High Church nature of Lutheranism may seem to be the big difference, and that beyond this Lutheranism is not particularly unique. I think in some ways this has to do with the fact that for many segments of Protestantism, aesthetics have become the be all and end all. Theology and what is believed is downplayed. Confessional Lutheranism is liturgical and uses much of the liturgy that has been used by the church for thousands of years.”

My thoughts: We need to train our children to be strong in a secular world, and the historic liturgy provides, at the

very least, two things: consistency in a world of constant change and time to hear God's Word. The constant change of our culture does not jive with a never-changing Lord. "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed" (MAL. 3:6). Consumed by what? That's a question worth blogging about too! Suffice it to say, our God provides stability, peace and comfort. Give the liturgy to our kids; give them the words of faith that provide stability, peace and comfort. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (ROM. 10:17). Since our liturgy is a collection of Scripture passages, there is all the more reason to embrace it and have our children use it as part of their school day. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (HEB. 4:12).

Baptism Saves

"Lutherans really start standing out like a sore thumb when we start talking about baptism. ... [Baptism] is rather 100% the work of God; it is pure grace and Gospel. It is the ultimate Monergistic act in which God makes someone His child. God washes away their sin and gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit."

My thoughts: Never, ever shall we as Lutheran schools shy away about Baptism. We would never physically put a child in harm's way. We have lockdown drills. We have secured buildings. We have safe playgrounds. We give careful consideration to dismissal routines. We strive to be bully free. Good for us! All the more then as we consider eternal planning, let's be sure to celebrate the baptisms of our school children, staff and parents. But let's also be sure to know who does NOT have the precious certainty of the Sacrament in their lives. We need to bring them to the font and have them enjoy the blessings of life and salvation in this holy rite. Our goal should be to have all our school's children baptized.

The Physical Presence of Christ in Holy Communion

"Lutherans believe that when Christ says 'This is my body' and 'This is my blood,' He actually means it. Luther famously said, 'Is means is!' Thus, we as Lutherans believe that the Scriptures teach that Christ is physically present mysteriously within the bread and wine. When our pastor puts the elements before us, we believe that what is before us is none other than the body and blood of the resurrected glorified



The Rev. Douglas Spittel kneels during the Words of Institution at First Trinity Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Pittsburgh.

savior Jesus Christ. When we partake of Holy Communion, we believe that what is in our stomachs is Christ. ... Lutherans would say that a failure to take Jesus at his word in the words of institution is to place reason above the word of God."

My thoughts: Teaching our kids that words mean what they mean is counterculture. For them to learn from Jesus that His words mean what He says is powerful. His word "Let there be..." created the world. His words of promise in the Old Testament rang true in the incarnation of our Lord. He says He is present, and He is in this holy meal. He announces that His Word is truth (JOHN 17:17), so it is. Our kids need this meal. We teach that it strengthens faith. Our kids need this strength as they are bombarded with temptation and sinful actions and words. They need this meal as reminder of God's goodness and grace (Ps. 34:8).

Christ-Focused Justification

"Justification is the idea that we are saved by faith alone. ... The Lutheran when asked how do you know you are saved replies 'I know I'm saved because I'm baptized. It is in the waters of baptism that he has saved me and washed away my sins, given me the Holy Spirit and has made me beloved child of his, for the sake a Christ and his death for me on the cross."

My thoughts: This is a stumbling block for some. It's in this topic where we get the notion of cheap grace. But as a reminder, take a look at the cross. Your Savior shed His blood for you. Cheap? It took a God-sized sacrifice. It's in

our understanding of justification where we differentiate ourselves. No “ands” or “buts” in our salvation. It’s a gift, and it’s our life in Christ that leads us to show and share love for others. *Sola gloria.*

Images

“Many Protestants take their cues concerning images from the Reformed and would say images of Christ are forbidden. Lutherans use crucifixes and use of other sacred art and would be somewhat indistinguishable from Roman Catholics on this subject. We would not worship images but believe that the historic church has always used Images and that doing so is wise to teach and confess the faith and other reasons.”

My thoughts: Most people are visual learners. (See thelutheranschools.org/2016/12/20/christmas-as-a-lesson-in-teaching.) This is all the more reason to have the various images of our churches continue to be included in our architecture and decor. In fact, let’s celebrate the rich history of biblical imagery in our teaching and let’s educate our students on the physical choices made in our churches as they teach about Christ. For example, consider the prominence of the octagonal font as a reminder of the eighth day and of the eight saved in the ark.

