



SEPTEMBER 2021

SCHOOL MINISTRY

Mailing



THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
MISSOURI SYNOD
School Ministry



SEPTEMBER 2021

SCHOOL MINISTRY MAILING

Contents

Alight

“In All Things Christ Is with Us!”

Dr. Rebecca Schmidt

Community and Enrollment

“Enrollment - More than Numbers”

Dr. Kristen Newell

Computer File

“Creating a Reason”

Mr. Corey Nelson

Early Childhood Devotions

“God Created All Things”

Dr. Judith Christian

Family Matters

“Having All Things in Order”

Dr. Steven Christopher

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

“Learning Opportunities: The New Learning Loss”

Dr. Kara Bratton

Parent Pages

“Hang Up Your Superhero Cape”

Dr. Kim Marxhausen

Professionally Speaking

“A Fresh Opportunity to Share Jesus in All Things”

Mr. Jim Scriven

Rattles & Prattles

“God Created ALL Things”

Mrs. Judy Williams

School Shepherd

“All Things Considered in Jesus: the Main Thing”

Rev. Robert Riggert

Time Out for Directors

“Yes! I’m All In!”

Dr. Drew Gerdes



Alight

FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS



In All Things Christ Is with Us!

Greetings from the National office! Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic during the past year and a half has been filled with new experiences and unexpected blessings. Working remotely, reassessing conferences, devising ways to share information, continuing to develop resources without the benefit of in-person contact and depending on technology to stay connected to those we serve brought challenges and innovation in our everyday lives. Throughout this time, the one constant we could count on, whenever we were gathered virtually, is that we were still able to praise and share Christ.

The summer of 2021 has been an encouraging one for School Ministry! Travel has opened and professional groups were able to meet in person. In June, after staying connected virtually for two years, the School Leadership Development (SLED) participants joyfully met together and a new SLED cohort was begun in person while being mindful of local pandemic guidelines. National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) met in person and, in the midst of an unexpected mask mandate, successfully awarded 128 schools accreditation status. We thank God in Christ Jesus for these blessings.

The theme for Lutheran schools this year is “In All Things” and is inspired by Colossians 1:17–20: “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he

is the head of the body, the church ... [He reconciles] to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” And while we are still feeling the effects of the pandemic, this verse comforts us with the knowledge that Jesus Christ gave His life for us and remains with us “In All Things.” We have much to be thankful for! Together we can live out our God-given vocations and serve our neighbors in the

sanctuary, classroom, STEM lab, choir room, playground, gym, athletic field, faculty lounge, office and every place where we are gathered in person or remotely.

We don’t know what path the pandemic will take this year. While we hope for in-person classes with full attendance, we prepare for multiple scenarios of in-person and/or remote learning. In praise and thanksgiving to God, we continue to adapt in order to continue to share the

Word of God daily with those we serve. We will continue to do our best, seeking to do all things well. We know that we will all face many challenges in the coming year. When we fall short, we are blessed to be able to seek the grace of God for forgiveness and then rededicate our efforts individually, in addition to our efforts as a school, district and Synod, to glorify God and serve His people.

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (ROM. 8:28).





Community & Enrollment



Enrollment – More than Numbers

This is the first of a nine-article series developed from the work of Dr. Kristen Newell in “How is parental sense of community at LCMS elementary schools different between schools of growing, stable, or declining enrollment?”



The request for enrollment began like many others: a phone call and arrangements for a visit. The whole family came to the tour: mom, dad, grandma and child. The child was a young boy, 4 years old, but observant and quick to adjust to his surroundings. He confidently stepped into the classrooms to take a peek and was excited to see the playground. As the tour wrapped up, the family moved into the conference room for a time of Q&A. The conference room was rather understated — just a table, six chairs and a picture or two on the walls. One picture was a portrait of Jesus.

The little boy looked intently upon the face of Jesus. “Do you know who that is?” asked the admissions counselor. “No,” answered the little boy.

That is the moment — the moment where it was clear: enrollment at LCMS schools matters, and enrollment is more than numbers. Each time a Lutheran school adds a new student, it is an opportunity for that child to hear

about the forgiveness and love of Jesus. This particular boy enrolled in prekindergarten. He heard about Jesus every day for one semester. Then he moved back to his country of birth, India, and was never heard from again. Only God knows the impact Lutheran education had on this child, but his teachers know the Word of God was spoken to him daily at school when he otherwise may not have heard it. God’s alive and active Word does powerful things, as promised, “It does not return to me empty” (ISAIAH 55:11).

Enrollment is more than numbers. The work of maintaining and growing enrollment at LCMS schools is significant for more than just keeping schools open. Enrollment is significant for more than ensuring schools are financially stable (albeit another important topic). Instead, stable and growing enrollment at LCMS schools is an integral piece to the mission of the LCMS “to make known the love of Christ.”¹ The LCMS supports educators and congregations “so that through

them children may be equipped as disciples of Jesus Christ.”² Declining enrollment limits the reach of Lutheran schools and churches. This article, and eight to follow, is written with the hope of providing theological and practical applications to impact enrollment growth so that the word of God can be shared with more students and families.

The information in these articles comes from my dissertation research study asking, “How is parental sense of community at LCMS elementary schools different between schools of growing, stable, or declining enrollment?”³ The articles will describe the connection found by the study between sense of community and enrollment at LCMS elementary schools. The articles will address: (1) motivation for the topic, (2) details from existing literature on school choice, sense of community, and brand loyalty, (3) the research methods and results of the dissertation, (4) practical applications schools can use to strengthen sense of community and thereby influence enrollment growth and (5) next steps. Practical applications will be covered over the span of multiple articles.

