

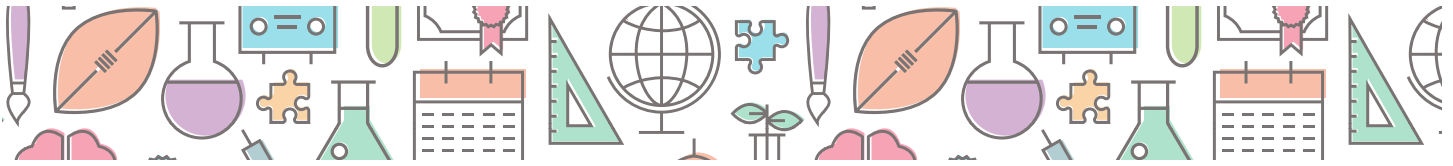


NOVEMBER 2021



SCHOOL MINISTRY

Mailing



NOVEMBER 2021

SCHOOL MINISTRY MAILING

Contents

Alight

“The School Shepherd – A Champion of Schools”
Dr. Rebecca Schmidt

Community and Enrollment

“The Research Study”
Dr. Kristen Newell

Computer File

“Creating Stories”
Mr. Corey Nelson

Early Childhood Devotions

“The Call of Abram”
Dr. Judith Christian

Family Matters

“In All Things Be Thankful”
Dr. Steven Christopher

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

“Accelerating Learning for Student Success”
Dr. Kara Bratton

Parent Pages

“How Do Children Learn the Faith”
Dr. Kim Marxhausen

Professionally Speaking

“Being Thankful, In All Things”
Mr. Jim Scriven

Rattles & Prattles

“God Chooses Abraham and His Descendants”
Mrs. Judy Williams

School Shepherd

“All Things Thankfully Considered”
Rev. Robert Riggert

Time Out for Directors

“The Joys of Creativity”
Dr. Drew Gerdes



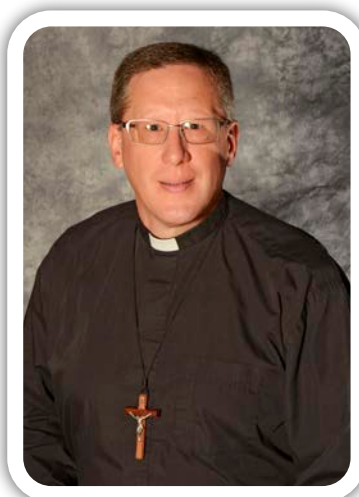
Alight

FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS



The School Shepherd – **A CHAMPION OF SCHOOLS**

Mission outreach is essential to Lutheran schools. Lutheran early childhood centers and elementary/high schools are an integral part of a congregation’s ministry to children and families. Every day tens of thousands of children, many without a church home, enter the doors of Lutheran schools across the country and around the world. A School Shepherd understands that the purpose and shared vision for a church and school serving in a community is the foundation for sharing the Gospel message of hope.



Rev. Eric Carlson
NLSA 2021
School Shepherd

This relationship between the church and school is explored and validated through the National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) process. In March 2021, St. John’s Lutheran School in Hannibal, Mo., hosted an NLSA Validation Team in pursuit of accreditation for its kindergarten-through- eighth grade school. Meet the Rev. Eric Carlson, sole pastor of St. John’s Lutheran Church and School, who is the NLSA 2021 School Shepherd. Nominated by St. John’s NLSA Validation Team, affirmed by the English District and selected from a group of nominees by the NLSA School Shepherd Selection Committee, Pastor Carlson exemplifies what it means to be a School Shepherd.

When asked about St. John’s school, preschool and

child care, Pastor Carlson affirms the relationship he has with the families he serves in the St. John’s community. “I love serving at St. John’s Lutheran School because of the endless opportunities to share the love of God in Christ Jesus. God has brought the children to the waters of Holy Baptism. Parents have become reengaged with the faith as their children share Bible verses and stories at home. Our church members have had their faith strengthened as the children come to sing during worship. It is a joy to partner with the teachers and staff as we spread the Gospel and see faith sprout and grow.”

Former LCMS English District Executive Director of Schools Gail Holzer shares, “His (Pastor Carlson’s) passion for teaching children the Christian faith is evident. ... Realizing the need for the teachers ... to have a clear understanding of Lutheran doctrines and teaching, he initiated classes ... and leads and teaches in a manner that is open and welcoming, encouraging the faculty and staff every step of the way.”

Principal JoAnne Conoyer affirms, “As a non-Lutheran, I met weekly with Pastor Carlson for catechism classes. His leadership throughout the course helped me better understand the beliefs and teachings of the Lutheran Church, which helped me teach the Lutheran faith to my students.”



The Rev. Aaron Witt talks with a student at Christ Lutheran Church and School, Columbus, Neb., in 2018.

A community parent observes, “We are confident in Pastor Carlson’s faith, commitment to Lutheran education and his leadership. He is one of the main reasons our children attend St. John’s.”

A member of St. John’s shares, “For the children, he is immovable in faith. His office is in the school where he readily ministers to students and faculty. Weekly chapel services were made accessible to all students and families during distance learning ... His leadership was a beacon of hope to the faculty and the outside community ... We are thankful that the Lord placed him in our church, in our community and in our children’s lives.”

We give thanks for Pastor Carlson and his ministry at St. John’s Lutheran Church and School! The NLSA School Shepherd Award was created in 2015 to recognize and uphold faithful school shepherds who lead churches and schools with a shared vision for spreading the Gospel message of salvation through faith in Christ with the hope and promise of eternal life for everyone.

