

A vertical border on the left side of the page, composed of a repeating pattern of small, line-art icons. These icons represent various educational fields: science (rocket, microscope, planet, atom, beaker), mathematics (compass, ruler, pie chart, bar graph), arts (paint palette, musical notes, lightbulb), and general education (books, graduation cap, apple, pencil, paper plane).

FEBRUARY 2017

School Ministry Mailing



FEBRUARY 2017

School Ministry Mailing Contents

Alight

"Part 1: What If All of Our Lutheran Schools
Would Just Go Away?"
Terry Schmidt

Computer File

"Technology Outside of the School Day"
Matthew Bergholt

Early Childhood Devotions

"The Wedding at Cana"
Dr. Judith Christian

Family Matters

"Upon This Rock: The Rock of Kindness"
Dr. Steven Christopher

Growing in Governing

"The Visionary and Effective Board"
Thomas Wrege

Insights & Ideas

"Ten Commandments"
Calie Vera

NLSA Powerful Practices

Concordia University Chicago Early Childhood Education
Center, River Forest, Ill.

Parent Pages

"Upon This Rock: Guarding Against Internet Pornography"
Dr. Kim Marxhausen

Professionally Speaking

"Be Ready to Speak: In Means and in Me"
Mark Muehl

Rattles & Prattles

"God Rescues through Jesus' First Miracle"
Judy Williams

School Shepherd

"Rock-Solid Shepherds Love"
Rev. Robert Riggert

Time Out for Directors

"What's Your Curriculum? An Interrelated Coherency"
Cheryl A. Haun



Alight



FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

PART 1: What If All of Our Lutheran Schools Would Just Go Away?

“Education was an integral part of the initial vision cast by the Missouri Synod’s forefathers.”



FROM THE BEGINNING, Lutheran leaders have been proponents of congregational Christian education. Martin Luther’s work in biblical translation put God’s Word into the hands of common people. The universal ability to read and write was essential for the Christian to understand God’s Word. As the chief reformer of the established church, Luther was also a reformer of education. Luther expressed his concern about the state of education in Germany by stating: “I am afraid that the schools will prove the very gates of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures and engraving them in the heart of the youth.” His encouragement resulted in the founding of Lutheran schools not only in Germany but also throughout the world.

Schools were a priority when the Saxons immigrated to the United States. In fact, the first constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod placed a high value on Lutheran schools, stating, “In order for the congregation to become a member of synod, a provision for the Christian schooling of the children is to be made. In such schooling it is stipulated that there must be the sole use of orthodox books including catechisms, readers, hymn books. Materials must be endorsed by the Synod as being thoroughly Lutheran” (from the Synod’s first constitution in 1847).

Education was an integral part of the initial vision cast by the Missouri Synod’s forefathers. Our Synod’s first president, C.F.W. Walther, reminisced in an 1870 sermon about the Saxons’

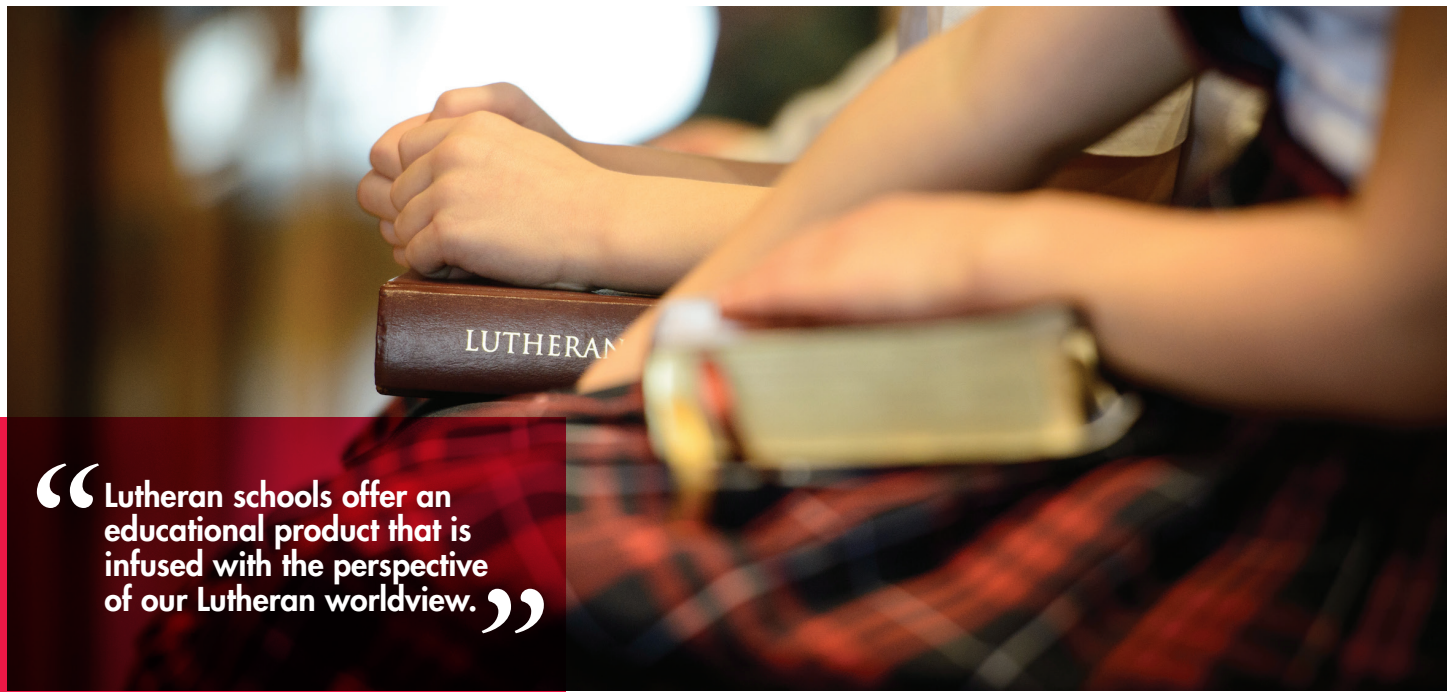


PHOTO: LCMS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD

“Lutheran schools offer an educational product that is infused with the perspective of our Lutheran worldview.”

motivation for moving to the United States, saying, “Our only real object was to save our souls, to live in faith over here, to establish here the true and correct public worship, and to maintain a truly Christian school for our children.”

This issue of whether or not Lutheran schools were exclusively operated for the children of Lutheran parents was addressed by our second Synod president, F.C.D. Wyneken, in 1857: “May the congregations consider more and more the important mission work done through our schools among our unbelieving countrymen, and then may they realize that the Lord has entrusted especially the little children to our care.”

As a result, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has placed an emphasis on the establishment of well-run Lutheran schools and established an unparalleled educational system that currently serves the needs of thousands of families with early childhood centers, elementary schools, high schools and institutions of higher education. Lutheran schools offer an educational product that is infused with the perspective of our Lutheran worldview. Lutheran schools provide high-quality, Christ-centered education for Lutheran families and families from our communities.

Today, our schools face significant cultural changes. Much of this results from changes in how schools are expected to be funded and operated, as well as changing priorities, needs and pressures within Lutheran congregations. There is pressure to

operate schools that provide the highest quality of education. Even our Lutheran families shop for the educational product that best meets their unique needs. Therefore, Lutheran schools today are expensive undertakings. They require a high degree of energy, significant financial support, qualified teachers and many prayers.

The passion for Lutheran schools displayed by Luther, Walther and Wyneken seems to have cooled. When a congregation operates a school, it requires commitment. That measure of commitment may be tested whenever a crisis occurs, whether it be financial or operational. Today, pastors, parishioners and even some of the leaders of our Synod ask, “Is the potential for reward worth the significant investment required by those who support a Lutheran school?”

Our Synod has been firmly committed to sponsoring Lutheran schools. Despite that history, today the very structure of how our schools are supported and operated has placed the future of Lutheran schools at risk. What would happen to our church body if all of our Lutheran schools would just go away? In next month’s article, we will examine statistical trends and the impact of a church body without Lutheran schools.