First, it is good to be reminded of the historical context of LCMS schools and the current culture of the United States. Schools have always been a part of the LCMS. According to Newman, “Educational systems became a specialty of the LCMS ... even before the formal creation of a synod, the Lutherans launched schools.”⁴ In the first 100 years after the formation of the Synod (in 1847), more than 1,000 elementary schools were established.⁴ School ministry remains an important mission of the LCMS in the present with enhancing “early childhood, elementary and secondary education” as one of the Synod’s seven mission priorities.¹

The peak thus far in number of elementary schools and K–8 enrollment came in the 2001–02 school year with 1,038 schools and 158,356 students.⁵ According to Synod statistical reports, the number of elementary schools in the 2019–20 school year was 827 with a total of 80,393 K–8 students (85% response rate from schools). The 2001–02 and 2019–20 data show a loss of 211 schools and a 49% decline in enrollment. Even with some schools reporting enrollment growth in the midst of the COVID pandemic, the numbers of enrollment loss and school closings in the past twenty years are staggering.

The decline in enrollment parallels another statistic: the decline in number of Baptisms resulting from students attending an LCMS school. Statistical reports record 2,731 students Baptized in the 2009–10 school year. Only 2,009 students were baptized in the 2019–20 school year, a 26% decline in Baptisms. Again, enrollment is more than numbers! Declining enrollment results in missed opportunities for the LCMS to share Jesus Christ and to disciple students in the Christian faith.

Finally, the rise in the percentage of the population who are unchurched and the post-Christian culture of the US make school ministry even more vital. Barna research indicated only 22% of millennials and 26% of Generation Xers are practicing Christians.⁶ However, after millennials marry and have children, they may be more inclined to become “a part of a faith community.”⁷ LCMS elementary schools could be the place where millennial families first find a faith community.

Enrollment matters, and enrollment decline trends need to be reversed so that more children can hear about Jesus Christ. The need for actionable steps to work toward enrollment growth is clear. Can sense of community help your school grow? Check back next month to learn more!

Footnotes

¹ The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (2020). “About Us.” Accessed August 28, 2021, lcms.org/about.

² The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (2020). “LCMS School Ministry.” Accessed August 28, 2021, lcms.org/school-ministry.

³ Kristen Newell, *How is parental sense of community at LCMS elementary schools different between schools of growing, stable, or declining enrollment?* (2021). (Publication No. 28492466). [Doctoral dissertation, Concordia University Wisconsin]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

⁴ Michael W. Newman, *Gospel DNA: Five markers of a flourishing church: Learning from a movement called “Missouri,”* revised ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ursa Publishing, 2018).

⁵ LCMS, personal communication, January 21, 2020.

⁶ Barna. (2019). “A snapshot of faith practice across age groups.” (2019), Accessed August 28, 2021, barna.com/research/faithview-on-faith-practice.

⁷ Jones, J. M. (2019). “U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades.” Gallup News. Accessed August 28, 2021, news.gallup.com/poll/248837/church-membership-down-sharply-past-two-decades.aspx.

Community & Enrollment

VOL. 1, NO. 1 // SEPTEMBER 2021

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Kristen Newell Designer: Frank Kohn

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Computer File



Creating a Reason

The last year was an unprecedented time in education ... and everywhere else! Hopefully, the year ahead will move many in Lutheran education back to a year of learning that will resemble familiarity and normalcy! Additionally, some teachers may benefit from an unexpected level of grants and funds in their schools. This could be an excellent opportunity to bring long-awaited updates to technology in our schools!

That leads to the question, “What do we do with all of this new technology?” Hopefully, the *Computer File*

newsletter this year will begin to answer this question! In short, you will see many ways to utilize technology in an effort to unleash the creativity in your students!

But why create? This is where we start with what God has demonstrated to us!

From the very beginning, He created! Then, in Genesis 1:28, He blessed Adam and Eve with creating: “God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.’”





In Isaiah 43, God states that we are His and created for His purpose: “everyone ... whom I created for my glory” (v. 7).

Furthermore, we are told what we should do in Ephesians 5: “Be imitators of God, as beloved children” (v. 1). In other words, watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents.

So, our Creator claims us as His created children, blesses us with the ability to create and then tells us to be creative!

So, as *God-created creators*, do we facilitate a creative community with our students? Not enough, as the research shows.

Teachers and students most often say they use technology for activities that do not utilize creative aspects. Such activities often include writing papers, tracking of assignments and taking online tests or quizzes.¹

These tasks limit the potential to fully engage students and develop deeper thinking. Activities that modify or redefine the learning process are much less common. These redefining activities could include multimedia projects or experiences outside the classroom.¹

In a Gallup survey, only ten percent of students indicate cross-curricular projects that allow students to use creativity.¹

As *God-created creators*, how do we facilitate a creative community with our students? That is precisely what the *Computer File* will encourage you to do this year, with make-it/take-it activities. Here are the

topics for the year:

September — Creating a Reason

October — Creating Community

November — Creating Stories

December — Creating Audio and Video

January — Creating 3D Designs and Objects

February — Creating Art

March — Creating Games and Code

April — Creating with Drones and Robots

May — Creating with Faith

I would like to re-emphasize the make-it/take-it concept for each of us as Lutheran school educators. Learning about the ins and outs, ups and downs and opportunities and obstacles of a technology application is best done by trying it yourself! The last official technology class I was in took place in my undergrad days in eastern Nebraska nearly 30 years ago. Since then, everything I’ve learned about creating with technology started because *I literally like to push buttons!* Also, when you use creativity tools in your classroom, you’ll discover more about using them because of all of the student creativity flowing! When the students run into obstacles and difficulties, all of you can grow through troubleshooting together!

As we go through each month, part of the focus will be on the SAMR model, which was developed to allow teachers to effectively integrate technology in classroom instruction. The following link gives a great rundown of the idea of SAMR: edutopia.org/article/powerful-model-understanding-good-tech-integration.