NLSA School Shepherd Honorees

- 2021 Rev. Eric Carlson
- 2020 Rev. Jonathan Dinger
- 2019 Rev. Joseph Cunningham
- 2018 Rev. Phillip Baerwolf
- 2017 Rev. Peter Schmidt
- 2016 Rev. Kevin Jud



The Rev. Daniel Czaplewski, pastor of Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, greets a student after class outside the church and school in 2014.



Community & Enrollment



This is the **third** 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 Research Study

The past two articles in this series have discussed *Enrollment — More than Numbers* and *Why Sense of Community* was chosen as a variable to consider when trying to increase enrollment. The next four articles will suggest practical applications schools can consider enacting to strengthen community and thereby increase enrollment. Before diving into the practical, we will reflect on the theoretical. This article will outline the methods and results from the research study asking, “How is parental sense of community at LCMS elementary schools different between schools of growing, stable, or declining enrollment?”¹

The research question was addressed using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A two-part survey was the primary data collection instrument. Participants in this quantitative survey were parents of students at selected LCMS elementary schools (kindergarten through eighth grade) identified as having growing, stable or declining enrollment. Interviews of the principals at these schools were also conducted as secondary data to support and enhance the results from the survey.

First, the school groups (growing, stable or declining enrollment) had to be defined and schools identified in each category. Growing schools were defined as any LCMS elementary school that had increased by at least a plus one in enrollment each year for seven years, 2012–2018. Schools in this category were identified with the aid of statistical data reported to the national office of the LCMS. Eight schools were found to meet this definition. Schools declining and stable in enrollment were both self-identified and found through personal contacts and Facebook groups. Declining schools were



defined as having lost enrollment, at least a minus one, each year for five years, 2014–2018. Stable schools were defined as having no trend of either growth or decline for more than three consecutive years in a five-year span, 2014–2018. Three schools in each category agreed to participate in the study.

Each school provided the researcher with email addresses for all parents of students in kindergarten through eighth

grade. Surveys were sent directly to parents' emails using Qualtrics. The first portion of the survey consisted of the pre-existing *Sense of Community Index 2* (SCI-2) developed by Chavis, Lee and Acosta.² This Likert-scale survey has 24 items grouped into four sections. The sections are in line with the four areas described by McMillan and Chavis in their definition of sense of community: 1) reinforcement of needs, 2) membership, 3) influence and 4) shared emotional connection.³ The second portion of the survey was created by the researcher. It asked 18 questions to gather demographics of the participants in the study including: age, gender, education level, faith connection/identification, family income level, if they worked at the school, number of children enrolled at the school, number of years as a parent at the school and whether they have friends with children enrolled at the same school.

Participants had three weeks to respond to the survey. Then the results were analyzed using an ANOVA to determine if there was a difference in the average *sense of community* scores between the schools in different groups (growing, stable and declining enrollment). Statistical analysis was also utilized to see if different demographic groups had differences in *sense of community*. Statistically significant results were found.

The *sense of community* among parents at LCMS elementary schools with declining enrollment was statistically lower than the *sense of community* of parents at schools with stable or growing enrollment.

Statistically significant differences in *sense of community* were found between demographic groups as well. The demographic groups with statistically significant differences were: gender of the respondent, number of children the respondent had at school, if the respondent has friends at the school and if the respondent works at the school. Fortunately, none of these prohibit a school from impacting *sense of community* overall.

After statistical analysis was complete, the researcher interviewed the principals. Five questions were asked concerning current enrollment at the school, the percentage of students who are members at the associated congregation(s), the yearly retention of students and the number of new students enrolled each year. Four questions were asked relating to: 1) the principal's perceptions of the school community, 2) intentional community building practices of the school, 3) building staff community and 4) effects of COVID-19 on school community.

Eight of the nine principals reported a strong, positive community at their schools. Since the quantitative data showed a clear difference in *sense of community* felt by parents, the perception of principals showed the importance of objectively measuring *sense of community*. All nine of the schools organized events to help build community among parents, but not all principals worked intentionally to build community among staff. These activities and differences among the schools will be discussed in following articles. Finally, COVID-19 was seen as having both positive and negative effects on school community. This will also be discussed in future articles.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from the data: 1) *sense of community* can affect enrollment and 2) schools can intentionally work to increase *sense of community*. What can your school do to increase *sense of community*? Are these things doable and within the constraints of your school (budget, staffing, etc.)? The next four articles will help to answer these questions.

Footnotes

¹ Kristen Newell, "How is parental sense of community at LCMS elementary schools different between schools of growing, stable, or declining enrollment?" (Ed.D. diss., Concordia University Wisconsin, 2021). ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 28492466.

² David M. Chavis, Kiern S. Lee and J.D. Acosta, "The sense of community (SCI) revised: The reliability and validity of the SCI-2" (paper presented at the 2nd International Community Psychology conference, Lisboa, Portugal, June 4-6, 2008), accessed August 28, 2021, thelc.ms/sci-scoring.

³ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, "Sense of community: A definition and theory," *Journal of Community Psychology* 14, no. 1 (January 1986): 6-23.



Community & Enrollment

VOL. 1, NO. 3 // NOVEMBER 2021

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Kristen Newell Designer: Frank Kohn

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line "Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry."

Published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod // 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295 // 314-965-9000 // lcms.org

© 2021 LCMS

PHOTO: LCMS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD



Computer File



Creating Stories



“**S**tudents who search their memories for details about an event as they are telling it orally will later find those details easier to capture in writing. Writing theorists value the rehearsal, or prewriting, stage of composing. Sitting in a circle and swapping personal or fictional tales is one of the best ways to help writers rehearse.” (A Position Statement from the Committee on Storytelling, 1992)

When I taught early elementary, I loved to have my students write stories! I loved to see all of the creativity they put into the stories, and how every time we wrote, my students took the project in directions that I never expected! I also liked to utilize project-based or art-related writing projects. For many students the inclusion of creative outlets other than just writing led directly to longer and higher-quality writing! For these students, a physical aspect of the writing project often helped direct their creativity!