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The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Alight

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February 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			National Girls and Women in Sports Day 1	The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord 2	15th Amendment to US Constitution Ratified, 1870 3	Charles Lindbergh born, 1902 4
Weatherperson's Day 5	Ronald Reagan born, 1911 6	Laura Ingalls Wilder born, 1867 7	Boy Scouts of American Founded, 1910 8	Read in the Bath tub Day 9	Lunar Eclipse 10	Get Your Guitar Out Day 11
Abraham Lincoln born, 1809 12	First Magazine Published in America, 1741 13	Valentines Day 14	Galileo Galilei born, 1564 15	Surrender of Fort Donelson, 1862 16	Random Acts of Kindness Day 17	World Whale Day 18
National Engineers Week 19	Presidents' Day 20	Nina Simone born, 1933 21	George Washington born, 1732 22	Single-tasking Day 23	St. Matthias, Apostle 24	Pierre-Auguste Renoir born, 1841 25
Solar Eclipse 26	International Polar Bear Day 27	National Tooth Fairy Day 28				

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



Computer File



Technology Outside of the School Day

As many of you have probably realized over the last few years, students' use of technology is not limited to the classroom as it once was. Historically, technology was prohibitively expensive, and many students only interacted with it at an educational institution or library that had the funds to bring computers and the like into their buildings to enrich learning. With the rise of laptops and smartphones, students increasingly have the ability to be connected to the world around them from the moment their alarm goes off in the morning until they fall asleep at night.

These changes create both positives and negatives in an educational setting. However, not all learning activities take place during the traditional school day. Teachers take students on field trips, coaches set up competitions after school and on weekends, and Lutheran school students participate in worship services throughout the year. These "after hours" activities, combined with accessible technology, may create tension at school-sponsored events, where students think that school rules and policies no longer apply. Thus, it is essential to think about how your ministry will approach student technology use outside of the school day to create a clear and consistent message to students and parents when questions arise. Regardless of

what you may implement from the best practices and suggestions that follow, remember that if you have not faced any issues with this topic already, it is only a matter of time until it happens. It is best to be prepared in advance so that you are not reacting to a situation after the fact.

A General Best Practice

While there are innumerable intricacies and specific examples that can be included in policies and procedures dealing with technology outside of the school day, there is one very simple and general best practice that has worked for countless institutions. It can be assumed that most schools already have a policy in place to regulate student technology use during the school day, so why not apply this to outside of school as well? Basically, whatever policies have been established for students once the school day begins — such as cell phone, Internet or school device usage policies — would still remain in effect if the student is being supervised as part of a school-sponsored event. (See the following sections for specifics on how to modify policies to fit certain situations.) It is imperative to have a firm foundation of policies and expectations as the core of any discussions related to technology outside of the school day, and the best place to start is where you already are.

“ ... it is essential to think about how your ministry will approach student technology use outside of the school day ... ”



POSITIVES:

- Policies have already been developed and procedures are in place for enforcement.
- Students already know the expectations from during the school day.
- It establishes a general baseline for technology use outside of the school day.

NEGATIVES:

- It may be viewed as restrictive outside of the classroom setting.
- There is very little room for exceptions to existing policies.
- It is not applicable to every situation for students outside of the classroom.

Before- and After-School Technology

Even though the best practice described above is an acceptable extension of an existing policy that will work in many situations, there is one glaring exception that many schools will face: technology use in before- and after-school care situations. In many cases, students in these supervised situations will be working on homework or engaging in activities to pass the time before their next scheduled event. For students today, this often results in the usage of technology. Thus, making an exception for technology use in these situations is essential, but it must be done in a manner that is well defined and systematic for all students. A policy could stipulate that all homework must be done before technology is permitted, or perhaps it is only permitted in a certain area if it is being used for homework. There are many ways in which this type of exception can be effectively implemented, and it is up to you to determine what will work best.

POSITIVES:

- Allows for exceptions to a blanket rule governing technology use outside of the classroom.
- Gives students the ability to use their technology like they do at home (with supervision).

NEGATIVES:

- Requires all staff to enforce the policy in the same fashion (full-time, part-time, volunteers, etc.).
- May result in student abuse of the privilege of technology usage due to decreased restrictions.

Technology for School-Sponsored Events

Another specific example of technology use outside of the school day is for field trips, class trips and sporting events. As with all other school policies that are applied to these situations, changes and modifications are necessary in order to effectively supervise students outside of the school day. Many schools have faced difficulties in these situations because there are so many variables impacting student activities. However, many schools have found it effective to lessen the restrictions on technology use but set specific guidelines for specific types of events. For example, students may be able to use their own devices while in transit to and from events (sporting, class trips, etc.), but they are subject to restricted use once at the event. Or students are able to use their own technology during the day on a class trip (for pictures, etc.), but devices are stored in a single location during overnight hours. An additional consideration that factors into this discussion is grade level, and in many cases schools differentiate usage policies on the age of the students. Whatever the case, it is essential to establish guidelines for all to follow in these situations and to continue to reinforce their systematic application.

POSITIVES:

- Allows for specific circumstantial use of technology based on need and teacher discretion.
- Gives students the chance to learn personal responsibility and digital citizenship in a supervised environment.

NEGATIVES:

- Systematic enforcement is difficult due to differing staff and volunteer engagement levels with students.
- Requires additional focus and effort to implement effectively with students.

As is the case for the establishment of any policy, it is up to the individual school to determine what is the best fit for their specific ministry. Determining what works best is the first step, but it is essential to remember that the most important thing is the consistent implementation of established policies. Keep modifying as necessary, see what works and what does not, and 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.



PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

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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).

The Wedding at Cana

BIBLE STORY: JOHN 2:1–11

BEFORE YOU TEACH

It is time for Jesus to begin His ministry, and the story of the wedding at Cana introduces children to the first of 37 miracles recorded by the Gospel writers. In *Miracles*, C.S. Lewis defines a “miracle” as God doing up close and personal what He is and has been doing since the beginning of creation. This *first* miracle of Jesus does a couple of important things. On one level, it demonstrates that God’s provision for His people is beyond anything we can ask or imagine (SEE EPH. 3:20). Who needs 180 *extra* gallons of wine for a wedding party? But Jesus’ answer to our need is not bound by our small-minded accounting.

On a more profound level, this extravagant gift from Jesus is a sign of the heavenly banquet that God has promised and prepared for all people (SEE IS. 25:6). As Jesus did at Cana, God is still stepping into the lives of His people, and each miracle narrative is an opportunity to teach and affirm again God’s extravagant love for all people. We who know the love and power of God may well be — like Mary — His agents to put people in touch with Jesus, so that they may know and love Him as we do.

Greeting

Make it a priority to joyfully welcome each child as they enter every day. It is easy to be distracted, but these few seconds are critically important for altering whatever has



occurred prior to the child’s arrival and establishing the tone for the school day. Say, “**Good morning, child of God. I am looking forward to [name activity] with you today.**”

Gathering

Gather children in or around your established worship center, using a known song, chant or signal.

Tell the Story

You will need: tall clear drinking glasses, two large pitchers of water, red food coloring and a clear plastic container.

Before you begin, place the drinking glasses in the clear plastic container and add two drops of food coloring to the bottom of each. Then read the following to the children.

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. 6 • February 2017

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO, GETTY IMAGES, THINKSTOCK

Jesus; His mother, Mary; and His disciples had been invited to a wedding celebration. People in Jesus' time did not have root beer, 7-Up, Gatorade or other drinks that we enjoy. They usually drank water or wine. At that time, it was very important that invited guests have plenty to eat and drink because celebrations could last for a whole week. Mary, noticing that all the wine was gone, said to Jesus, "They have no more wine." Jesus replied, "Dear woman, why are you telling me this? My time has not yet come." Mary then went to the servants and said, "Do whatever he tells you." Nearby stood six giant water jars. A lot of water was needed because wedding celebrations at that time could last for days and days, and the wedding guests washed their hands over and over again. Jesus then said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." So the servants filled them to the brim.

Slowly pour water into the glasses, allowing the water to overflow into the plastic container.

Then, according to His will, Jesus told them to take some of the water to the master of the banquet. The servants did as they were told, and the master of the banquet tasted the water. Amazingly, the water had turned into the best wine ever! The master of the banquet did not know where the wine had come from, but the servants knew. The master then called the bridegroom to him and said, "Everyone brings out the very best wine first, but you have saved the best wine for last." This was the very first miracle of Jesus. Here, Jesus revealed His glory and His disciples put their faith in Him. We can trust Jesus to provide us with even more than we ask for or can even imagine, and as always, He provides at just the right time! His love for us is extravagant!

PRAY: Dear Jesus, fill us up with Your great love sent to us from heav'n above. Help us all Your love to share, so others know of Your care. Amen.