Law and Gospel Distinction

“This idea really over-arches all of Lutheran Theology and practice. ... To a Lutheran a statement such as this is a gross mingling of the law and Gospel and is corruption of the pure Gospel ‘Jesus died for you and forgives your sin but now you need to repent, and live a more holy life, a life pleasing to God.’ This of [course] is a oversimplification of confusing the Law and the Gospel for the sake of example. Lutherans would say that all other Christian traditions confuse the Law and the Gospel and pervert the pure Gospel.”

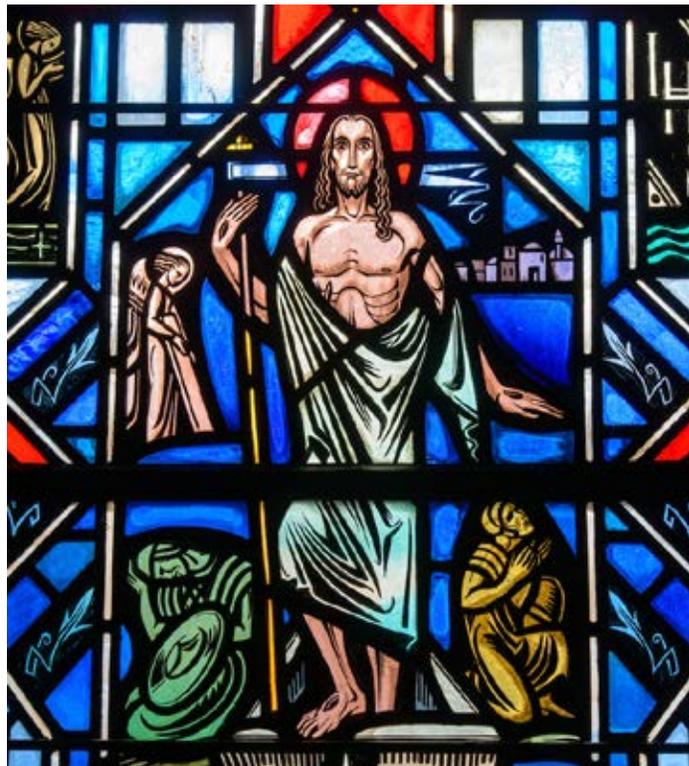


PHOTO: LCMS COMMUNICATIONS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD

Stained glass at Luther Memorial Chapel in Shorewood, Wis.

My thoughts: Here are C.F.W. Walther’s words to drive home this point: “Faith is not merely thinking, ‘I believe.’ Your whole heart must be seized by the gospel and come to rest in it. When that happens, you are transformed and cannot help but love and serve God.”

Next month, some best practices for supporting these teachings will be included in *Professionally Speaking*.

Professionally Speaking

March 2017

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Rattles & Prattles



A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS

God Strengthens Jesus to Do His Work

Bible Story: Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane
(MATT. 26:36-46; MARK 14:32-42; LUKE 22:39-45)

Before Teaching the children:

It was time for Jesus to finish the work God sent Him to do. God chose His Son, Jesus, to come to earth — to live a perfect life, which no one could do from the time Adam and Eve first disobeyed God. Then Jesus suffered the consequences of everyone else's disobedience and died, taking the punishment all people deserved. But that wasn't the end. Jesus rose victoriously, completing the work of salvation. In Ps. 62:1-2, David writes, "From him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation." Scripture tells us that through believing in what Jesus did, His work becomes ours.

The night before Jesus died, the reality of what would happen the next day seemed overwhelming, and He was extremely sorrowful. Jesus needed to talk to His Father in heaven. He and His disciples walked to His favorite place to pray — the Garden of Gethsemane.

He asked His disciples to watch and pray with Him. He walked a little farther and prayed three times. All three prayers had the same elements: They were directed to His Father in heaven, they questioned whether His suffering and death were absolutely necessary, and they were resigned to His Father's will.

The Gospel of Luke records an additional piece to the story. Between Jesus' second and third prayers, God sent an angel to strengthen His Son for His task. Then Jesus prayed, "Not my will, but yours, be done." Strengthened for His task, Jesus woke up His sleeping disciples and walked to face Judas and the temple soldiers who arrived to take Him prisoner. In less than 24 hours, Jesus went through three trials, a brutal beating, a painful crucifixion and death, and would be placed in another garden in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.