My decade of early elementary teaching ended right at the beginning of the technology integration available now, so I wasn't able to fully explore the additional opportunities for having my students fully utilize their creativity through the addition of technology. But, let me tell you ... there are many awesome digital storytelling applications out there!

This month, we'll take a look at having your students create stories with technology. Now, I'm still a firm believer in having students (especially in the younger grades) use

the physical act of writing on paper. I tend to see the digital storytelling application as the “publishing” step of the writing process. As students get older and more proficient on a keyboard, even the brainstorming and scaffolding could be completed with technology.

Storyboard That (storyboardthat.com) is an easy drag-and-drop creation platform. The site offers a free version and a premium subscription version with extensive abilities. The Storyboard Creator allows people of all skill levels to create amazing visuals for teaching, learning and communicating. Teachers can create materials and lessons for their classes, and students can take ownership of their voice and learning. ([youtube.com/watch?v=p_KAOJix7Tc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_KAOJix7Tc))

PowToon (powtoon.com) is similar to Storyboard That. See this video for more: youtu.be/1EQiZQi-aGY.

My View: The interface is easy to use for beginners. There are hundreds of built-in options for background and props. The students would be able to easily create scenes for any writing. There are many options for downloading the finished product.

Concerns: There are definite limitations to the free version. Downloaded projects will have a very prominent watermark, and each storyboard is limited to six cells. Additionally, a student can only create two storyboards a week. The paid version has amazing options, but it will cost about \$6 per month.

Story Jumper (storyjumper.com) has many similarities to Storyboard That. The benefit here is that it is free to use for schools! The interface may be even more user-friendly for younger students than other options.

My View: I like this even better than Storyboard That, due to the free aspect. The ability to add a student's voice directly to each page is awesome! It also connects with Google Classroom. I highly recommend this one!

Concerns: The downside is getting anyone to see the books your students have created. Everything is free to use, but it costs to publish anything. There are multiple options for publishing, but you can't even download a PDF without paying for it. Here's more information: youtu.be/ibUPqVsH_Xs.

Google Slides (docs.google.com/presentation) is an app that allows you to easily collaborate and share presentations with text, photos, audio or video files. These presentations can feature student-created text, art, video and even audio.

My View: This should be one of the first platforms for digital storytelling with students. It works great, has collaboration and has many features built in to make work more efficient for students. It allows students to tell stories in so many formats that barriers to telling and sharing are almost entirely removed! Students creating a book could end up with a video that even turns a page!

Concerns: The only concern is with trying to get your slides shared as a video. It will require the use of a separate add-on (workspace.google.com/marketplace/app/creator_studio/509621243108) or application (screen-castify.com).

Screencastify (screencastify.com) is a digital video recording of your computer screen and usually includes audio narration. Students can create free videos of whatever they can get to be displayed on their screen. This video will get you started using Screencastify: youtu.be/lHr9r-F-k1s.

My View: Screencasts are great for creating a video of whatever is shown on the screen! This is one way to change a Google Slides presentation into a video. The best part is creating the digital story in Google Slides, and then presenting the slides and narrating as the presentation is shown. Additionally, screencasting lets the students bring in many different forms of media, including pictures taken or videos recorded. Screencastify will even allow students to write or draw on the screen while recording. Screencastify is one of

many ways students could record themselves reading their own story.

Concerns: There is a learning curve for students at first. They will need time to try out the features to get it to work the way they want. All of the features are great, but require some initial teacher set up.

Paper Slide Videos are a powerful yet simple, low-tech way to create digital stories. Just like the name implies, it involves sliding papers or whiteboards to create a video. Students create the pages of their story on the paper/whiteboards and then slide them across a surface while someone records with any device that records video. Here is a great explanatory video: youtu.be/kPe8XSk_cRY.

My View: Paper slide videos are the place to start if you have little experience with digital storytelling or a limited amount of technology to use. If all you have is your phone, you're all set! This is a great change-of-pace activity for students doing digital storytelling so they aren't just doing everything on tech. Students who would rather have some handmade aspect to their stories will love this! Paper slide videos are also great for collaboration.

Concerns: No concerns here! I would, however, encourage teachers to use this to change things up or as a stepping stone to more digital creation.

Book Creator (bookcreator.com) is a digital book-making tool with limitless options, suitable for students of all grade levels. It's available for both tablets and browsers. Students of all abilities can create books with drawings, text, video, audio and files from other apps! This video gives a good overview of the free account: youtu.be/HJvkeh7DK6c.

My View: This is the tool I used with students as young as Pre-K. They were able to draw a picture and record themselves telling the story of their creation! There are so many options with Book Creator that the students can include as many things as they like! I love the option of creating art right in the application. The finished product can be exported as an actual e-book, which can be shared with families! This is certainly one to try!

Concerns: The free version is very good, but the limitation comes if you have a large number of students, or would like to combine what your students create into a class book. The paid version is currently at \$10 per month, which allows real-time collaboration and setting up a way to combine books. I feel this one is worth it at this price!

5 Card Flickr (5card.cogdogblog.com) is best described as a story emerging from given images! You are dealt five random photos for each of five draws, and your task is to select one each time. These images are grouped together to tell a story in pictures. When you are done, you have the option to add a title and explanation, then you can save the story so you can share a link or get an embed code to add it to your own website.

My View: This site is a great place to start a digital storytelling project, especially for those students who can't think of what to write!

Concerns: The downside is that this really is just the place to get some random ideas. To really flesh it out and give the students a place to add their own words and voices, you'll need to use something like Google Slides.