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

Pre-K & K: "Trust in [the Lord] at all times ... pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us" (Ps. 62:8).

Grades 1 & 2: "Trust in [the Lord] at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us" (Ps. 62:8).



Activities

CREATE: Heart rubbings. You will need: paper-free crayons, white paper, double-sided tape and heart patterns of various sizes cut from old file folders or tag board.



Using double-sided tape, adhere heart templates to tables or desktops. Show children how to place white paper over the template and, with a paper-free crayon held sideways, rub over the template where it can be felt. Demonstrate moving the paper and repeating the process using different colors or varied shades of warm or cool colors. Encourage experimentation.

SING: "I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus" (LOSP, P. 24).

DO: Substitute a Valentine's Day party and card exchange with a "Share the Love" family service day. Invite school families and congregation members to join together to address identified community needs. Fold heart rubbings into "care cards" and add "Jesus loves you" messages. Distribute the cards to those you serve. Return to celebrate this sharing opportunity with heart-shaped cookies and punch. Be sure you have more than enough for everyone!

Live the Story

Set aside quiet time for personal reflection. What do you run out of or run low on? What fills you up? What have you been given than is more than you ever imagined? Celebrate the extravagant love of Jesus!

Sending

Remind children that we can trust Jesus to provide for our needs and the needs of others according to His will and at just the right time. Jesus' love is extravagant. He loves you *all* the time!



Early Childhood Devotions

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Family Matters



A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS

Upon This Rock: The Rock of Kindness

Is the world as nice a place as it used to be? If you were to ask others this question, what kind of answers do you think you would get? Many of us would say that it depends on the age of the person responding — that the older the person, the less likely it is that they find this world to be a nice place. Why is that?

You might think that with the advances we have had in transportation, technology, communication and medicine, people would also have advanced equally in being kind and nice to one another. Yet, many people would say that this is not the case. Where have all the nice people gone? Where is civility? Where is kindness?

Kindness, according to the Word of God, is a fruit of the Spirit, meaning that it resides within God's people — a result of faith, waiting to come forward. The challenge is to find ways for it to be revealed in a consistent manner, in genuine ways, in everyday as well as critical situations.

Kindness is often thought of as being meek or mild — perhaps even soft. That is a misunderstanding. True kindness is strong. It is the embodiment of strength in action, delivering a message of care by offering a word of support or lending a helping hand. Kindness is acting in a measured and appropriate manner toward others, which results in a better situation.

Kindness is one-way, directed toward another, without any expectation of the return of a similar kindness. We do it for someone else's good, the betterment of a group, to improve a situation or conditions around us — not for the attention

or notoriety it can bestow on us. Kindness gifts, directs, guides and welcomes. Kindness is shown in acts of care and compassion. Kindness does not give in, but it holds firm to principles, values and beliefs.

Jesus Christ modeled this in His earthly ministry as He performed acts of kindness in healing people of their diseases, providing them with basic necessities of life and teaching them the truths of God's kingdom. The ultimate act of kindness shown by Christ was the giving of His life

on the cross of Calvary for our sins, hanging there in our place, feeling the pain and weight of our sin.

Even in the midst of His suffering, Jesus whispers words of kindness to the believing thief next

to Him, promising that he

would join Jesus in paradise. Those same

words of kindness hold true for believers today. We will join Jesus in paradise when we breathe our last breath.

Kind parents know that their kindness is not always returned by young children — and that there are no guarantees that it will be returned when children get older. As parents, we follow the example of our kind Savior, who was patient and loving toward others, gave of His time, provided for physical needs, taught truth with diligence, practiced forgiveness, gave attention to physical concerns and wept with those who were grieving, always doing the will of His heavenly Father.

We all do parenting in a variety of ways. No matter what kind of parent you are, always try to be a kind one.



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 whose birthday is the closest to Valentine's Day share the opening prayer.

VALENTINE SHARING:

Ask the following questions as a way to open up a family discussion on the topic of giving valentines.

- 1) Who might you want to give a valentine to this year? Why?
- 2) Who are you hoping to receive a valentine from this year?
- 3) What's your ideal Valentine's Day gift to give or to receive?



FAMILY BIBLE SEARCH:

As a family, look up Ps. 103:2-10 and read what these verses have to say about the kindness of Christ, our Lord.



- List below some of the benefits we receive because of the kindness and love of God.
- Have family members share actual ways the kindness of God has been displayed in their lives.

FAMILY KINDNESS ACTIVITIES:

The month of February celebrates showing love, care and kindness toward others. Select one or more of the kindness activities listed below to do as a family.

- Make several pizzas in the shape of hearts and then deliver them to friends and family. If you want to really go over the top, cut the pepperoni pieces/other meats into the shape of hearts!
- Create a list of people to call on Feb. 14 to wish them a happy Valentine's Day. If they don't answer, leave them a fun family message.

- Make homemade cookies in the shape of hearts and then deliver a bag of them to family, neighbors and friends. Put fun Valentine's Day messages on the bag as well!
- Write letters or make personalized valentines for people in your life and put them in the mail so that they arrive on or near Feb. 14.
- Wish special people in your life a happy Valentine's Day in a personalized way by using various avenues of social media.
- Organize a Valentine's Day party at a home for seniors. Bring in several families to help with the fun. You can even have a panel discussion, asking various seniors to share stories of what it was like dating when they were young.
- Write prayers of thanksgiving to God for the various people your family loves.

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 the people in our lives who love us. Help us to love them and find ways to be kind to them. Help us to be kind to those we don't know. Thank You, Jesus, for always loving us so much that You went to the cross to die for us. Help us to share this good news with 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

The Visionary and Effective Board

Think of a school board that governs within a Lutheran ministry setting. What exactly is its role? Many of our boards are filled with laypeople who may never have served in such a capacity before. It serves us well to be teachers of not only the collective role of the board, but also that of the individual member. Typically, the administrator/head of school/principal takes the lead in educating for leadership and governance. Teaching this role helps the entire board understand how it can be both visionary and effective. There are many dynamics involved, but the bottom line is that the opportunity is there to provide a strong and vital vision and to accomplish this in the most effective ways.

The goal is honoring God through serving the children of the school with faith formation opportunities each and every day. There should be a dynamic teaching team and plan, as well as a program of education that is one of excellence. Challenges should be looked at as opportunities. Lutheran schools are about forgiveness and grace! Focus on the mission, and yet look ahead to continually add value. Truly, it is about being effective in governance.

In 1 Sam. 12:24, the writer shares, “Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.” We serve. We biblically bless others. We support the congregation or association. We wash one another’s feet. We do things internally, but moving out to an external role of sharing the Gospel is the bigger picture for all involved. What a great opportunity!

No matter the terminology used — mission, purpose, direction, core values, belief statements — each provides an opportunity for an organization to gain clarity about what drives decision-making in the short and long term. High-reliability organizations stay “tight” to their vision and mission, aligning their work in ways that help staff members and all who are served build belief in the processes and products.

The following list contains components for efficacy and vision:

- Have the right people on the bus.
- Have effective meetings.
- Define the role of the collective board and of each individual as a member.
- Have training that allows for education, questions and answers.
- Accreditation should drive improvement, and evidence should be made available.



- A strategic plan will ensure that structure is in place, plans are actionable, due dates are assigned that include personnel or groups, and that the resources needed are listed.
- A communication plan keeps constituents well informed.
- Authority allows a board to carry out vision.
- A re-visiting of the mission at every meeting is the lens to refocus continually.
- Structured processes are in place, such as getting proper feedback, information and research where needed.
- Policy allows the administrator to work appropriately within his or her position description.

In a practical application, here are ways that a board can make being visionary and effective a priority:

At the start of each new academic year, have a “visioning activity” that not only includes the board, but also the faculty and staff.

Begin with the school staff. This is a time of excitement! Write these headings on a whiteboard and have fun working together:

- Re-visiting this past year
- 5-Year Vision
- 10-Year Vision
- 20-Year Vision

Have the staff members brainstorm together and begin to fill in the spaces below each category. This should be facilitated by the meeting leader.

Then bring the Board of Christian Education into the discussion so that it can see the staff vision and add input. Finally, have the board break down the exercise into some simple, manageable goals for the year, as well as to fill in a new category titled “Goals Beyond 2016.” Have the board put forth two major goals from this list that will be communicated broadly. Examples could include beautifying the campus and putting together a financial sustainability plan.