Jesus' example of asking God for help is a model we can use. As you interact with each other, the children and their parents and there's a problem (e.g., difficulty separating from a parent or caregiver, hitting, biting, throwing toys that could hurt, crying following a tumble), take time to talk to God. Say, "Dear God, You helped Jesus when He was feeling sad and needed help to make the right choice. We need Your help too. Please help... We pray in our Savior's name. Amen."

God helped Jesus; God will help us too.

Jesus' Time

Getting Prepared

- Set up a worship center using a small, low table with rounded edges. Place a children's picture Bible on top. Set it against a wall or the back of a shelving unit. Tape a picture of Jesus above it. Optional: Add an altar covering (either cloth or laminated colored construction paper), a small wooden cross (only use this during Jesus' Time, since children may use it inappropriately) and two candles (e.g., cardboard tubes covered with laminated paper and pieces of red tissue for flames).
- Prepare visuals: Enlarge the patterns on the reproducible. Color the figures. Cut out, laminate and cut out again. Tape to cardboard tubes for tube puppets or use them with a magnetic board or felt board.
- Songbook: *Little Ones Sing Praise*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989.

Getting Ready

- Invite the children to Jesus Time, singing: **“Walking quietly, come and gather near. Walking quietly, Jesus' Time is here”** (*LOSP*, P. 8). Encourage mobile children to come and sit; caregivers carry and sit down with non-mobile infants.
- Sing a welcome song: Use the melody of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”
Hello, hello, how are you; I'm so glad to see you too. We will listen, sing and pray, learn of Jesus' love today. (Repeat first line)
While singing, add the cross to the worship center and “light” the candles.
- Point to Jesus' picture and sing a “Jesus Loves Me” song (*LOSP*, P. 41–42)
- Show the Bible and chant or sing, using the melody from “A Tisket, a Tasket.”
**A story, a story; it's time to hear a story.
It's from God's Book; we know it's true.
God gave these stories to me and you.**

Telling the Story and Application

Show the figure of Jesus and the disciples. **Jesus knew the time was near, the time for Him to die; He asked His friends to pray with Him; a tear was in His eye.**

Remove figures and replace them with sleeping disciples and kneeling Jesus. **Then Jesus knelt and prayed to God, “I need Your help tonight. Please make Me brave; please**

make Me strong; I want to do what's right. I know it will hurt to die; it's what I have to do — To take away the sins of all” — that means me and you. (Point to self and children.)

Replace kneeling Jesus with standing Jesus. **Then Jesus stood and looked around; He saw His friends close by. But He saw them all asleep, woke them** (replace sleeping disciples with standing disciples) **and said, “Please pray with me,” with a great big sigh.**

Remove standing figures and replace them with the sleeping disciples and kneeling Jesus. **A second time and then again Jesus prayed for help that night. “Please make Me brave; please make Me strong; I want to do what's right. I know it will hurt to die; but it's what I need to do— To take away the sins of all.” And that means me and you.** (Point to self and children.)

Add the angel. **God listened to Jesus' prayer; He sent an angel from above. The angel helped Jesus to be brave. Oh, how great is our God's love.**

Remove figures and replace with the folded hands. **God heard and answered Jesus' prayer. He hears and answers our prayers too.** Use the following action poem:

**Sometimes I fold my hands to pray —
at bedtime and when it's day.** (Fold hands.)
I KNOW God listens to my prayer. (Nod head affirmatively.)
Sometimes I'm feeling sad. (Show sad face.)
Sometimes I'm feeling glad. (Show happy face.)
I talk to God; God listens to my prayer. (Nod head affirmatively.)

Song:

“Jesus Listens When I Pray” (*LOSP*, P. 15)

Prayer:

Dear God, thank You for listening to Jesus when He prayed. Thank You for helping Him. Thank You for listening when I pray too. Amen.