Toontastic 3D (toontastic.withgoogle.com) is a playful storytelling app that scaffolds the creative writing process and empowers kids to create their own animated cartoons. It was not specifically designed for schools, but teachers over the years have loved how the app sparks their students' imaginations and uses the Story Arc to help frame their writing. This tutorial shows the main functions: youtu.be/GSoHH3oF13c.

My View: This is probably the best looking and most impressive of the bunch! The finished product as a 3-D video is hard to beat! The options and cinematic quality is very appealing to students!

Concerns: The students will need to have a story written ahead of time. There isn't anywhere to put text into the app, so there would probably need to be some experimentation and writing happening concurrently before a final product is ready to record.

WriteReader.com (app.writereader.com) will allow students to hear letters and the sounds they make as they write



their own books. The process allows them to become authors while learning to read by writing. The online platform allows them to easily search for and add images to their created books. They may also add narration to each page. Links to books can be shared, and books can be downloaded with a premium account. This video covers the features: youtu.be/QQFzc319HoA.

My View: The platform is designed to be used with early elementary classrooms, and it has some features for early readers that other sites don't have. The price per year is very affordable (around \$40), and allows teachers to manage their students' use.

Concerns: It doesn't have some of the bells and whistles other applications do, but the price is great for what you are allowed to do.

Hopefully, you can try one or more of these ideas for creating digital stories! Don't try them all! Find something that works with your students and stick with it! Here is this month's **video overview**: drive.google.com/file/d/1kXJfuXIdedO-wNEPXNAmn7LFgL7mkX_B/view.

Here is this month's **Edge Tech!** These are some of the newest approaches in educational technology, and may require an adventurous spirit! This month's Edge Tech is schrockguide.net/digital-storytelling.html. This one isn't one simple application but a deep dive into everything related to digital storytelling! If it's not in there ... it doesn't exist!

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.

Computer File VOL. 21, NO. 3 // NOVEMBER 2021

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Mr. Corey Nelson Designer: Erica Schwan

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line "Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry."

Published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod // 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295 // 314-965-9000 // lcms.org

© 2021 LCMS

IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES



Early Childhood Devotions

FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7

IN ALL THINGS **JOHN 1:3**

FOCUS: Jesus in All (Col. 1:15–20)

The Call of Abram

(Gen. 12:1–8)



Before You Teach

God's call and promise resonate throughout the Old Testament. His relationship with Abram foreshadows the baptismal connection God establishes with His people in Jesus. This ancient liturgical prayer aptly frames the believer's response to God's call:

"O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as-yet untrod-den, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out in good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen"

(Evening Prayer, last modified May 12, 2021, accessed October 12, 2021, valpo.edu/chapel/james-wetzstein/ventures/.)

Greeting

Greet each child upon entry, establishing a positive tone for the day. **Good Morning/Afternoon, God's dear child. I am thankful for you!**

Gathering

Signal children to gather in your worship area. Sing "Happy Now We Gather" (*LOSP*, P. 9) or other gathering song. Introduce the biblical narrative.

Tell the Story

You will need: A suitcase, clothing, several food items, bottled water, a cross.

DO: As the narrative is told, place **clothing, food and bottled water** in the suitcase where indicated.

The Lord told a man named Abram, "Go, leave your country, your home and all of your friends. From you will come a great nation! I will bless you and make your name great! You will be a blessing to others." Doing as God told him, Abram and Sarai, his wife, packed up their **clothing**, their tents, and as much **food and water** as they could carry. They gathered their family, their animals and all they owned, and they left their home and traveled, with the Lord leading them, to an unknown land. Abram's nephew, Lot, and his family went with them. When they safely arrived in the land of Canaan, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, "To you and your children I will give this land." Abram built an altar, called on the name of the Lord and sang songs of

praise and thanksgiving. God had a promise and plan for Abram. God has a promise and plan for each of us. We give thanks for all God's gifts, especially for Jesus (**cross**), sent to save you and me!

PRAY: Dear God, our Father in Heaven, Thank You for Your saving love, for Jesus sent from above. Thank You for my family, and their loving care for me. Thank You for Your loving care, help me share it everywhere. Amen.

Conclude by singing the third verse of "We Pray for Each Other" (LOSP, P.15).

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

Pre-K & K: "I have called you by name, you are mine" (ISAIAH 43:1).

Grades 1 & 2: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (ISAIAH 43:1).

Activities

CREATE: FAMILY PORTRAITS. 8-by-10 pieces of construction paper, pre-cut to be picture frames and imprinted with the verse from Isaiah 43:1, one per child; 8-by-10 pieces of drawing paper. Adhere pre-cut frames to drawing paper. Add "name plates" imprinted with each child's family name (e.g., "The Smiths"). **Abram gathered his family, their animals and all they owned, and they traveled to a new land.** Guide children to each draw their family, including themselves, on the framed paper. Display.

DO: WHAT WOULD YOU TAKE? Abraham left his home to live in a new place. **ASK: If you moved to a new place, what two things you would take with you?**



SING: "God Chose Me" (LOSP, P. 107); "It's Good to Give Thanks" (LOSP, p. 61).

FUNDAY FRIDAY: "What's in the Suitcase?" Place several items ranging from funny to practical (things familiar to the children) in a suitcase. Together chant, **What's in the suitcase, what could it be? Something old? Something new? Something funny? Something yummy? Let's guess, and then we'll see.** Provide clues. When an item is guessed, remove it. Repeat until all (or most items) have been identified.