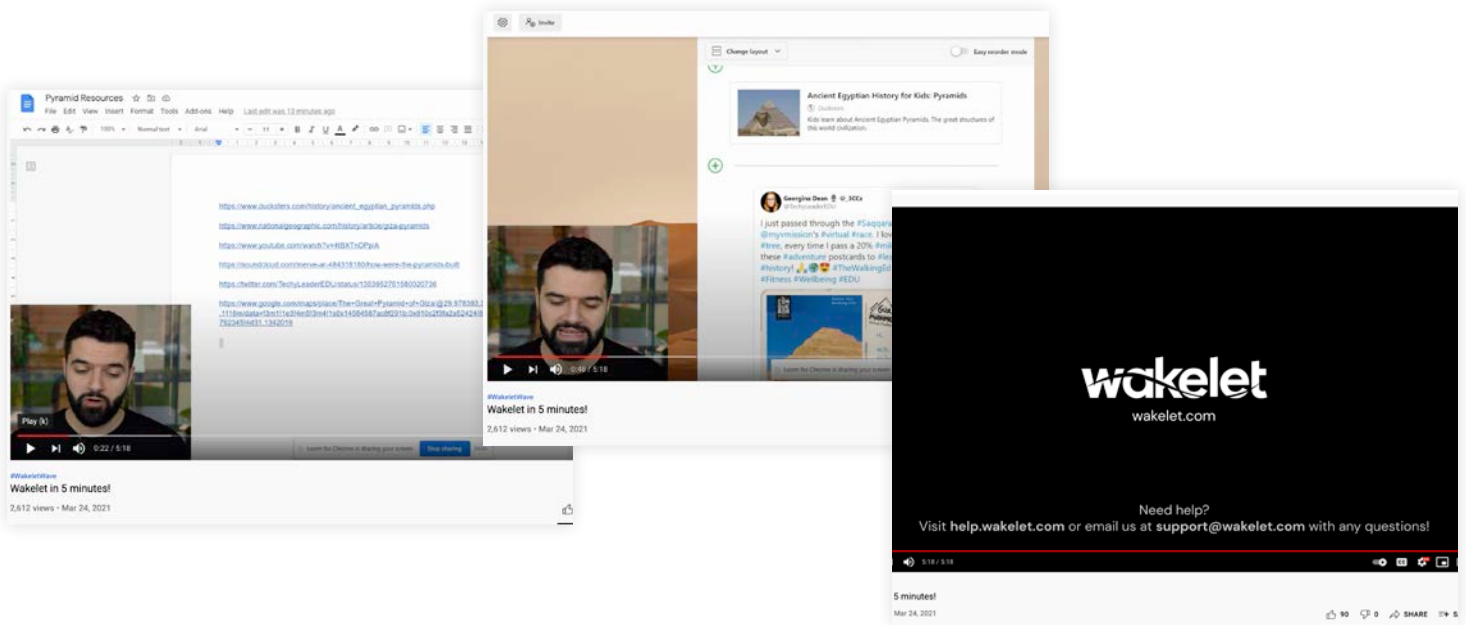
Here is a brief description of each component:

Substitution: This is a direct replacement of a traditional lesson with a digital version. There is no substantial change. One example is to create a digital worksheet rather than copy a paper one.

Augmentation: This is a direct replacement of a traditional lesson with interactive and functional enhancements. For example, the students could cover the same content, but may have access to multimedia assets and opportunities to post feedback.

Modification: At this level, the task at hand is reliant on technology, and full creativity is implemented. Generally, the task is defined by the technology being used. For example, students could create a video response to a topic.

¹ gallup.com/education/267449/creativity-learning-transformative-technology-gallup-report-2019.aspx



Redefinition: Redefinition happens when technology is utilized to create unique responses to a task. At this level, collaboration, publishing and communication are vital. Students would use a variety of technological approaches, and final products may be shared with the outside world.

(Don't feel that each lesson needs to be at the Redefinition level! Each aspect of the SAMR model has usefulness. The distinction is presented to allow you to reflect on where most of your lessons are based.)

Each month, I will include a **video overview/tutorial** of that month's topic. This month is included! Check out the video here: drive.google.com/file/d/1OlZzGgb4FWVlilM-HobzoPhA1bu5Zpe4/view. Also each month, in addition to several ideas, I'll throw in an **Edge Tech** idea. These are some of the newest approaches in educational technology, and may require an adventurous spirit! This month's **Edge Tech** is *wakelet.com*. Here is a short informational video about Wakelet: youtu.be/4ZyyZa4MFFk.

Finally, if you would like to explore educational technology on a more personal level with other Lutheran school educators, I encourage you to consider TEC21. I'm in my fourth year of being a TEC21 Facilitator. We have stations across the country, including online opportunities and even STEM workshops! Get more information here: tec21connect.com/.

TEC21

About Us Workshops Locations Registration Contact Us

Technology Enriched Classrooms.

17 LCMS Districts 27 Locations 971 Teachers 43,695 Students Impacted

Welcome to TEC21. We're the front door to the world of technology. We want to give Lutheran educators the key.

Through unique, inspiring workshops, TEC21 equips teachers serving in Lutheran schools to use technology to engage, motivate and educate children for life. We bring educators together to examine, question, evaluate and understand technology, and develop practical applications for the classroom. We sustain learning through a collaborative, online peer-coaching community.

Why?

We want Lutheran schools to be places of excellence where Christ's love and grace

Computer File

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Mr. Corey Nelson Designer: Erica Schwan

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Early Childhood Devotions

FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7



IN ALL THINGS **JOHN 1:3**

FOCUS: Promise for All (Col. 1:15–20)

God Created All Things

(Gen. 1:1–2:1)



Before You Teach

We begin ... at the beginning. The creation of Adam and Eve was the culmination of God's loving act of creation. It did not take long for God's human creatures to cause His perfect creation to go awry. But the Lord of creation went right back to work to redeem His fallen masterpiece. The Lord who made all things enacted a plan to bring all back to Him. He would do that through the second person of the Trinity, Jesus, who was already there, active in the very act of creation. This year, we gather around Bible stories that teach and remind us of God's continuing promise of love and forgiveness of sins for all people.