Closing/Benediction:

Jesus' Time is almost over. Before we end, let's sing a goodbye song. Sing “Goodbye, Goodbye” (*LOSP*, P. 40). Encourage children to wave goodbye, “extinguish” candle flames and put away the cross. **Remember, Jesus loves you. And He promises to hear and help you when you talk to Him.**

Integrating the Theme

Literacy Activities:

- **Nursery Rhyme:** “Bow, Wow, Wow.” **Bow, wow, wow! Whose dog art thou? Little Tommy Tucker’s dog — Bow, wow, wow.** The rhyme focuses on the “sound” dogs make; exchange Tommy Tucker for names of children. Use cats (e.g., “Mew, mew, mew. Whose cat are you?”). Use the pattern of the dog from the reproducible.
- **Books to Read:**
 - *Old MacDonald*, retold by Rosemary Wells (board book from Scholastic)
 - *God Hears Me* by Joni Walker (Concordia Publishing House)
- **Poetry:** Use an action poem to get ready for a new activity: **We listen with our ears; it’s true.** (Point to ears.) **But eyes** (point to eyes, looking at teacher) **and hands** (hands are folded in lap) **help us listen too.** (Nod head.)

Art and Music:

- **Art:** Make a sticker collage. Use pictures of animals, instruments, cars, fire trucks, ambulances and other objects.
- **Music:** Sing “Old MacDonald Had a Farm,” focusing on the sounds animals make. Use a literacy activity. *I Love Music: My First Sound Book* by Marion Billet shows various instruments and the sounds they make (Scholastic).

Math, Science and Social Studies:

- **Math:** Action poem, chant in rhythm: **I can make a sound; you can too. Clap our hands. One! Two! Let’s make another; stomp with me. Stomp our feet. One! Two! Three! This is fun; let’s do more. Click our tongues. Click our tongues. One. Two. Three. Four!**
- **Science:** God heard and answered Jesus’ prayer. God gives us ears to hear.
 - Our ears can hear sounds. While playing with toy replicas of animals, mimic the sounds they make. Listen to the sounds musical instruments make.
 - Play/watch YouTube videos of familiar sounds children might hear.
- **Social Studies:** In the Bible story, Jesus is overwhelmed with sadness as He faces suffering and death. Little children experience strong emotions. But they have not learned words to describe how they feel and what to do. We can help them. The letter for parents has suggestions that are useful for us too. A good song to use with the children is “If You Feel Happy” (*LOSP*, P. 60).

Health, Safety, Nutrition and Large-Motor Activities:

- **Nutrition:** Serve crispy rice cereal and milk. Listen for the sounds, then enjoy.
- **Large-Motor Skills:** Take a walk and listen for familiar sounds (animals, cars, vehicle sirens, etc.).



Connecting with Families

Make a copy of the letter for each family. Before sending it home, , take time to add your signature and, if possible, a personal comment.

Dear Parents,

This month, we shared the story of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was almost time for Jesus to complete the work God gave Him to do — to suffer and die in our place. His death was by crucifixion, a very painful and slow death. As the time drew near, He became overwhelmed with sorrow and prayed to God. God heard and answered His prayer. He sent an angel to strengthen Him for the task.

Young children have strong feelings too. But they don't know the words and haven't developed the verbal skills to tell us how they feel. We can help them learn the words. As they become more verbal, we will encourage them to use their words to talk about the situation. And we can help them learn coping skills.

The parents of infants and toddlers know what their child is feeling just by the sound of their cry, sounds they make and their body language. Here are some basics and sample scenarios:

- Talk to them about what you see.
 - When an infant is crying and pulling up their knees to their chest, they probably have an air bubble. Say, "Oh, my! I think your tummy is hurting." Tip your baby forward and down, then put him or her up to your shoulder and pat the baby's back. When the baby burps, say, "I heard that. Does your tummy feel better now?"
 - "It looks like you're angry. Are you angry because you can't reach the toy?" You might move it closer or help them stretch, scoot or crawl to get it.
 - "It looks like you're sleepy. You're rubbing your eyes and yawning. Let's sit down together in the rocking chair. I'll sing a song/play some quiet music."
- Even when the situation demands quick and immediate attention, remain calm and talk about what you are doing.
 - "Oh, my! It looks like my baby fell down and is hurt. I think we need to get (ice for a bump, soapy water to clean a wound). There. Does that feel better?"
 - A toddler dashes into the street. Quickly get the child and say, "Oh, no! I can't let you run away from me. You might get hurt. You need to hold my hand and we'll walk together, or I will carry you."
- Even though it may appear like a toddler has willfully done something wrong, avoid criticism and blame.
 - "I can't let you bite your friend. It hurts and makes him feel sad." Involve the child in helping the child who was bitten (e.g., getting a "boo boo" ice bag, comforting the child). After the situation is calm, pray, "Dear Jesus, I'm glad You love and forgive us even when we make wrong choices. Please help us to be kind and loving — just like You. Amen."