CAMP SERVE: "Suitcase Ministry." Identify a family in your community who needs assistance. Assess the needs (e.g., food, clothing, bedding, children's books, board games, cleaning or first-aid supplies). Engage the school/church community in filling a suitcase with the needed items. Gift to the family, with gratitude for the opportunity.

Sending

You will need: A cross to pass.

Gather in your "Sending Circle." Pray, inviting children to name one thing for which they are thankful as the cross is passed and received. **Dear Jesus, Thank You for ...** Conclude saying, **For all Your gifts, we praise Your name. Amen.** Dismiss, saying to each, **I give thanks for you!**

Live the Story

It is much easier to be thankful when things are going according to plan. Let us be thankful, in ALL circumstances.

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Early Childhood Devotions

VOL. 26, NO. 3 // NOVEMBER 2021

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.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line "Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry."

Published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod // 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295 // 314-965-9000 // lcms.org

© 2021 LCMS

IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES



Family Matters

A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS



IN ALL THINGS

Be Thankful



We ask the same question at this time every year, and that's OK.

As Thanksgiving approaches and when we sit down for the big family meal, the same question looms. Sometimes it is the meal host who will ask the question; other times it may be the family matriarch/patriarch or even a young child who was asked it in school and is now ready to give an answer at the family dinner.

The question, of course, is, "What are you thankful for?"

As much as we ask it, year after year, it is always fitting for a Thanksgiving family celebration. There is no right or wrong time to express gratitude. Can you say, "thank you" too much? Such words of appreciation may be directed to an individual for his generosity, to a group of people and most certainly to God.

The well-known story of Jesus healing the ten lepers in Luke 17 is often cited during the season of Thanksgiving as an example of sincere gratitude. In this account, ten men with the horrible disease of leprosy are healed by Jesus. Jesus sent them all to priests who certify their healing and allow their return to normal life in the community, but only one came back to express his gratitude to Jesus. This man who came back to speak words of thanks was a foreigner, which was a surprise. He must have been so very appreciative of the healing action of Jesus to go back to talk with Him.

One thing that this story points out to us is that words of thankfulness are always meaningful. It may take extra time, it may mean going out of our way, it may even be socially awkward, but it is always appropriate. It may also be a surprise! It seems like Jesus was a little taken aback that it was this foreigner who spoke words of appreciation to Him personally.

As you gather with your family this Thanksgiving, please share words of thanks and appreciation with one another. Don't be bashful. Say it sincerely, as we all have much to be thankful for from God and from one another. And may we all be grateful as well for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins, so that we could be eternally connected to the Father, and thus be able to enjoy the many earthly blessings He bestows on His children.

Also, this Thanksgiving, could we all speak unexpected words of thanks to someone? Let's catch them off guard! Surprise them with a "thank you" they didn't see coming. It will be a blessing to all.

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: THANKSGIVING TURKEYS

PURPOSE

To engage family members in an activity that helps them share the things they are thankful for with one another in a fun manner.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- › Paper lunch bag for each family member present
- › Variety of colored markers, colored pencils and crayons
- › Orange, red or brown 1-inch equilateral triangle cut from construction paper for each person
- › Several colored pieces of construction paper (orange, yellow, red and brown) cut into the shape of feathers 4-to-5-inches in length and about 1-inch wide. (You might also want to cut a flair or slit on one side of them to give them a feathery look.)
- › Glue sticks or transparent tape

PROCESS

Follow the steps below to enjoy an activity that shares Thanksgiving surprises.

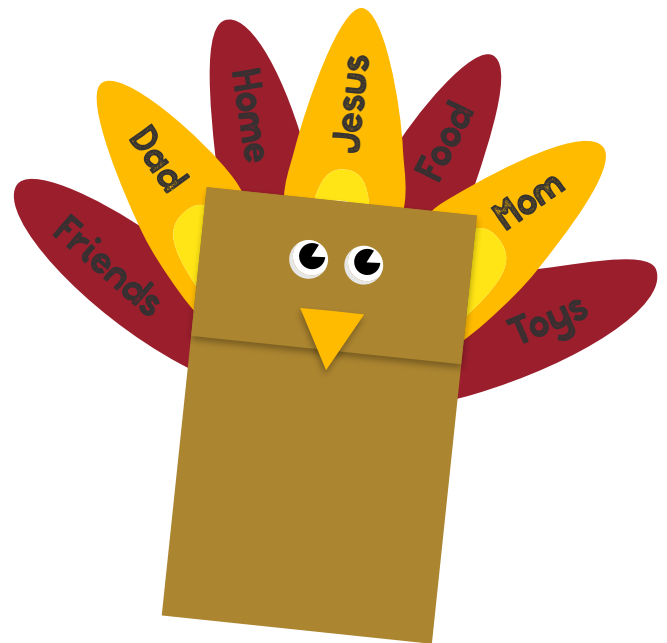
- 1 Give each family member a paper bag and have them draw big friendly eyes on the bottom of the bag so that it can be used as a puppet.
- 2 Have each person glue a colored triangle pointing downward below the eyes so that it looks like a turkey beak.
- 3 Give each person several colored feathers.
- 4 Have each family member write something he or she is thankful for on each feather and tape it or glue it to the back of the paper bag, sticking upward so that they look like turkey feathers. (For those unable to write, have an older sibling or parent write the things that person is thankful for.)
- 5 Encourage everyone to write a surprise item of thanks. This can be something that others in the family might not be able to guess they are thankful for or a challenge or difficulty they experienced this year — but are yet thankful for because it benefited them in some way.

- 6 When everyone is done creating the “Thanksgiving Turkey” have them put their hands in the bag, using it as puppet, and share the things that are written on their feathers. For some extra family fun, have each person use an animated voice to speak as the puppet to share the items on their feathers.
- 7 Keep the puppets around all week, and use them in fun ways during your family Thanksgiving celebrations, like greeting friends and family at the door, announcing the call to dinner, etc.