“Effectiveness” can be defined in a more general sense but with some particulars: making rational decisions, functioning cohesively as a group, exercising appropriate authority, connecting to the community, working toward board improvement and acting strategically. Just as there are

practical applications available as shown above for vision, here are some pieces to think about that can allow for greater effectiveness:

- On the day of board meetings, share with faculty and staff that prayers are requested for this time together.
- The chairman and administrator have quality time together to plan out the meeting times and the months ahead using an annual agenda.
- Stop any meeting mid-agenda to re-focus on the mission.
- Have time for policy review.
- A dynamic devotion can segue the board into inspiration and Spirit-led discussion.
- Have in-service training.
- Stay on time, stay on task and make sure every member comes prepared.

Make no mistake: There will always be challenges. But having faith-filled people who put God first will bless conversations, decisions, communication and vision. Prayer is the key. Pray through every part of the preparations, the meetings and the follow-up actions. Be thankful! God has placed Great Commission effectiveness and vision in your midst. To Him be the glory!

RESOURCES AVAILABLE



- Visioning activity
- Campus improvement plan template
- Strategic planning facilitators: Jim Galvin, Les Stroh, Mission Enablers
- Annual agenda for boards





Insights & Ideas

FOR TEACHERS OF CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7

Ten Commandments

Even from a young age, students are taught that school is all about being successful. We encourage our children in countless ways to do well and flourish in the wonderful world of academia. From the moment we first step foot in the classroom, we are thrust into a world of policy and expectations. It's about doing the work, following the rules, embracing the system, trying your best, fulfilling the requirements, passing exams, completing assignments, studying and learning to get the best possible grades. Success is determined by very measurable results.

On one level, the Ten Commandments certainly provide us with a blueprint for holy living. God says to us as His dearly loved children, "You are My chosen people, and as such I want you to experience life without pain and hardship." So the commandments first given to Moses are meant to curb our behaviors and guide our actions. In other words, they are to keep us out of trouble and strengthen our relationship with God and each other.

As it turns out though, we all know that the commandments are never something we will be able to faithfully adhere to. It's undeniable. We break commandments with consistent and reckless abandon. Yet, that's the ironic beauty of them. It is in our inability to lead the holy and ideal lives that God desires for us to have, as outlined on those stone tablets, that we are given the humble opportunity to gaze into the grace-filled eyes of Jesus. Our place in God's kingdom is not found within us. Thanks be to God for that! Instead, we find our value and worth in God. Deut. 20:4 says, "For the LORD your God is he who goes

with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory." God goes to battle, and by the blood-stained wood of the cross of Jesus, we know we have been made holy. God declares us successful and provides us with the passing grade. We joyfully echo the words of the apostle Paul, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 COR. 15:57).



Spiritual and Social Living

Introduce the Ten Commandments by reading the story from a children's Bible. Read through the commandments. Explain that these are God's rules for us. Just like we have school rules, God wants us to follow these rules so that we are safe.

I like the way this unknown author states the commandments in "Ten Commandments for Kids" (source unknown):

1. Put God first.
2. Worship God only.
3. Say God's name with love.
4. Make Sunday a special day.
5. Respect, obey and honor your parents.
6. Do not hurt others.
7. Love your husband or wife and not another.
8. Do not take something that is not yours without permission.
9. Tell the truth.
10. Do not become jealous of what other people have.

Communication Arts

Letter Tube Drop

You will need:

- 26 empty toilet paper tube rolls
- 26 pingpong balls

Write one letter of the alphabet on each tube. Also write one letter per pingpong ball to make matching pairs. The students will match the pingpong ball to the tube and drop it in the corresponding tube. To make this activity more challenging, use uppercase letters on the tube and lowercase letters on the ball.

Discovering the World

Have the students practice counting to 10 as a group. Then have the students count out 10 objects, such as cotton balls, buttons or small rocks. Have each student glue their objects onto a piece of paper as a reminder that there are 10 rules that God wants us to follow.

For older students, write the numbers 1-10 on small cards. Have the students arrange the numbers in numerical order. (Each student will have a set of cards with one number on each card.) Have them glue their numbers to a paper.

Expressive Arts

Play the song "God's Top Ten" from the CD *God's Ten Best, Songs about God's Way to Live*.

The students can also learn the following song (tune: "Jingle Bells"):

No other gods, no idols.
Don't misuse God's name.
Keep the Sabbath holy, that's God's special day. HEY!
Honor your mother and father
Don't murder, lust or steal.
No false tales, no envy, this is God's great deal. HEY!

Wellness

Groundhogs Game

To play this game, lay poly spots or hula-hoops in a large space, enough for one per student. When the drum sounds, the students begin moving around the room. When the drum sounds again, the teacher yells "winter." The "groundhogs" then find a poly spot or hoop and hibernate. If the teacher yells "spring," the students find their shadow.

The students can be given special directions on how to move each time (e.g., hop, skip, frog jump).



OLD-FASHIONED HARD TACK CANDY

Ingredients:

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1/4 cup light corn syrup
- 1/2 tsp. desired flavoring
- 1/2 to 1 tsp. food coloring

Line a 13-by-9-inch baking pan with aluminum foil and set aside. In a saucepan over medium heat, combine sugar, water and corn syrup. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly, until sugar dissolves and mixture begins to boil.

Cook without stirring until mixture reaches the hard-crack stage (or 290-310 degrees on a candy thermometer). Remove from heat. Quickly stir in flavoring and food coloring.

Pour hot syrup into the lined pan in a thin, even layer. When lukewarm, deeply score the slab of candy with a knife into squares or other shapes as desired. When cooled, carefully break along score lines. Wrap individual pieces in wax paper.

Book of the Month

God's Ten Commandments Big Book

The Ten Commandments are God's gift to tell us how to live a godly life. The simple words and images in this book show children how and why we obey the commandments God gave us. This book is available for purchase from cph.org.



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.

- "That was a really kind thing to do."
- "Thank you for listening."

Insights & Ideas

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NLSA POWERFUL PRACTICES



Concordia University Chicago Early Childhood Education Center, River Forest, Ill.

Professional Development that Leads to Change

“Teaching is one of the few professions in which the novice is expected to assume full responsibility from the first day on the job” (Hall, 1992).

The Early Childhood Education Center has been part of Concordia University Chicago’s campus in River Forest, Ill., since 1975. From our humble beginnings in the basement of a dormitory, we supported undergraduate students in their coursework by providing hands-on experience with young children. In 2002, we were blessed with a new facility, which increased our ability to meet the needs of children from birth through age 8. Our mission and vision are deeply embedded with the university’s, and our philosophy supports university students as well as community families.

We currently provide a developmentally appropriate early childhood program to approximately 225 children. We hire full-time teachers with state licensures and offer jobs for students to assist in the classrooms. Our constructivist philosophy and our professional development trainings with The Project Approach continue to allow us to provide the environment and resources for children to learn and grow.

Ongoing learning opportunities in the lives of early childhood professionals are vital to their growth as individuals as well as the development of the children they serve. The field of early childhood education is constantly on the move. Research on brain development and how children learn has given this field much to consider when providing professional development training. For years, attending an all-day conference or a conference that spanned several days was the norm in professional development. It gave teachers and providers a chance

to learn some new ideas, meet other professionals and hopefully bring back to their classrooms their conference experiences. In some cases, the excitement generated at these conferences was quickly put aside once staff returned to the day-to-day organization and schedule of the classroom. That’s why coordinating professional development support to teachers and directors can provide the guidance needed to implement positive changes in their programs.

As our staff members work to improve quality programs for families, we also look to support each other in our professional development. Finding the time and giving staff the tools needed to include new ideas in the day-to-day classroom setting can be challenging. Each year, we choose a focus topic related to specific curriculum ideas and then utilize our in-service training days scheduled throughout the year to focus on implementation, review



and reflection on the chosen topic. We meet to discuss where we are, how we are doing and what help we may need from each other or from consultants in the community to move forward.

Choosing a specific topic for the year enables us to focus on planning professional development days. In past years, we have included topics ranging from our indoor and outdoor environments, improvements with our child center portfolios as a means of assessment, improving our understanding of project work and concentrating on developing formal documentation boards, which we do once a year.

Project work is a very important part of our curriculum, and we have dedicated a number of trainings around how to improve our classroom projects. The following photo shows staff at one of our in-service meetings reflecting on and making suggestions to improve some of our first formal documentation boards. These boards are related to the project we did the semester prior to this meeting. We had much to learn regarding formal documentation board layouts and how to communicate information regarding the project in a way that will keep the observer interested.