If you would like additional tips, please feel free to talk with me.

Your child's teacher,

Rattles & Prattles

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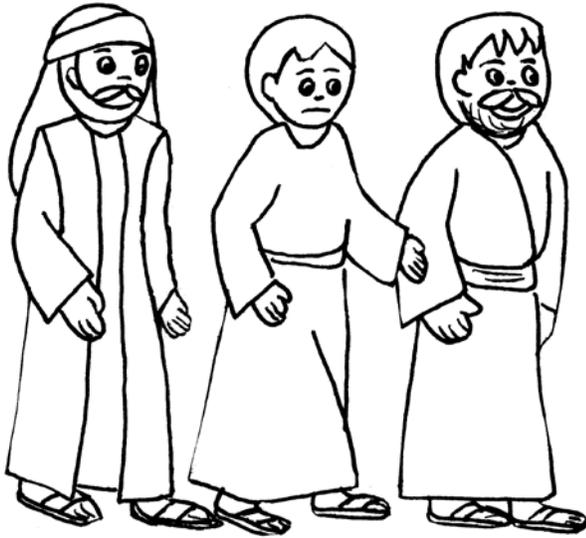
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MARCH 2017

Rattles & Prattles

Use the patterns on this page and the next to prepare visuals to tell the Bible story and permeate God's story throughout the day.



Jesus' friends



Jesus



angel



Jesus' praying



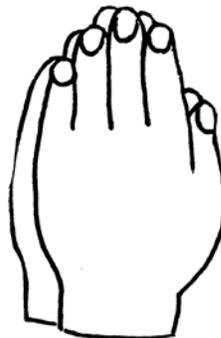
Jesus' disciples sleeping



sad



glad



Nursery Rhyme
Bow Wow Wow!



School Shepherd



ROCK-SOLID SHEPHERDS PRAY

Lutheran school ministry is built on the Rock that is Christ. Lutheran school shepherds find themselves standing on the Rock and praying at the Rock.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, Prays at the Rock

“Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here, while I go over there and pray’” (MATT. 26:36).

The Gospel accounts of Jesus’ prayer at the Garden of Gethsemane do not describe the exact setting or posture of prayer. Several artistic expressions of the event show Jesus kneeling at a large rock, looking with eyes directed heavenward. It is a strong illustration. The location of prayer is far secondary to the expression of Jesus’ prayer. In the time of deepest agony, Jesus prayed.

Prayer was a mark of Jesus’ ministry. Early in His ministry, overwhelmed by the needs of those who came to Him, “he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed” (MARK 1:35). Shortly before His Passion, Jesus prays for Himself, His disciples and us (JOHN 17). In His last breaths from the cross, Jesus prays. The disciples watched Jesus pray and asked that He teach them to pray.

Reflection: Describe Jesus in prayer. What instances in Jesus’ ministry do you see and hear Him praying? If the Son of God prays, what’s the example and motivation for our prayer life?

School Shepherds Pray at the Rock

School shepherds watch Jesus pray and from Him learn to pray. In many settings and situations, the request comes, “Pastor, would you lead us in prayer?” The school shepherd is seen as a prayer leader, which is an honor and expectation.

The school shepherd in prayer is more than another function of the office. A person of prayer is who and what we are in Jesus, the Rock. Consider the more formal prayer opportunities: the Divine Service includes the “Prayer of the Church,” and among the petitions are petitions for the



school ministry, school families and school activities; the staff and board meetings conclude with prayer; the school chapel service includes a prayer time; and ministry visits to the hospital and other emergency situations include prayer.

Just as significant are the less formal prayer times and settings. A child comes to the pastor’s office with a concern or at the request of the principal, and the conversation includes, “Let’s pray about this.” A staff member shares a burden with the pastor in the school hallway, and the conversation concludes with prayer. A school parent shares

a celebration with the pastor, and a prayer of thanksgiving is offered.

The daily ministry routines and the opportunities for pastoral care routinely and comfortably include prayer. Conversations often conclude, “How can I pray for you?”

Reflection: What prayer opportunities has your school ministry given you? How have you grown in your prayer ministry?