Greeting

Plan to greet each child upon entry. **Good morning, child of God. I am so happy you are here today!**

Research has shown the first five seconds after a child's

arrival are critical for establishing the child's positive outlook for the day.

Gathering

Gather children in your worship space. Demonstrate making the sign of the cross. Repeat with the children, saying **We begin our day together with Jesus.**

Tell the Story

Signal children to repeat bold-print phrases after you.

Long ago God made the heavens and the earth. The earth did not have shape and was surrounded by darkness. God said, "Let there be light," and, there was light. God called the light Day and the darkness Night. God saw that it was **GOOD!** God separated the water from land to make the earth, rivers, lakes and oceans. God saw that it was **GOOD!** Then God said, "Let there be plants and trees; lights in the sky — the sun, moon and stars to brighten the earth during the day and at night. God created creatures that swim in the sea and birds that fly in the sky. God saw all that was created, and it was **GOOD!** But, God was not done yet! God created land animals, things that run and things that crawl, things that creep and things that walk. And, God saw that everything was **GOOD!**

Then, God made a perfect man, Adam, and a perfect woman, Eve. People were created to love God, care for one another and all of God's creation. And God saw that everything was **VERY GOOD! GOD LOVED THEM!** We are God's people! **GOD LOVES YOU AND ME!**

Praying Together

Teach and sing verse 3 of “We Pray for Each Other” (LOSP, P. 15) to conclude prayer time.

PRAY: Thank You, God in heav’n above,
For the world You made with love.
Help us Your gifts to always share,
While telling others of Your care. Amen.

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

Pre-K & K: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (GEN. 1:1).

Grades 1 & 2: “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good (GEN. 1:31).

Activities

CREATE: Provide art materials with which children can make something God created, as named in the “Creation Chant” (See “Do”).

SING: “I Can Stamp” (LOSP, P. 21).

DO: Creation Chant *Children repeat each line after the leader.*

God made earth; God made heaven.
God made days that numbered seven.
God made land; God made the seas.
God made plants and God made trees.
God made day; God made the night.
Morning, evening looked just right.
God made sun, the moon, the stars,
planets Jupiter and Mars.
God made creatures tall and small;
those that fly, jump, run and crawl.
God made all the very, best;
it was time for God to rest!

CAMP SERVE: Invite an individual with demonstrated leadership skills and a passion for service, to be camp-serve leader. Service ideas will be provided here in the coming months. However, you are best able to identify your community’s needs, as well as broader service opportunities in which you can realistically engage. GO! SERVE!

Sending

Gather children in a “Sending Circle.” Review highlights of your day. Pray. As children exit, say to each, **God loves you**, (name of child), **all the time!**

Live the Story

Helen Kemp (a renowned children’s choral conductor) stated, “Body, mind, spirit, voice; it takes the whole person to sing and rejoice.” Her observation about these fundamentals of singing reminds us to provide opportunities for children to use their whole beings to respond to God’s love, using the creativity God has instilled in each of them — singing, dancing, swaying, twirling or dramatizing. Doing so addresses the importance of the whole person’s (the whole child’s) participation in creative expression of thanks, praise, service and obedience.



Early Childhood Devotions

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Judith Christian Designer: Lisa Moeller

NOTE: You will need the songbook: *Little Ones Sing Praise (LOSP)*, copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House (CPH), St. Louis, Mo.

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IMAGES: GETTY IMAGES

Family Matters

A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS



IN ALL THINGS

Having All Things in Order



We hope this school year will be a step closer to normal.

There is no doubt that the 2020–21 school year was out of sorts in so many ways. Some schools began instruction online and then moved rather quickly to on-campus teaching. Other schools had to wait to hold on-campus classes and then had to do so in a staggered manner, welcoming various grades back at different starting dates. Some students never made it back to campus at all and remained online the entire school year. For those who did return to on-campus instruction, they know all about the safety measures of mask requirements, washing of hands and maintaining social distance. It was anything but normal.

As much as students, teachers, parents and administration bemoan the routines of school life, let's admit that we missed them this past year. It is human nature for many

of us to want to set patterns for daily life, as it gives us a sense of predictability. The seasons of the year, sleep cycles and the schedule of national holidays and church festivals all create a sense of routine and offer us welcoming patterns for our daily lives. Many hope that this coming school year will usher in those friendly and known routines we haven't recently experienced. We'd now welcome them back like old friends.

It is also helpful to think also about finding order at home within our families as parents. Within our households, it is also a good thing as moms and dads to strive for routine and set healthy patterns that create order and well-being among family members. Hard work, planning and scheduling have a payoff in the gift of peace of mind and emotional stability.

Our spiritual life is different however. While there are benefits to serving others and growing through personal study and prayer, we can never get our faith-walk fully in order. We are always going to come up short due to our sinful condition. The truth is that we won't always do what we should do but will often end up doing what we shouldn't do, even in spiritual matters. It is only through the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross that our spiritual life gets in order. It is through the perfectly lived life of Jesus, who died an undeserved death on Calvary, that order is restored in our relationship with God.

While we hope this fall brings a return to order in the schooling of our children, and likewise in our homes, it is reassuring to know that Christ has made all things new in terms of our spiritual lives and gives us the assurance of eternal life.

FUN FAMILY ACTIVITY //

Gather the family together in a comfortable setting, with no electronic distractions, preferably around a table (or other hard surface) to enjoy the family activity outlined below.

ACTIVITY TITLE: STEPPING INTO A NEW SCHOOL YEAR

PURPOSE

To engage family members in an activity that challenges them to plan and celebrate the coming school year.

OPENER

Ask the following questions in your family setting to get a conversation going.

- What was hard about last school year?
- Was there anything good about the last school year?
- What are some things you are looking forward to this coming school year?