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.

Heavenly Father. We are thankful for so many things. For family. For friends. For our home. For our schools. For our church. For all the good gifts You give us. Most of all, we thank You for Jesus, who is our Lord and Savior. In His name we pray. Amen.





Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



Accelerating Learning for Student Success

The school year is already underway, and you've likely already had to adjust instructional plans and expectations.

To keep the focus on success for students and opportunities for their learning growth, as well as our own, think about what your vision was for this school year, other than survival. Teachers want to help students with unfinished learning, and this requires more than a business-as-usual approach, if such a thing even exists anymore! You also probably started the year with ambitious goals for students but may be experiencing a challenge now with how to make those goals a reality. Taking a deeper look at learning acceleration may help to reassess some classroom practices at this point in the year, even though the term *accelerating* can seem counterintuitive at first.

The first step in thinking about accelerating learning is making the following commitment. Commit to every student having access to grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction and engagement and a feeling of safety and belonging, along with having high expectations for the success of each student. If this is the vision and commitment for the remainder of the school year, and you feel compelled to live this out in your classroom, acceleration plays a role in achieving this.

According to a study¹ from Zearn and TNTP, students who were given opportunities for learning acceleration struggled less with academics than students



who were given below grade-level or remedial instruction to address learning gaps. Accelerated learning this year should focus on students being provided with grade-level materials and assignments instead of looking back and filling in all the gaps in learning first. As grade-level content is provided, critical gaps should be filled in as students need those skills for new learning. The recommendations for learning acceleration from TNTP², ask the following question to make sure that your focus remains on grade-level content at least 75% of the time: will this help every student get back to grade level? Keeping this question at the forefront of your mind during instructional planning will help keep the emphasis on acceleration rather than remediation and ensuring that every student, regardless of their ethnicity, socio-economic status or disability, is receiving critical grade-level content.

¹ "Accelerate, Don't Remediate: New Evidence from Elementary Math Classrooms," (TNTP and Zearn, 2021), accessed October 7, 2021, tntp.org/publications/view/teacher-training-and-classroom-practice/accelerate-dont-remediate.

² "Learning Acceleration for All: Planning for the Next Three to Five Years," (TNTP, 2021), accessed October 7, 2021, tntp.org/assets/covid-19-toolkit-resources/Learning_Acceleration_for_All_2021.pdf.



As reported by *The Atlantic* in the article “Our Kids Are Not Broken,”³ accelerating learning through giving students more challenging work in collaborative learning settings helps to fill in the skill gaps that may exist as well. As students work together on challenging activities and problems, each student uses his or her strengths and skillsets in combination with the diverse strengths and skillsets of other students. All students pick up different skills with this type of learning. It also helps to define students by their potential rather than their deficits. This emphasis is especially important in looking for learning opportunities and rethinking what learning looks like for this school year. Also keep in mind there are students who struggled academically before the pandemic or who are diagnosed with a disability. This approach does not replace specialized support students may need for those reasons, but these students also need equal access to grade-level content to ensure their success.

Focusing on acceleration also should incorporate ensuring a feeling of belonging for each student and authentic partnerships with families. These are key components for academic success, and, after the disruptions of the last 18 months, they are even more important. Some students were not in a school building for any of the 2020–21 school year, and likely some have been in and out already this year, depending on your

³ Ron Berger, “Our Kids Are Not Broken,” *The Atlantic* (March 20, 2021), accessed October 7, 2021, theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/03/how-to-get-our-kids-back-on-track/618269/.

area of the country. This can lead to students feeling disconnected from their teacher and peers rather than a true sense of belonging. Make it a point to get a sense of whether all students have at least one adult at the school they feel comfortable talking with when needed and if they each feel that they play an important role in the classroom. This could be done informally, or also look at this resource from TNTP for some questions to consider asking: tntp.org/covid-19-school-response-toolkit/view/fall-learning-experience-survey-questions. Likewise, make sure all parents and families feel comfortable coming to you, or someone at the school, with questions or concerns rather than assuming that they have this level of connection.

For additional resources on learning acceleration, check out TNTP’s COVID-19 School Response toolkit and readings: tntp.org/covid-19-school-response-toolkit. Also know that LSEM is here as another resource to help your ministry address individual student needs and best practices for students with disabilities. Contact us at lsem@luthsped.org or visit our website at luthsped.org and let us know how we can support you!



Fearfully and Wonderfully Made VOL. 5, NO. 3 // NOVEMBER 2021

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Kara Bratton Designer: Erica Schwan

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line “Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry.”

Published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod // 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295 // 314-965-9000 // lcms.org

© 2021 LCMS

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES



Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



How Do Children Learn the Faith?

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (PROV. 22:6).

My Bible commentary tells me that, in this verse, the word *train* is close in meaning to *dedicate*. I like that understanding better because it sounds less like teaching a puppy and more like raising a child.

As parents, we have a long list of responsibilities that work toward raising a child. Diet, medical and emotional health, school and supporting interests in the arts or athletics are a few that come to mind. An essential way we dedicate our children is to teach the faith and instill godly values. This is a crucial responsibility made even more complicated because the world tends to work against our efforts.

In teaching the faith, we need all the help we can get. Our work would be in vain if it were not for the work of the Spirit, God’s Word and the Sacraments. We can make the most of our efforts by using the tools God gives us, including information about the brain.

God designed our children’s brains to learn in two remarkable ways: solo learning and social learning. Solo learning happens when children observe the world and try experiments, usually in the form of play. As children grow older, their solo learning becomes more school-like as they read, memorize and practice specific skills.