Lutheran Schools as Rock-Solid Places of Prayer

The disciples came to Jesus with the request, “Lord, teach us to pray” (LUKE 11:1). Following the example of the Master Teacher, school shepherds have the privilege of teaching others to pray. Lutheran schools are places of prayer. Lutheran school students, teachers and partners are people of prayer. Consider an intentional prayer ministry.

Pastor and teachers prepare prayer classrooms. Each classroom “adopts” a missionary for whom they will pray during the school year, seeking prayer requests from the missionary and strengthening the relationship with the missionary family. Students in the classroom have a prayer partner for whom and with whom they pray. Students are encouraged to be prayer leaders in the classroom by beginning and concluding the school day in prayer. Classrooms pray for another Lutheran school in the community or around the world.

Families are informed that they are being prayed for on a specific day or week in the school year. Families share concerns and celebrations that shape the petitions. Families are invited to pray for the school, staff and each other.

Prayer “events” become part of the school program: a prayer vigil is organized, and students and families are invited to participate; a prayer walk through the neighborhood or another setting is organized; a bulletin board of prayer requests is displayed, and students, families and congregation members are invited to take a request and pray; and school year planning by the board and staff includes explorations of prayer ministry.

Reflection: How has prayer ministry been included in the life of your school? How could prayer be more intentional in the school and church family?

PRAYER

Hear us, Father, when we pray,
Through Your Son and in Your Spirit.
By Your Spirit’s Word convey
All that we through Christ inherit,
That as baptized heirs we may
Truly pray.

Jesus, advocate on high,
Sacrificed on Calv’ry’s altar,
Through Your priestly blood we cry:
Hear our prayers, though they may falter;
Place them on Your Father’s throne
As Your own. Amen.

(Lutheran Service Book 773:1,3)

School Shepherd

March 2017

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Time Out for Directors



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS

Assessing Our Youngest Learners

One of the most difficult topics to address in early childhood education today is the issue of assessment. We can't seem to agree on what best practices look like or how we define assessment in the younger years.

Here are three things that continue to ring true as I reflect on my years in this profession:

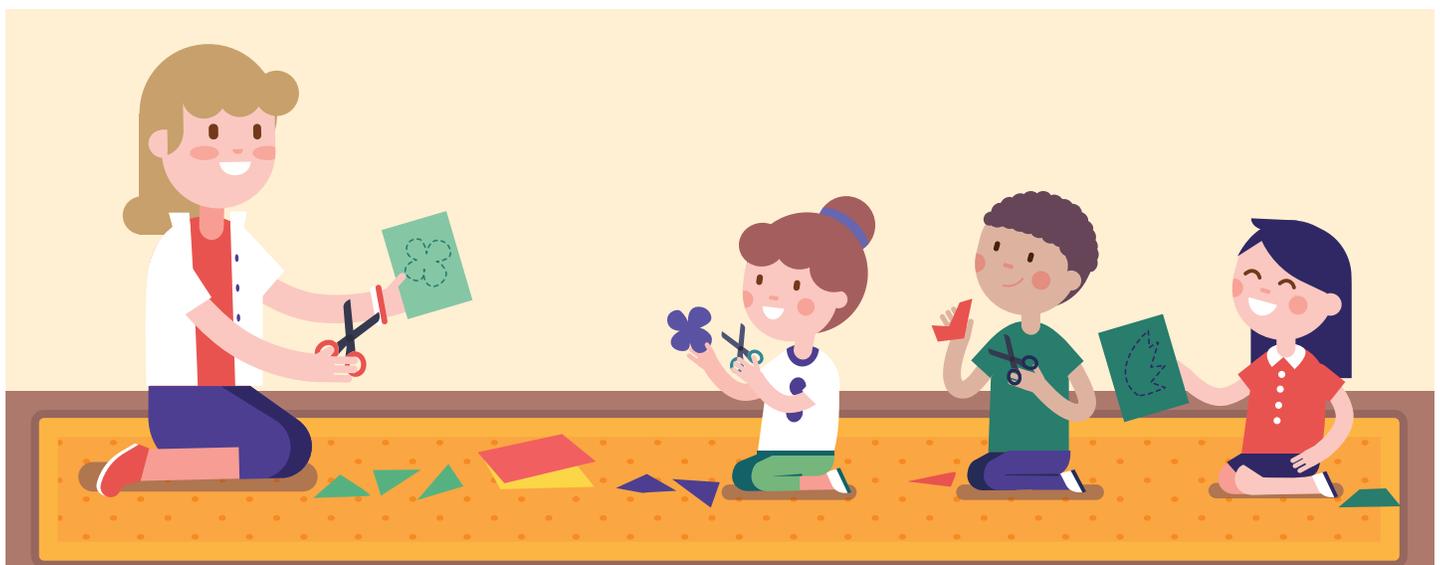
- In the Lutheran early childhood setting, assessment at the preschool level is an elective choice. State-supported centers, on the other hand, may mandate assessments.
- Assessments in Lutheran preschool settings vary greatly. Assessments can look like scrapbooks, journals, checklists and developmental screens. Assessments in the public sector can look like standardized tests or inventories that compare children against developmental or standardized norms. Typically, these tests are used to support the existence of the preschool program within the structure of the public school setting and to get the children "kindergarten ready."