This activity allowed us to learn from each other. We were able to ask specific classroom teachers about the thoughts and ideas behind their design as well as what

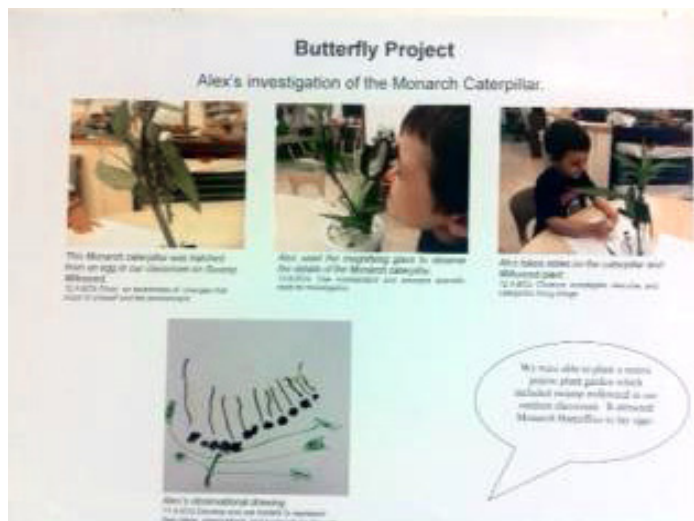


they learned from the project. This activity began our yearly professional development focus. After each board, we learned more about how to make it graphically and artistically pleasing to people while also providing information that describes the essence of the project.

A major part of formal documentation involves choosing photos that show learning, not just the finished product. These two pictures show children choosing what the next step will be in their design or structure. It shows children thinking critically and designing.

Capturing the excitement and wonder of the project through photos and documentation provides a wonderful window into the children's learning. The formal project board below follows the path of the monarch caterpillar in a butterfly project. This board captured one child's curiosity about the caterpillar, from simple observing to indepth study with the magnifying glass to his representational drawing.

Through ongoing review and reflection on previous projects, we strive to improve our next learning experience. Using teacher collaboration time, in-service trainings and small-group support, we look forward to our next project.



NLSA Powerful Practices

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Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

UPON THIS ROCK:

Guarding Against Internet Pornography

Generations ago, pornography was covered in brown paper labels or hidden out of sight of children. But now, our children are growing up in an environment where they do not have to find porn — it finds them. The issue of pornography exposure is not something that parents can ignore.

The statistics on pornography are as disturbing as the material itself: 1 in 5 mobile searches are for pornography. Approximately one-third of minors have viewed pornography online, with numbers as high as 70 percent for teens older than 14. The average age of first exposure for boys is 12 years old. Furthermore, 28 percent of children and teens view porn unintentionally through pop-up ads and hard-to-leave sites that repeatedly bring up new windows of porn as the viewer desperately tries to shut it down. Online porn is far more aggressive than the stereotypical magazine found in a friend's garage.

We are just starting to understand the negative effects of easy access to online porn for adults. The concerns raised are even more distressing for children and adolescents. Exposure for young children is confusing and interferes with their moral development as they seek to learn which behaviors are acceptable and healthy. For pre-teens and adolescents, pornography exposure interrupts their understanding of sexuality, confuses new feelings brought on by hormones, and opposes what they learn about God's will for their sexual behavior.

It is not God's desire for His children to be exposed to pornography. In the Small Catechism, Luther reminds us of God's promise of protection from evil as part of the morning and evening prayers we are encouraged to teach our children. Psalm 91 has comforting words for us regarding God's longing to protect and shelter His

children from the evils of sin: "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone" (Ps. 91:11-12).

There are several ways in which parents are encouraged to shelter their children from pornography.



“When we dwell in the shelter of God, we live in a place of safety. Research indicates that people who attend church regularly are 26 percent less likely to indulge in online porn.”

1. Be your child's first and most important teacher regarding sex. When you are able to set aside your squirmy embarrassment about the subject matter and educate your children about sex on a regular basis as they grow in their ability to understand, you will be setting a strong foundation by which they can compare anything else they are taught about sex. Your words should be the first they hear on the subject, so that your voice and God's will are the strongest influences. Check out Concordia Publishing House (especially cph.org/c-268-learning-about-sex-series.aspx) for helpful materials. Research tells us that good, values-based sex education reduces, rather than promotes, promiscuous behavior in teens.
2. Teach your child discernment. Parent-led sex education is a great foundation for protecting children from online porn. Yet, it is important to remember that information is not the same as application. Parents also need to teach children discernment by finding opportunities to apply God's values to what is seen on television, on social media and in movies. Help children to understand that using sex and human bodies for humor or advertising is not part of God's will. Help them to recognize the difference between praising God for the creation of our bodies and using bodies to manipulate feelings. If your child is unintentionally exposed to pornography, take time to pray. Thank God for our bodies and for His protection.
3. Be involved. Many parents are turning to electronic filters to reduce the chance their children will be inadvertently exposed to porn. (Check out a recent article on the subject at pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2346997,00.asp.) This can be a good start. It is also recommended that computers in the home be in public places and that phones spend the night in a central recharging station. This lessens temptation and makes it more likely you will see any porn that forces itself into your child's view. Also, do not assume that your children and their friends are using social media appropriately. A watchful parent will make inappropriate texts less likely to happen and your child more likely to tell you when it does.

Psalm 91 suggests one more piece of advice regarding protection from evil: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust'" (Ps. 91:1-2).

When we dwell in the shelter of God, we live in a place of safety. Research indicates that people who attend church regularly are 26 percent less likely to indulge in online porn. Through the Sacraments and the study of God's Word, our faith is nurtured and strengthened. Our God-given faith is an important way that God shelters us.

For Further Study

Find statistics at covenanteyes.com/pornstats/.

Parent Pages

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Professionally Speaking



Be Ready to Speak: In Means and in Me

Peter writes, "...always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 PETER 3:15). Last month's *Professionally Speaking* considered one's readiness to speak. It included having a message prepared and being ready to share it consistently and frequently. It also included our professionalism — knowing the best practices of our trade.

This month, as one considers this readiness, think of it in two ways of presentation: in means and in me.

In Means

Through what means are messages delivered? There is no doubt that a large part of Martin Luther's ability to share the Reformation message was due to the invention of the printing press. The LCMS has followed his lead by being a leader in using technology to share the Gospel. "Bringing Christ to the Nations" via "The Lutheran Hour" is proof of our historical efforts in using technology. Whether through radio, the Web or social media, the LCMS continues its efforts to utilize technology to share the Gospel and support Christians. The Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison's vlog posts demonstrate the value of our present means. What other advances will occur in the decades to come that will help messages be shared?

What are your ways of sharing Christ? How do you feed your faith, and how does technology support that effort? Social media is a marvelous way to connect with the world. Through Facebook, I've reconnected with friends, family, classmates, students and colleagues. While it has allowed us to enjoy each other's lives, Facebook also allows for the sharing of ideas. Each user can plot a particular course of interest, and Facebook provides an opportunity to gather your acquaintances to share ideas. Also, what does your profile say about you? Is it a bold confession of your faith in Christ? Do your "liked" pages reflect your faith?




In Me

When the means have been addressed, then how about me? How is my speaking, and how well am I equipped to share?

Person-to-person and face-to-face are still the best methods for communicating. Beyond content, professionalism and means, what about "me"? What does your presence say in communicating?

My friend Erik Palmer (@erik_palmer) has taken it upon himself to be the voice for teaching speaking skills. When I first met him, he was speaking at an ASCD convention in Washington, D.C., on tech tools for the classroom. Now in his most recent book, *Well Spoken: Teaching Speaking to All Students*, Palmer gives lessons for teaching speaking, including his thoughts on building and performing a speech. From consideration of the audience to the use of visuals, he encourages preparation for public speaking.



In last month's *Professionally Speaking*, I shared the importance of having prepared content in our teaching. Being "ready in season and out of season" (2 TIM. 4:2) with a clear, consistent message is integral in our Christian witness. That said, *Well Spoken: Teaching Speaking to All Students* addresses performing one's speech. It could be argued that presenting the message is just as important as the content in our readiness to share the message. Short and sweet, delivering one's message is about presence and presentation.