Social learning involves interaction with others, especially those who know more than the child knows. Each time your children interact with you, even in a short conversation, they learn something about language, social skills, regulating their emotions and your value



system. It is quite a long list, but each piece of learning is small. The brain keeps track of each bit of learning and adds it together to decide what is essential. The more interaction you have with your children, the better they learn — even what you do not intend to teach!

Picture your child in a school classroom, and we can see evidence of both kinds of learning. After a lesson, your child works steadily on an assignment to practice the new skill. That’s good solo learning. The teacher enhances this learning by offering her class opportunities to use that new skill in different settings. Social learning comes into play when your child interacts with the teacher or fellow students. When the teacher integrates faith teaching into the day, he reinforces your child’s understanding of the role of faith in everyday life. Bible lessons teach the faith, and daily experiences allow reinforcement of learning.



How can we use both solo and social learning to teach our children the faith at home? We can do it in some straightforward ways:

SOcial LEARNING:

- › Recite prayers as a family. The Lord's Prayer is an excellent tool because your children will hear it at home and church. Encourage them to pray with you when the Lord's Prayer comes up in the service.
- › Engage in family devotions and conversational prayer. God's Word is powerful, and when your children experience this frequently, they learn how important it is.
- › As your children grow, use family dinner time or car ride time to discuss typical problem situations. Tell stories from your youth about how God helped you handle peer pressure, disappointment and opportunities to share faith with a friend.

- › Look for ways to serve your church and people in your neighborhood. This speaks volumes about faith.

SOLO LEARNING:

- › Luther's Small Catechism makes for excellent devotional material for your school-age children. If they have memory work for school, memorize their assignments together.
- › As a family, learn one new Bible verse each week. Practice together and quiz each other. Pick verses that make good prayers and offer comfort during struggles.
- › As your children grow, add hymn learning to the list. Hymns make excellent devotions too. Weave into devotions some responsive phrases from your liturgy to encourage natural participation in church services.
- › Commit to regular church and Sunday school attendance. This is good solo and social learning as it helps your child develop a worship routine and teaches that you value the gifts of your faith.

The burden of effective teaching of the faith is not ours. We can leave that to God. Our work includes providing many ways for our children to experience God's Word. We are blessed to have many tools for surrounding our children with the truth of God's Word. We are blessed to do this in an easy, natural way that encourages us to model how vital faith learning is for the brain and the heart.

"For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth" (3 JOHN 1:3-4).

When the Apostle John recorded these words, he was likely referring to his children in the faith or new followers of Christ. By virtue of their Baptism, the children in our families are new followers of Christ also. Seeing your adult child walking in the truth is indeed a great joy. The building of that path starts now.



Professionally Speaking



Being Thankful, IN ALL THINGS



When I began my teaching ministry (shout out to Atonement Lutheran School in Metairie, La.), all but two of the faculty were Commissioned Ministers, and most of them were products of Lutheran Schools. I was a bit of an exception. I was a Commissioned Minister, but I'd NEVER attended a Lutheran School until I went to college (Concordia University, St. Paul, St. Paul, Minn., class of '90). My education had been a couple of early years in Catholic School, then the rest in public school. My student teaching included experiences in both public and Lutheran schools. The difference between the two was striking. The atmosphere, the students, the parents, the peer relationships — already as a student teacher, I saw there was so much more joy in a Lutheran school.

I think I had an advantage over many of my church-work peers in recognizing this difference, as I was NOT

a product of Lutheran schools. From day one, I valued and appreciated the palpable difference made by having Jesus in all things of the educational experience. From teaching math to coaching soccer, from parent-teacher conferences to drama productions, being in a place of faith, serving alongside a team living out God's calling on their lives rather than just working for a paycheck or because they liked the job, has made such a difference! I don't even want to think about what my 30+ years as an educator would have felt like if I wasn't able to share God's love as an integral part of what I do.

These days, there aren't so many Commissioned Ministers coming out of our Concordia University System. New workers do still graduate, but at numbers far below those who are retiring. This means a steadily increasing number of educators in our schools, particularly over the past 20 years, have come from other sources. In some ways this may be a silver lining for Lutheran Schools. Some of the best teachers I know, who make the most of every opportunity serving in Lutheran School ministry, taught elsewhere first. Especially those who taught in public school and then switched to a Lutheran School, they get it — that same sense I had from day one: how special the ministry atmosphere and opportunities are. And they LOVE it. I pray that all of us seek that same energy, excitement and appreciation for what we have in Lutheran Schools — how much we can be thankful for — and that we don't miss a single opportunity to let Christ's light shine through us this school year.

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Professionally Speaking // NOVEMBER 2021

Writer: Mr. Jim Scriven Designer: Lisa Moeller

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line "Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry."

Published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod // 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295 // 314-965-9000 // lcms.org

© 2021 LCMS

PHOTO: LCMS COMMUNICATIONS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD



Rattles & Prattles

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS



God Chooses Abraham and His Descendants “CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL” (COL. 3:11).

Bible Story: God chooses Abraham and his descendants to continue the promise of a Savior to the next generation.

Scripture References: Genesis 12:1–8; 28:15

What it teaches us: God blessed Abraham and chose him and his descendants for a special purpose — to be the people from whom Jesus, the promised Savior, would be born.