FUN FAMILY ACTIVITY: FOOTPRINT PLANS

- 1 In the place where the family members are gathered, please provide the following supplies:
 - Large piece of paper (at least 11 inch by 17 inch) for each family member
 - Multi-colored markers and pencils (crayons could also work)
- 2 Have each family members use a dark color to trace his or her right footprint with the shoe on in the center of the paper.

- 3 Have each family member then draw a cross in the center of the footprint, signifying that Christ guides and directs our steps in the school year ahead. Have family members draw the cross in various styles and enhance it with vibrant colors.
- 4 In a clockwise pattern, have each member of the family write something they hope to see happen this coming school year and circle it. They can highlight it in a special color or decorate as well. Family members unable to write down words can draw a picture of something they hope to see occur or have an older family member write the words for them.
- 5 As family members write down items on their paper, ask them to share with the family what they hope to do or see happen and to share why.
- 6 Family members can write down as many items as they would like to share.
- 7 When each person has completed the poster, have him or her draw a line with a dark-colored marker or crayon from the encircled item to the traced footprint. Then have that person draw an arrowhead point at the end of the line so that it connects with the outline of the footprint, signifying that it is our hope that what we do in the coming year will always point to Christ, who guides and directs our steps.
- 8 Place the completed “footprint plans” in a prominent place in the home, where family members and visitors will see them often and be reminded how the Lord would guide our ways in the coming year ahead and every day.

CLOSING PRAYER

At the close of the family session, have an adult or older sibling say the following echo prayer, phrase by phrase, with everyone repeating the words.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for watching over us this last school year. Please guide and direct us in the year ahead. Help us to grow in knowledge, and in faith, and in service to others. In the name of our Savior, Jesus. Amen.





Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



Learning Opportunities: The New Learning Loss

I'm speaking for myself here, but also assuming that many of you, like me, have a list of words from the last year and a half that you would be happy to never hear again. My list includes: *the new normal*, *quarantine*, *unprecedented*, *lockdown* and *uncertain*, among others. If you have a list, it may include a few of these as well. Recently, there has been an additional term that is making me cringe: learning loss. Don't get me wrong; just as the other words have their place in the current state of the world, learning loss is critical for everyone in education to understand and work to address as the new school year begins. However, it is my feeling that incorporating the term loss devalues all the extra hours and efforts that teachers, administrators and staff have put in over the past 18 months, and all of the trials and challenges students and their families have overcome. Everyone went above and beyond expectations to now be faced with a year or more of feeling that we have to catch students up because they lost so much. The intention behind this is noble, yet it doesn't acknowledge the resiliency of students and teachers. It can have the unintended consequence of making students feel that they need to be somehow fixed and having them lose all motivation for school and learning.

For these reasons, I propose using the term *learning opportunities* rather than *learning loss* this year. Yes, this year, even more than usual, students are coming to us with academic and social skills that are all over the map. I say that we embrace this as an opportunity to look even more into how God has fearfully and wonderfully designed each of these students and



emphasize the unique gifts of each along with supporting the challenges brought on from the last year and a half. Let's look beyond the loss and look for opportunities to develop the gifts and celebrate the successes of the students God has placed in our care.

I think of myself as an optimist overall, but I also don't overlook reality. Where I live in Indiana, statewide data was recently reported to quantify how students are currently performing compared to two years ago. In our state, there was an 8% drop in the number of students passing the state assessment in the area of English Language Arts and a 10% drop in the area of Math. The state used the term *moderate-significant academic impact* to describe the effect of COVID on ELA (likely will take about a year for students to "catch up") and *significant academic impact* for Math (likely will take more than one year for students to catch up). The reality is that many students are performing academically at levels below their achievement levels from two years ago, and I don't suggest that we



overlook or dismiss that for the sake of optimism. What I am suggesting is that we also look for the positive changes in students and explore their strengths, as well as look for opportunities to expand our effective structures and teaching practices.

Each month in the *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* series this year, a specific idea or strategy to provide our schools and students with learning opportunities to enhance growth academically, socially and spiritually will be presented. For now, there is one thing I challenge you to think about as the school year is beginning and you're thinking of reframing *learning loss* as *learning opportunities*. As you get to know your students this year, think about this: if you could provide each student with just ONE thing that would change his or her life for the better, what would that be? What is the ONE thing you could teach or instill that would change that child's life forever? My guess is that as you think through and whittle that list down, things like mastering multiplication facts are not going to make the cut. I would wager that topping many of your lists is that students know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. If you wanted to add some secondary items to that list that have a more academic focus, I would still bet that multiplication facts aren't on that list. I would guess that things like empowerment and self-efficacy, critical thinking, social skills and other broad ranging skills would be at the top of that list.



This school year will be another challenging year for administrators, teachers and students, as there will be pressure to catch students up. I encourage you to take a breath, pray and start by focusing on that one key learning opportunity you can identify as having the most impact on students' lives going forward. This is a year for learning opportunities, and we'll continue to look at more specific strategies in the upcoming months. In the meantime, please reach out to LSEM at lsem@luthsped.org or visit our website at luthsped.org and let us know how we can support your ministry this school year!

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Kara Bratton Designer: Erica Schwan

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Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



Hang Up Your Superhero Cape

In March of 2020, parents everywhere stood up, dusted themselves off, put on their superhero capes and faced the daunting reality of responsibilities brought on by COVID-19. Suddenly parents were working from home while caring for and teaching their children. All of the changes likely brought on anxiety, and that emotion became something new for parents to contend with. It seemed like everything was different and more complicated. The situation called for a hero, and parents everywhere stepped up to volunteer.

When we face challenges, we dig down deep into our reserves and push forward. This practice is a great way to deal with temporary anxiety because you are using your stress to make you sharp and to help you deal with what lies ahead. The downside is we cannot sustain this behavior for the long haul. The longer a situation progresses, the more challenging it is to find the resolve to endure.