Here are four tips from Palmer's book:

1. **Presence/poise:** We're not all gifted with the willingness or ability to speak in front of a group. However, we all can WORK at making sure that our presence is such that it does not distract from the message. Quiet feet, as opposed to rocking back and forth, provide a much more confident look. Hands that find a "home" position do no harm to a message, as opposed to hands that are flicking one's bangs away, touching one's nose or scratching one's ear. Poise is as much a learned skill as a state of mind. As is the case with most skills, it needs practice. Adults in front of adults with a willingness to share thoughts on one another's speaking should be a professional development portion of your upcoming faculty meetings!
2. **Passion:** Some of us are "rah rah" people. We enjoy firing up the crowd and energizing them with a stirring speech. Others? Not so much. However, both lack of passion and over-exuberance can be detriments to our ability to share the Gospel. While we know that it is God's Spirit who moves in His Word to accomplish what it sees fit, I hope you share my prayer that I do my part to be His voice and instrument and let His will be done, rather than inhibit. In his book, Palmer

emphasizes "life in the voice." He encourages the emphasis of certain words and phrases for effect. What are the words and phrases of your Christian witness that aren't just a personal desire to share, but which point others to the cross?

3. **Eye contact as part of presence:** (See also presence/poise!) I confess that outside of sports, the TV shows I watch most often are singing related. While most of the commentaries are about as worthless as the canned audience participation, one valuable piece of coaching that often comes up is connecting with the audience, and that usually means making eye contact. Eye contact engages. I once had a pastor who never looked at me when he talked to me or as I was talking. He was always looking elsewhere — out the door, out the window and so on. I was sure he had better things to do than converse with me. What does our eye contact say about sharing our faith? Do we look ashamed? Do we look too intense? Are we looking for someone else to talk to? Or are we reading our imaginary script?
4. **Pacing:** Pacing is not just about speed, but it includes speed. Too fast can be exhausting! Too slow can be exhausting in a different way. But pacing is all about understanding and how speed can enhance that understanding. It's not wise to hurry through the message just to say it has been shared. Meaningful sharing involves a sort of formative assessment, and pacing reflects a response to this assessment.

I suggest you purchase *Well Spoken: Teaching Speaking to All Students* for many reasons. It's a fabulous resource for your staff and also for your English/language arts classes.

And be ready to speak: Speak the truth in love, and speak boldly of the grace that has been given to you.

Professionally Speaking

February 2017

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Rattles & Prattles



A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS

GOD RESCUES THROUGH Jesus' First Miracle

.....

Bible Story: Jesus saves a wedding celebration
(JOHN 2:1-11; JOHN 2:4)

Before Teaching the children:

This month, we share the story of Jesus' first miracle as recorded in the Gospel of John. In the story of the wedding at Cana, Jesus saved a wedding celebration. Instead of being an embarrassment, it turned out to be one the residents of Cana would talk about for years to come. It was truly a happy, memorable day.

John wrote that Jesus and Mary, Jesus' mother, were invited to a wedding. Weddings at the time were joyous occasions that were celebrated for a period of five to seven days. Following the wedding ceremony, meals would be served. The groom's family served the best foods: challah (bread with currants and almonds), roasted lamb and duck, sardines, fruit (melons, dates, raisins and pomegranates) and lots of wine. There was dancing, accompanied by music played on stringed instruments.

During the wedding celebration, Mary realized that the host had run out of wine. That would be very embarrassing for the family. Jesus didn't help immediately, but read on.

Mary told the people who were serving, "Do whatever he [meaning Jesus] tells you." Later, Jesus said to them, "See those big jars. Fill them with water — right up to the top."

When they finished, Jesus told one of the helpers, "Take out a cup and give it to the person in charge." When he tasted it, he was surprised. It wasn't water; it was superb wine! Jesus changed the water into wine — a miracle! The man in charge didn't know where it came from, but all the workers did. I'm sure the news spread quickly.



Jesus performed many miracles during His three-year ministry. He did these to show He was the Messiah God promised. Jesus was and is indeed the Savior — our Rock and salvation (JOHN 2:11; IS. 35:4B-6). And as with everything He did, it was in God's perfect timing.

I love this story because it shows Jesus really cares. He cares about the "little" things that happen in our lives.

Jesus came to earth to rescue us from sin, death and the power of the devil. He left His home in heaven. He was born and lived the perfect life God demanded. Then He suffered and died to take the punishment for our imperfect lives. He came alive again on Easter. Now, through faith in all Jesus did, we become God's loved, forgiven, happy children — on our birthdays, Valentine's Day and every day. And someday, we will live happy eternally with God in heaven.



Curricular Materials

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 figures of Jesus and Mary. **Jesus and Mary, His mother, traveled one day — to a wedding at Cana, not far away.**

Add the bride and groom. **They greeted the groom with a smile so wide, and at his side stood the beautiful bride.**

Add the picture of food. **After the wedding, they stayed to eat. Yummy food and wine, a special treat. There was singing and dancing — a lot of fun. Smiles were on the faces of everyone.**

Hold the figure of Mary and wiggle it up and down. **Mary realized something was wrong. What could it be? The wine was all gone! Oh, my! Oh, me!**

Place Mary next to Jesus. **Mary ran quickly to tell Jesus, her son, "Please help our friends; what can be done?"**

Move Jesus and place Him near the jars and two workers. **Jesus told the workers, "Please hurry; don't stop — fill the jars with water right up to the top. Now get a cup and take one out." When it was tasted, the man smiled and said with a shout, "It's wine, really good wine."**

Remove all the figures except for Jesus. **Jesus helped the wedding to be happy. Jesus helps us to be happy. He gives us mommies and daddies, families, teachers, friends — people who love us. Best of all, Jesus died and came alive again to take away all the times we are not loving.**

Song:

"I'm as Happy as Can Be" (LOSP, P. 25). Change second phrase to "Jesus loves and cares for me." Second verse: "You can be that happy too. Jesus loves and cares for you." Third verse: "We are happy, me and you. Jesus is our Savior too."

Prayer:

Teach the children to sign "thank you." Hold up one hand, thumb extended; touch fingers to chin and then move fingers away — like blowing a kiss, but a little lower. It can be a response for prayer. **Dear Jesus, we are happy You love and care for us.** Response: Sign "thank you." **Dear Jesus, we are happy You are our Savior.** Response: Sign "thank you." **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, God loves you. When He looks at you, He smiles. He loves you and sent Jesus — so you can be His loved, forgiven and happy child.**

Curricular Materials

Integrating the Theme

Literacy Activities:

- **Action Poem:** Show the jars from the story presentation.
Pour, pour, pour the water. (Pretend to pour water)
Fill the jars higher, higher. (Raise one hand up, up)
Dip, dip, dip the water; (Pretend to scoop up water)
Jesus changed it into wine. (Smile and wave hands in praise)
- **Nursery Rhyme:** Download and print a picture of the nursery rhyme “Little Jack Horner.” Adapt it:
Little Jack Horner sat in a corner eating a (wedding/birthday/Valentine) **pie. He put in his thumb, and pulled out a plum, and said, “What a happy boy am I!”**
- **Read a book:** Read a Valentine’s Day book: Add the “Jesus loves you” component.
 - *The I Love You Book* by Todd Parr
 - *Counting Kisses: A Kiss and Read Book* by Karen Katz
 - *Pete the Cat: Valentine’s Day Is Cool* by James and Kimberly Dean



Art and Music:

- **Art:** Invite older infants and toddlers to “paint” a piece of paper. Use a 1-inch brush with red tempera paint. (Optional: Add powdered strawberry drink mix for a scent.) When dry, cut into heart shapes of different sizes. Paste duplicates of the Jesus figure from the reproducible on several, and put smiley faces on others. Post on a wall or bulletin board with the title “We are happy Jesus loves us.” Save five for the math activity.
- **Music:** Sing another happy song. Adapt the traditional “If You’re Happy and You Know It” to “If you’re God’s happy children, clap your hands...”

Math, Science and Social Studies:

- **Math:** Place five laminated heart shapes in a container. Dump them out and invite a child to put them back in using the following counting rhyme for Valentine’s Day.
Five red valentines lying on the floor; put one in the “bucket.” Now there are four.
Four red valentines so pretty to see; put one in the “bucket.” Now there are three.
Three red valentines all made by you; put one in the “bucket.” Now there are two.

Two red valentines; counting’s fun; put one in the “bucket.” Now there is one.

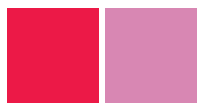
One red valentine lying on the floor; put one in the “bucket.” All gone — no more.