- And finally, preschool assessments in both types of institutions tend to be viewed as stressful for teachers, families and students. Often the focus is on the child's academic or cognitive skills and what he or she cannot do or has not achieved. Overall developmental assessments are not available or are simply not preferred.

These generalizations lead us to three real questions about the future of preschool assessments in our Lutheran schools:

1. What makes an assessment valid?
2. What does this assessment look like?
3. When (and how often) is the assessment used?

First, let's look at the validity of the assessment. Authors Snow and Van Hemel (2008) support two key components when looking at assessment tools for preschoolers: the "validity of an assessment tool is the extent to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure" and "the extent to which an assessment's results support the



meaningful inferences for certain intended purposes” (P. 427). In short, the tool measures what it is supposed to measure and provides meaningful information regarding the assessed area.

Do the assessments we use in our preschool environments measure what we are looking for? For instance, if we are looking at development in the area of fine-motor skills, will the assessment reveal the developmental level of the child’s writing or drawing? Will it reveal the child’s handedness and his or her type of grip? Many formal and informal assessments do not take into account the many layers of what looks like a single task (i.e., printing one’s name). If we dig deep into the “simple” process of a child writing his or her name, we find that a single task involves symbolic development, concepts of print, fine-motor control, knowledge of self, initiative, confidence and persistence. Do our assessments measure what we are really looking for, and is the data meaningful for all?

The first question leads us to a second question: What does the assessment tool look like? If we desire to gain a true understanding of our student’s growth toward developmental outcomes, an authentic, ongoing process is needed. Formative assessment is a tool that supports and informs instruction while learning is happening. Teachers are able to use the assessments with students during play and learning activities to assess all areas of development. Types of formative assessment in the preschool classroom include authentic work: monthly handwriting samples and self-portraits, interviews, cutting samples, anecdotal notes for behavioral/social-emotional development, and notes regarding our student’s attainment of spiritual milestones. These types of assessment are authentic in that the children’s work is truly their own. It is not a tracing activity, worksheet or craft. Teachers are actively involved in their observations of the formative assessment task. Active observations include note-taking, photography and encouraging words that state what a teacher sees happening (i.e., “I see lines and curves in your name”). Additionally, formative assessment tools align with early

learning standards and developmental learning domains. So, what does formative assessment look like? It looks like the child has done the work.

And finally, how often do we assess? If assessment is going to inform our teaching or help our teachers adjust their teaching to match the needs of their students, then it needs to happen more than once or twice a year. This is a daunting thought. But when teachers put formative assessment into their daily lesson plans and implement their plans during the course of the day (small- and/or large-group time and segments of free choice and play time), it becomes possible and meaningful at the same time.

Formative Assessment Resources:

- “Assessing Young Children: What’s Old, What’s New, and Where Are We Headed?” by Susan Bowers earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_view.aspx?ArticleID=210
- “Teachers Discussing Assessment in Preschool” nieer.org/2015/04/08/teachers-discussing-assessment-in-preschool
- Formative Assessment: Guidance for Early Childhood Policymakers from the Center for Enhancing Early Childhood Outcomes nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/ceelo_policy_report_formative_assessment.pdf
- Focused Observations, Second Edition: How to Observe Young Children for Assessment and Curriculum Planning by Gaye Gronlund and Marlyn James redleafpress.org/Focused-Observations-Second-Edition-How-to-Observe-Young-Children-for-Assessment-and-Curriculum-Planning-P777.aspx

Reference:

Snow, C.E., and Van Hemel, S.B. (Eds.). (2008). *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press.

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