When a crisis situation continues, the next stage means the situation is the new normal. At this point, our bodies and brains have found ways to cope, and we endure. The downside to this behavior is two-fold. First, as we adjust to the new workload, we lose opportunities to rest and renew. Second, we begin to fool ourselves into thinking we've got it all under control. We start to forget that God is the One making our endurance possible.

Psalm 23 is a good way for us to walk away from the super-parent cape and walk through God's Word. This Psalm is rich in comfort and encouragement to trust in Christ, our Shepherd. We begin with the first three verses:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (PSALM 23:1-3).

When we are in superhero mode, the ability to rest and restore is the first thing to go. We become hyper-vigilant regarding problems that we think we need to solve, and there always seems to be something that

needs our attention. This Psalm reminds us that Jesus, our Shepherd, is not a leader who demands. He is a leader who protects and provides. He is a leader who sacrificed His life for us. We recognize we can rest in the green pastures and drink from the still water as we dwell in that truth that while life demands, Jesus sustains.

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me (PSALM 23:4).

Throughout this past year and a half, it has often felt that we were in the shadow of death. Regardless of



“ Jesus accomplished our most essential need on the cross. He is truly our Shepherd in all things. Because of this, we can rest and find renewal in His mercy and grace. ”



whether COVID had a personal impact, the awareness of potential danger lurked around the corner. Each struggle we endure builds resilience for the next time of challenge. In both His guidance and discipline, our Shepherd urges us to abide by following Him.

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever (PSALM 23:5-6).

All this time, when we thought we were in charge, our Shepherd was preparing a table of strength, support and growth. We are sustained by His loving care and by His presence in the Sacrament. Our Shepherd's care for us is not limited to daily, earthly needs; He loves us in all things.

We can hang up our super-parent capes and follow Jesus into whatever the next valley has in store. The best way to survive a crisis is to follow Christ rather than take over the leadership role. We do the work

He sets before us and trust that the Shepherd has the problem in hand.

Now is the time to take a good look at your worship and Bible study practices. God teaches us through His Word and Sacrament. If the stress and busyness of the past months have interrupted the time you spend in the Word and fellowship, make a point to change that. You need the Shepherd. Your family needs the Shepherd. The next big thing needs the Shepherd.

“For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together (COLOSSIANS 1:16-17).

Our Shepherd, Jesus Christ, is not a mere superhero. He knows and provides what we need in every situation. Jesus accomplished our most essential need on the cross. He is truly our Shepherd in all things. Because of this, we can rest and find renewal in His mercy and grace.

Parent Pages

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Kim Marxhausen Designer: Frank Kohn

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Professionally Speaking



A Fresh Opportunity TO SHARE JESUS IN ALL THINGS



It's the beginning of another school year. As Lutheran educators in our schools, it is a time rife with opportunity. And pressure — there is only one chance to make a good first impression. Educators across the LCMS are trying to wow their students with engaging lessons and crafting vibrant learning opportunities. They are partnering with parents, being responsive to phone calls and emails, seeming cheerful at drop-off and pick-up and striving to create written communication with perfect spelling and grammar. Educational ministers like you are trying to validate the decision parents made to entrust their children to your Lutheran school.

All that we do to create and ensure excellence in Lutheran educational ministries is exceedingly important, but really serves only to allow us to succeed at our primary mission. We're not actually here to teach math

and reading or to nurture soft skills and social-emotional development. We're here in Lutheran Schools to share Jesus. School ministry is our vehicle to teach the faith as we introduce children and families to our loving God, the One who loved the world so much that He sent His one and only Son for us and for our salvation. We're here to make disciples. Exceptional schools attract more families and engage more students so that we can share Jesus.

There was a time when our Lutheran Schools were full of Lutherans. Looked around lately? The landscape has changed. You might still have a majority of students and families who are members of your church, but in many areas around our Synod, 30% or fewer are even Lutheran, let alone LCMS. Many schools have students from unchurched families or even children of other faiths. **What a rich opportunity!** The excellence of our academics, our service to families and our care for children are attracting families from across our communities. They come because of what they've heard, and it may have nothing to do with Jesus. But we know — it has EVERYTHING to do with Jesus, for in our schools Jesus is in all things. There is no separating a Lutheran school from the Christian faith. It's why we exist.

This is the opportunity you have. Whether families enrolled their students in your school because it is Lutheran, Christian or simply excellent and safe, you have the opportunity to bring Jesus to them in all things this year. He makes all the difference. Blessings on your ministry this year, demonstrating that difference!

Professionally Speaking // SEPTEMBER 2021

Writer: Mr. Jim Scriven Designer: Lisa Moeller

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY



Rattles & Prattles

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS



God Created ALL Things “CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL” (COL. 3:11).



Bible Story: God creates the world.

Scripture References: Gen. 1:1–2:1

What it teaches us: God created the whole world and everything in it. The meaning of the First Article reminds us “for all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him” (*Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation*, copyright © 1986, 1991 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.).

Prepare to teach

- › **Read** the story in several versions of the Bible, and, if possible, a study Bible.
- › **Think:** In Genesis, we read God created ALL things. In the meaning of the Apostles’ Creed, we recite, “I believe God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members” (*Small Catechism*, First Article). We use our senses to experience the wonderful world God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) created. We respond with thanks and praise.
- › **Prayer:** Dear God, fill us with a sense of awe and wonder as we read and think about the wonderful world You created. Please help us share that same feeling with the children, and inspire us to respond with thanks and praise. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

WORSHIP TIME AND BIBLE STORY PRESENTATION

You will need

- **Little Ones Sing Praise** (*LOSP*), copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House (CPH), St. Louis, Mo.
- **Picture of Jesus** (do an internet search for free pictures of Jesus).
- **Pictures:** find pictures of creation to share for the Bible story and follow-up activities; do an internet search for free graphics of creation.