- **Science:** Fill the sensory table one-third full of water. Set out a variety of utensils for the children to use to dump and fill. Refer back to the story as the children dip and pour water. Talk about which vessels are larger or smaller, count how many times they fill, and so on.
- **Social Studies:** If possible, post pictures of the children celebrating birthdays. Birthday and Valentine’s Day parties make us happy. Refer to what is happening (e.g., eating cake, playing, opening presents/valentines). Jesus helped the wedding be a happy time, and He is with us during happy times too.

Health, Safety, Nutrition and Large-Motor Activities:

- **Nutrition:** Serve small wedding cakes (petit fours) and grape juice, or small circle-shaped toasted cheese sandwiches with a smile made from catsup to continue the happy wedding theme.
- **Large Motor:** The people at the wedding had fun singing and dancing. We can sing and dance and be happy too. Invite the children to wave plastic streamers or scarves, while singing and “dancing” around. Sing “The More We Get Together” (if you’re not familiar with it, do an Internet search) or play happy music on a CD.





Connecting with Families

Make a copy of the letter for each family. Before sending it home, take time to personally sign it and add a personal comment about the way the child showed love to someone else or responded to hearing of Jesus' love.

Dear Parents,

February brings to mind many things, but Valentine's Day is probably the first thing most people think of. On Valentine's Day, friends and sweethearts think of different ways to show their love and care for each other. The Bible story for this month also focuses on love: the love of newlyweds and God's love for us.

The Bible story happened shortly after Jesus began His public ministry. He and His mother attended a wedding in the small town of Cana, not too far from Nazareth where they lived. Weddings at the time of Jesus were big celebrations that often lasted several days. This required a lot of food and wine. Not enough would be embarrassing!

But that's what happened. There was not enough wine. When Mary learned about the problem, she told Jesus. Then she told the servers, "Do whatever He says." A short time later, Jesus told the servers to fill six large stone jars with water. This was no easy task. Workers needed to make many trips to the local well, lowering and raising their buckets.

When they finished, Jesus instructed one server to take out a cup and give it to the person in charge (i.e., the caterer). He took a sip and commented on how tasty the wine was. Jesus changed the water into wine! Jesus showed His love and concern to these newlyweds, saved them from embarrassment and made their wedding day happy and memorable.

God's greatest example of love was to send His Son, Jesus, to be the Savior of all. He took upon Himself all the times people are not loving and caring (i.e., their sins). Then He was harassed, beaten and put to death in our place. But Jesus is God; He came back to life again. Now through faith in what Jesus did, God makes us His loved, forgiven and happy people.

We know we continue to live in a sinful world, where there are problems and sadness. But Jesus is there with His love, care, forgiveness and the special promise of eternal love, care and happiness eternally in heaven.

As you celebrate Valentine's Day, don't forget Jesus, the best valentine.

Your child's teacher,

Rattles & Prattles

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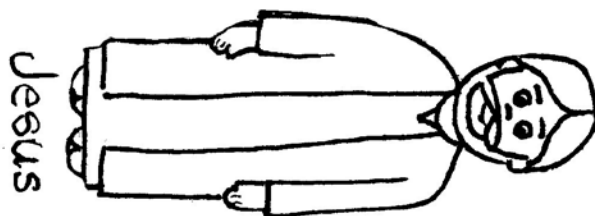
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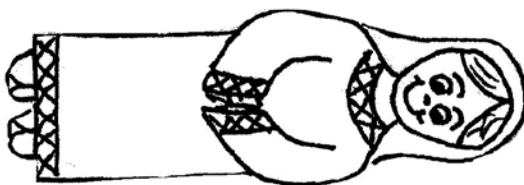
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Rattles & Prattles

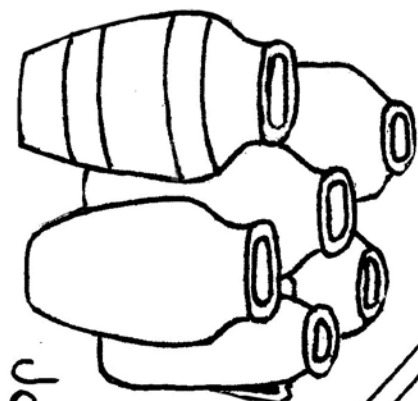
Use the patterns on this page and the next to prepare visuals to tell the Bible story and permeate God's story throughout the day.



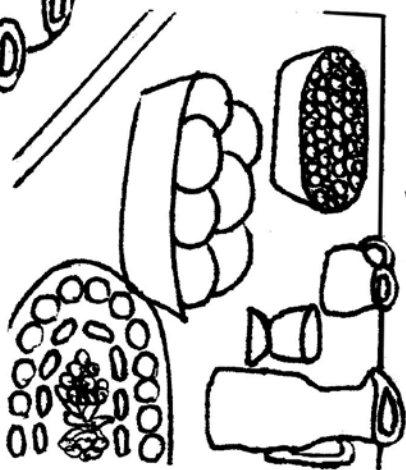
Jesus



Mary

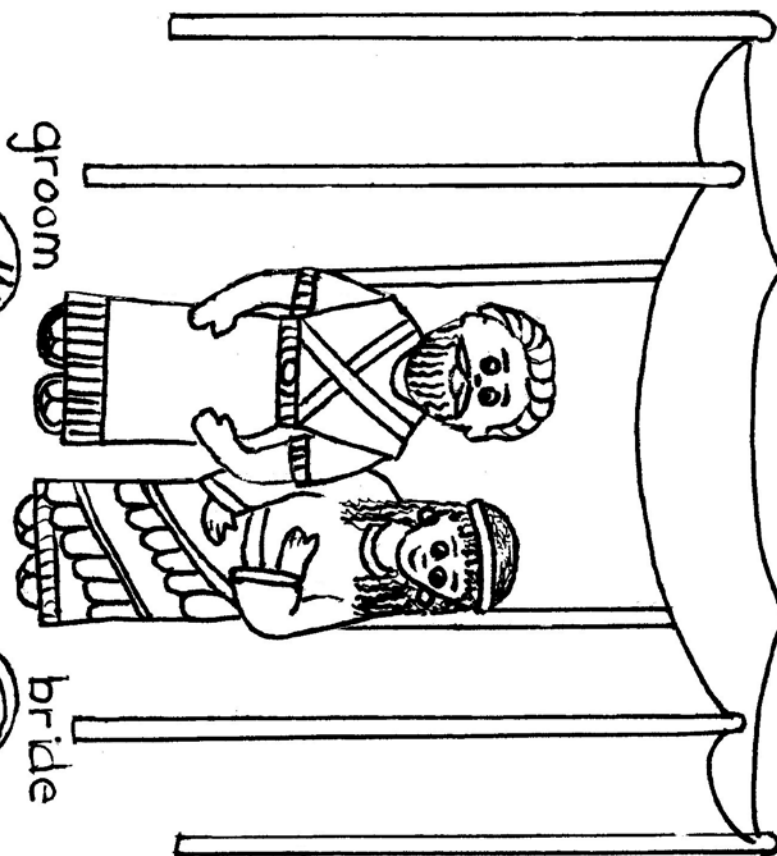


Jars

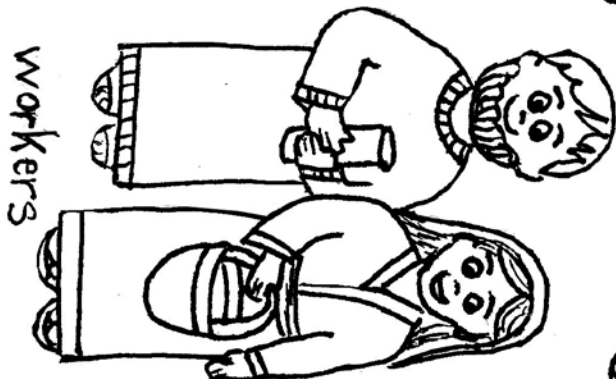


Wedding Feast

groom



bride



workers



caterer



School Shepherd



ROCK-SOLID SHEPHERDS LOVE

Christ-centered shepherds are ROCK solid. Lutheran school ministry is built on the foundation of Christ. School shepherds continue to build the school ministry on the one and only rock-solid foundation.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ... Love your neighbor as yourself” (MATT. 22:37, 39).

Shepherd, the Good Shepherd Loves You

There are tragic stories of children who, because of war or other oppression, are placed in orphanages immediately after birth. Some of those children have never experienced the loving touch of a parent or other compassionate caregiver. Some children never know how to love because they have never been loved.