Gather for Worship

Use tune from “Good-bye, Good-bye” (*LOSP*, P. 40).
**Hello, Hello, He-lo-o-o, Hello my friends to you.
Please come here and sit with me; we’ll learn of Jesus
too. He-lo-o!**

Invocation

Use melody from above. **Hel-lo, Hell-o, Hel-lo;
Hel-lo-o-o, dear God. Hello, dear God to You. We
know You are our Father, God’s Son & Spirit too.
He-lo-o!**

Bible Story

Introduction: Use the melody of “A Tisket, A Tasket.”
Sing: **A story, a story; it’s time to hear a story. It’s
from God’s Book; we know it’s true. God gives these
stories to me and you.**

Show a picture of God’s creation. **God loves ALL of us,
and God made a wonderful world for us to live in.**

Look around and you will see:
God’s wonderful world for you and me.

**Light and dark — tall mountains — deserts too.
Blue, blue sky, rivers-and-streams for you.**

**Wiggle your nose and you will smell —
green grass; flowers; and, leaves smell swell.**

**Move the fingers on your hands;
feel rough tree bark and soft, soft sand.**

**Use your tongue and taste a bite —
apples, grapes, bananas — taste JUST right.**

**God made the sun in the sky so bright —
moon and stars too at night.**

**Use your ears; listen! God’s creatures talking —
bow wow, mew mew, quack, quack, quacking.**

**God made the world, wonderful to see.
God made you and God made me.**

What the Story Teaches: God made a wonderful world for us. God, also, sent His Son, Jesus, to be our best Friend, Helper and Savior. We have a wonderful God. It makes us want to say, “Thank You, God! Thank You very much!”

Song to Sing: “Who Made the Sky So Bright and Blue” (*LOSP*, P. 74) Use pictures from the story for visuals.

Time to Pray

Pray a responsive prayer; show pictures used for the story presentation.

Thank You, God for (name several items). **Thank You, God.**

**Thank You for making a wonderful world for us.
Amen.**

Closing/Benediction

**That’s all for Jesus’ Time today. Before we go, let’s
sing good-bye.**

Sing: “Good-bye, Good-bye” (*LOSP*, P. 40). Optional:
Make the sign of the cross as pastors do at the end of the service.



IDEA STARTERS for integrating the Bible story and theme into STREAMS (curriculum)

S Science and Nutrition

- **Science:** God gives us senses. Encourage the children to point to their eyes, ears, mouth and nose. Set up a water table with plastic replicas of water creatures. Name them and count them. Ask, **What can you make the** (name of animal) **do?** (Swim, jump, wiggle, etc.).
- **Nutrition:** God gives us tongues to taste all the wonderful things He made to eat. Serve small pieces of fruit or cooked vegetables.
- **Physical Education:** God gives us our bodies. Use the song “God Made Me, Every Part You See” (*LOSP*, P. 76). Point to body parts. Invite toddlers to use their feet/toes in a variety of ways (e.g., walk, stomp, jump, run, tiptoe).

T Technology

- **Do an internet search** for free pictures of nature; print, laminate and show while telling the Bible Story at Jesus’ Time and singing the song for the day.

R Reading and Language Arts

- **Books:** share board books showing body parts [e.g., books by Theo LeSeig; a book to feel, *The Very Busy Spider* by Eric Carle (World of Eric Carle, 1995)], animals, fruits or vegetables.
- **Rhyme/Poem:** use finger plays: Eency, Weency Spider, Hickory Dickory Dock

E Engineering

- **In Genesis One**, we read how God took the dust of the earth and formed Adam. Set out clay to squish, roll and create (but, not to throw or eat).

CONNECT WITH PARENTS in your newsletter

Encourage parents to read/tell the Bible story.

Suggest they take time to hug child often, telling him/her how special and unique she/he is to them and to God, his/her Creator.

A Arts (art, music)

- **Art:** Use water in an art activity (e.g., finger paint, water colors).
- **Music:** Sing “Jesus Loves the Little Children” (*LOSP*, P. 94). Change the first verse to “Jesus made”

M Mathematics

- **Count how many** body parts we have (e.g., eyes, ears, nose, tongue, fingers).
- **Use a Rhyme:** 1, 2, 3; 1, 2, 3: Jesus loves you; Jesus loves me. 1, 2, 3; 1, 2, 3: Jesus made you; Jesus made me.

S Social Studies

- Each of us is God’s unique creation. Sing/chant (tune: “Are You Sleeping”) **You are special** (repeat). **God made you** (repeat). **Gave you-eyes-ears-and nose** (repeat), **tongues and toes** (repeat).





School Shepherd

TIPS AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONS WITH SCHOOLS



THEME | JESUS in All Things

All Things Considered in Jesus: the Main Thing

“And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (COL. 1:17).

If the school shepherd only focuses on the temporal *things* of a Lutheran school ministry, the task is often challenging, overwhelming, exhausting and fruitless. The school shepherd is often tempted to be all things to all people. There are children to greet, families to encourage, staff to support, leaders to guide, funds to raise and a variety of other roles and responsibilities.

This school year, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod invites Lutheran schools to jointly focus on the theme, “In All Things.” The theme also invites the youth of the church to gather together in the National Youth Gathering in July 2022. The theme based on Colossians 1:15–20 celebrates Paul’s inspired invitation to put Christ “before all things” and to recognize “all things hold together” in Him.

The text emphasizes that Christ is Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all things. Paul refers to Christ (He/Him) thirteen times in six verses. The “all” of Christ and His work is mentioned seven times. After witnessing the risen Christ on the road to Damascus (ACTS 9), Paul repents, and answers the call to be Christ’s witness to all people. Christ is ALL things for Paul and for us!

It is the privilege of the Lutheran school shepherd to bring Christ in all things in church and school ministry. A variety of activities take place in Lutheran schools. Preschools and early childhood centers engage in play-times and introductory songs and stories. Elementary



schools have classroom routines and a variety of experiences from athletics to the arts. Lutheran high schools take students more deeply into curriculum areas and more intensely into extracurricular activities. Whatever the setting or activity, Christ is in all things. The theme takes the message of Colossians beyond the Chapel time or Sunday worship to every aspect and activity of

Lutheran school ministry. Like Paul, we desire that “in everything he might be preeminent” (v. 18).