In Christ, we have been cradled in the adoptive love of God. The apostle John shares the significance of God’s love: “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 JOHN 4:10–11). Jesus, the one who commanded love, is the one who loved us sacrificially.

School shepherds are not immune to criticisms and confrontations. While pastors should not seek the ministry calling to be “liked,” we all have the need to be loved. When our actions and inactions remind us that we may be unlovable, when others treat us as if we were unlovable, the Good News is that Jesus loves us.

Reflection: How and when has the love of Christ sustained you?

Love God!

In Matthew 22, Jesus repeats the command first given by Moses to the children of Israel (DEUT. 6:4). Confronted with the variety of gods of their heathen neighbors during the journey through the desert and into the Promised Land, God’s people were reminded that there is only one true God. Only the God of Israel would provide for every physical need and ultimately secure their eternal salvation. The response was to love Him with all their being.



The school shepherd loves his family, church, school, work and hobbies. But first of all and above all, he loves God. The message and model is that all who journey through the school year and school ministry with him dedicate themselves to loving God above all else.

Reflection: How is love for God demonstrated in the day-to-day life of the school?

Love Yourself

Jesus' words in Matt. 22:39 remind us to "love your neighbor as yourself." Love of self is not idolatrous or vain. We don't love the expressions of our sinful nature and deeds. We love ourselves as the reborn children of God. We love what God has done and continues to do in and through us. Love of self is more than a positive self-concept. It is a confidence in our calling and affirmation of God's working.

Love of self includes healthy boundaries, assuring physical, emotional and spiritual health. The school shepherd knows himself and is attentive to avoiding weaknesses and temptations that may undermine health and ministry.

Reflection: What do you love about yourself?

Love Others

Who are the "neighbors" in a Lutheran school ministry? The neighborhood is found in one's own family. One of the cautions of school shepherding is that the demands of school and church ministry detract from one's own family. One of the critical examinations for the school shepherd is to make sure that after love of God, family members —



PHOTO: LCMS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD

spouse, children, grandchildren — receive the love they need and deserve in intentional time together.

The "neighbors" are also found at faculty and board meetings. They are the parents and grandparents on the school parking lot before and after school. They are found as an assembled group in the church pews and one-on-one in the pastor's office. The neighbors are the church and school family.

One special group of neighbors is the school children. Effective and joyful school shepherds love children. Little children easily and quickly love their pastor. They are ready to greet him with their smiles and high-fives. It is important that children know that the Good Shepherd loves them and that His shepherd in that place loves them. Depending on the size and context of the school, he knows the sheep by name, family and gifts. Again, the context of the school and the gifts of the shepherd will vary, but occasional greetings at the doorway, interactions on the playground and attendance at school games and events are demonstrations of the shepherd's love and interest.

Reflection: What do you love about being a Lutheran school pastor? What do you love about the children in your school?

PRAYER

Love in Christ is strong and living,
Binding faithful hearts in one;
Love in Christ is true and giving,
May His will in us be done.

Love is patient and forbearing,
Clothed in Christ's humility,
Gentle, selfless, kind, and caring,
Reaching out in charity.

(*Lutheran Service Book* 706:1–2)

School Shepherd

February 2017

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Time Out for Directors



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS

WHAT'S YOUR CURRICULUM? An Interrelated Coherency

If I had a dollar for every time a parent asks me “What’s your curriculum?” I would probably be able to pay for dinner out every night for a year! I’ve come to believe that parents really don’t know what they’re asking. They know that it is a good question to ask, but they don’t know what makes a good answer. So, what is a good answer?

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) advocates five guidelines for effective teaching that answer this question. View an infographic of them at naeyc.org/files/naeyc/image/inforgraphic_DAP_5guidelines_0.pdf.

Curriculum, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is “all courses offered by a school.” “All courses” might be represented by the points of the star in NAEYC’s graphic. Each point represents a key aspect to teaching and learning in the early childhood classroom:

- A caring community of learners;
- Teaching that enhances development and learning;
- A goal-centered curriculum;
- Assessment of development and learning; and
- Reciprocal relationships with families.



NAEYC asserts that, like the points of the star, the key aspects of teaching cannot be left out without weakening the whole. The five key aspects of teaching are interrelated and dependent upon each other. Each point of the star represents a vital part of a young child’s early learning experience.

Let’s ask ourselves two important questions as they relate to NAEYC’s five guidelines. First, what does this look like in our classrooms? Five very important things are happening in the classroom environment at the same time:

- Children and teachers are learning together in a safe, positive, caring environment. Conversations lead to new discoveries for children *and* teachers.
- Teachers are knowledgeable about child development and apply that knowledge to all classroom experiences. Children move along their path of development in small, incremental steps due to the teacher’s sense of developmentally appropriate practice. There is a healthy balance of teacher-led and child-led activities.
- Curricular experiences are outcome-based. Foundational goals are identified, articulated and lead to enhanced learning and successful school experiences. Children are actively engaged in their learning (mentally, physically and emotionally).
- Assessment of children’s development and work is ongoing and authentic. Formative assessment offers a system of weekly, monthly and quarterly collections that are used to inform teaching or what happens next in curriculum planning. Assessment allows for variations in learning, allowing all learners to demonstrate their developmental ability at their developmentally appropriate time.
- Relationships between teachers and children *and* teachers and families are reciprocal. NAEYC states, “There is *mutual* respect, cooperation, shared responsibility, and negotiation of conflicts toward achievement of shared goals” (NAEYC, 2009). Parents and teachers are partners in the children’s educational journey.

Our second important question relates to our personal and professional growth as a teacher and/or director: Believing that all guidelines are imperative to a young child’s educational experience we must ask ourselves, how are *we* doing? Are we successful at implementing strategies that promote all five guidelines? The following survey is designed to help us rank our progress in implementing the five key areas that promote successful outcomes for children in our early childhood programs. Conversations amongst partner teachers or with mentor teachers will target areas to improve upon.

Where are you now?

A work in progress Going quite well!

Caring community of learners				
1	2	3	4	5
Enhanced opportunities for learning				
1	2	3	4	5
Comprehensive curriculum				
1	2	3	4	5
Intentional, aligned assessment				
1	2	3	4	5
Reciprocal relationships with families				
1	2	3	4	5

The following Web-based resources can assist teachers and directors in their assessment of the five key areas of successful teaching and learning:

- **Building a Caring Community of Learners**
Designs for Living and Learning, Second Edition (Redleaf Press, 2015). Authors Deb Curtis and Margie Carter ask teachers to put themselves in the shoes of the young children and parents who spend their days in your space. A list of statements allows teachers to assess the current state of their classroom space. (A sample appendix can be found at redleafpress.org/Designs-for-Living-and-Learning-Second-Edition-Transforming-Early-Childhood-Environments-P1132.aspx.)

- **Teaching and Learning**
“Developmental Milestones Checklist: Children Two Months through Age 5,” from the CDC website, revised Aug. 18, 2016 (in Spanish and English): cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/checklists/all_checklists.pdf.
- **Curriculum**
“The Butterfly Garden: Developmentally Appropriate Practice Defined” by Sandra Crosser, Ph.D.: earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_print.aspx?ArticleId=115.
- **Assessment**
“Assessing Young Children: What’s Old, What’s New, and Where Are We Headed?” by Susan Bowers, Ph.D.: earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_view.aspx?ArticleID=210.
- **Relationships with Families**
“Building Partnerships between Families and Early Childhood Staff”: kidsmatter.edu.au/sites/default/files/public/KMEC_C4_201205_03_building-partnerships.pdf.
- **Spiritual Nurture throughout the Five Key Aspects**
Right from the Start by Shirley Morgenthaler, Ph.D., Concordia Publishing House. In this edition, Morgenthaler shares information about brain development, worship and an extensive resource list.

In our Lutheran schools, relationships, assessments, curricular experiences, teaching and learning, and a caring community of learners all share one goal: to bring more and more children and their families into the Kingdom of God! We celebrate Jesus’ command to “let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven” (MATT. 19:14).

References:

- NAEYC’s “Five Guidelines for Effective Teaching”: naeyc.org/files/naeyc/image/inforgraphic_DAP_5guidelines_0.pdf.
- “Curriculum” defined: merriam-webster.com/dictionary/curriculum.
- “Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8”: naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSDAP.pdf.

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