The school shepherd brings the new life through Christ through the waters of Holy Baptism. The school shepherd preaches and teaches the Gospel from the pulpit, in the small group staff devotions and in the individual dialogues with child and parent. The school shepherd brings the body and blood of Christ to the teachers, parents and ministry leaders and partners gathered at the sanctuary altar. The Means of Grace share the “all” of Christ’s power and presence.

The school shepherd shares the “all” of God’s Word. He shares the Law when Christ becomes secondary in the Lutheran school ministry. He brings the Gospel to the repentant confessions and shares the Good News of forgiveness.

Lutheran school ministry goes beyond the church and school setting. The Christ of the classroom and chapel service is brought to families and households. The Spirit works through the school contacts to bring Christ to parents and grandparents.

Lutheran school ministry takes place in a variety of earthly contexts. However, the message of Christ has eternal implications. That every child, parent, staff member, volunteer, donor and observer know the Savior who reconciled “to himself all things ... making peace by the blood of the cross” (v. 20) is more significant than any classroom, team or other school gathering. Only through faith will all things be in and with Christ eternally.

CONNECTIONS AND CONVERSATIONS IN ALL THINGS (with staff, board and ministry partners)

- “In All Things” encourages the school shepherd in his personal Bible study. The Concordia Commentary series includes a work on Colossians by Paul E. Deterding (2003).
- “In All Things” invites the school staff in a devotional Bible study of the Book of Colossians. CPH’s *The Mighty and Mysterious: A Study of Colossians* (2019) by Heidi Goehmann is an excellent study book and video series.

prayer

ALL THINGS IN JESUS’ NAME

Lord Jesus, You are “before all things, and in [You] all things hold together” (v. 17). We confess that in ourselves we are nothing and can do nothing. You have chosen to call us to be Your children. You have chosen us for the privilege of serving in Lutheran schools. We dedicate ourselves and all that we do to You, seeking Your blessing and bringing You glory. We pray that You might indeed be “In All Things” this school year, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

- School administrators and boards regularly evaluate, “Is Christ in all things in our school ministry?”
- The school year offers an opportunity to teach children the significance of the church year. Celebrate Christ in the Pentecost, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent and Easter seasons. What is the unique message about the work of Christ in each season?

HYMN

“Christ, the life of all the living,
Christ, the death of death our foe,
Who, Thyself for me once giving
To the darkest depths of woe:
Through Thy sufferings, death, and merit
I eternal life inherit.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.” (LSB 420:1)



Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



Yes! I'm All In!



Dedication. Passion. Servant-mindedness.

Strong participation. Team player. What do these words all have in common? Hopefully these are the words others might use to describe you and the work you do in Lutheran education. Or, perhaps these traits are ones that you strive to embody as you set goals for the start of a new school year. These traits certainly hold value for those serving in ministry; if you are not whole-heartedly “in” and dedicated to your work, it might be difficult to focus and pay close attention to what is ahead of you — the faith-filled, holistic education of young children.

Picture a high school basketball game where all the team members huddle for the coach’s pep-talk and then join hands as a gesture to show they are “all in,”

often shouting “Go Team!” Or, think about a wedding ceremony where the bride and groom hold hands to show they are “all in” and fully dedicated to a lifelong marriage. Or, ponder for a moment whatever else may come to your mind as you reflect on what it means to be wholly dedicated toward something — to be “all in.”

As you begin a new school year, you are likely hoping for a year that looks more familiar than what last year did. You may be hoping for few regulations related to the pandemic and for children to engage in learning and peer relationships in a meaningful and less restricted way. Perhaps you want to put the computer away and not think about distance learning for a while. No matter what you envision for the new school year, make sure you are “all in” with your preparations. As

you prepare the classroom environment, make plans to visit with students and families or cut out laminated name tags, do your work knowing that it is for Jesus!

Have you ever known a colleague who talks to herself? Do you talk to yourself? Because early childhood educators are always singing and talking to students, it is not odd for you to vocalize your thoughts out loud; it's actually fairly common. Take advantage of this unique characteristic and share words of prayer as you go about your classroom preparations. Being "all in" means asking God to bless your classroom, your students and the interactions you all will have with one another. A day shouldn't go by without speaking to God in prayer.

Know that God is "all in" with you too. He will never leave you or forsake you. He is with you 24/7 and will support you when needed most. God will also celebrate with you when you are blessed; the blessings come from Him!

Because God is "all in" for you, you can remember the words from Colossians 1:16, where Paul wrote that "all things were created through him and for him"; this means that, because of God's mighty power, all things are created for a great purpose — to serve Him. Go about your start-of-the-school-year preparations knowing that God has great things planned for you and your students. Keep your eyes focused on Him each day, and teach your students the importance of being "all in" for Jesus too!

"In All Things" is the theme for Lutheran schools this academic year. Take a moment to ponder the following — perhaps, use these words as a prayer:

In all things — may my work be dedicated to Christ Jesus.

In all things — may the work I do with God's children be a blessing to their growth and development.

In all things — may my colleagues see my words and actions as a reflection of Christ's love, grace, mercy and forgiveness.

As a Christian, it's all really quite simple: because of Christ's love for us "in all things," He is "all in" for us. Christ died and rose again for you, colleagues, students and families and your community. Live out your vocation in an amazing way this school year in all you do. John 3:16 states it beautifully, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

This school year, stay close to those who have a like-minded attitude about being "all in" and contributing to your school ministry; and, for those colleagues who need a little help in understanding this important concept, keep them in prayer and give them assistance to grow so they, too, can be "all in" each and every day.

May God richly bless you and your new school year!



Time Out for Directors

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Writer: Dr. Drew Gerdes Designer: Lisa Moeller

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