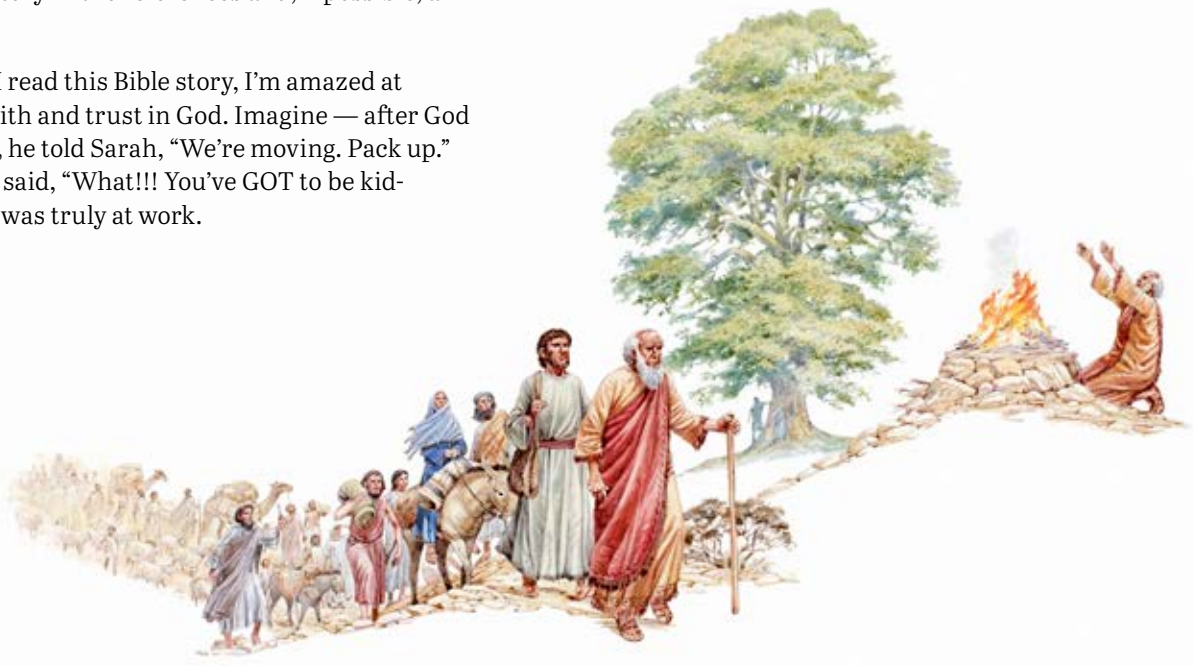
Prepare to teach

› **Read** the story in the references and, if possible, a study Bible.

› **Think:** As I read this Bible story, I’m amazed at Abraham’s faith and trust in God. Imagine — after God spoke to him, he told Sarah, “We’re moving. Pack up.” She probably said, “What!!! You’ve GOT to be kidding?!?” God was truly at work.

God is at work through you! As you read/hear God’s Word, God’s Spirit works to strengthen your faith, help you share Bible stories, love and care for the children and their families; through your words and actions, God’s Spirit is at work.

› **Pray:** Dear God, You spoke to Abraham. He listened and responded. Please help me listen as You speak to me through Your Word. Use Your Word to help me grow in my love for and knowledge of You and empower/inspire me to share Your story with children and their families. 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.
- *Fingers Tell the Story (FTS)*, copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House (CPH), St. Louis, Mo.
- Picture of Jesus (do an internet search)
- Pictures of (a) Abraham, (b) Abraham and Sarah, (c) Abraham by a tent and (d) Abraham, Sarah and Isaac to use by going to Pinterest or searching the internet.

Gather for Worship

Use tune of “Goodbye, Goodbye” (*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. Hello, dear God, to
You. We know You are our Father, God’s Son and
Spirit too. He-lo-o!**

Opening Song: Show picture of Jesus. Sing “Jesus Loves the Little Children” (*LOSP*, P. 94).

Bible Story

Introduction: Sing, using melody of “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 gives these stories
to me and you.**

**Jesus loves all people. Today, let’s see how
He loved Abraham and Sarah.**

Share Bible story pictures found above.

1. Show Abraham and sing the story using the melody “Are You Sleeping?”: **God told Abraham** (repeat); **I want you** (repeat). **To move to a new home** (repeat); **far away** (repeat).

2. Show Abraham and Sarah with animals & belongings; sing: **Abraham-and-Sarah** (repeat); **moved far away** (repeat). **God told him where to go** (repeat); **far away** (repeat).

3. Show Abraham by a tent; sing: **God told Abraham** (repeat); **I love you** (repeat). **You will have a family** (repeat); **and a son** (repeat).

4. Show Abraham and Sarah holding Isaac; sing: **God gave Abraham** (repeat); **Sarah too** (repeat). **God gave them Isaac** (repeat); **He gave them joy** (repeat).

5. Same picture as above: **God told Abraham** (repeat); **I love you** (repeat). **One day I’ll send a Savior** (repeat); **for everyone** (repeat).

What the Story Teaches: God gave Abraham and Sarah a special son, Isaac. God gives us to our families.

Song to Sing: “I Am Special” (*LOSP*, P. 108)

Prayer

**Thank You, God, for loving Abraham and Sarah, and
giving them a family. Thank You for sending Your
Son, Jesus, to live, be hurt, die and come alive for all
families and me. Thank You, God. Amen.**

Closing/Benediction

**Jesus’ time is just about over; before we go, it’s time
to sing “Good-bye, Good-bye”** (*LOSP*, P. 40). Optional:
Make the sign of the cross.



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

S Science and Nutrition

- › **Science:** Abraham used his ears to listen to God. We use our ears to listen too (voices, instruments, etc.). Listen to and identify loud, soft, swishy and other sounds.
- › **Nutrition:** traveling foods – items Abraham and Sarah may have eaten [e.g., pita, cheese (pieces, string, etc.), fresh and dried fruit]. Pray, thanking God for food.
- › **Physical Education:** Take listening walks inside your facility, the church, the playground, nearby areas. What sounds do we hear? Who/what made them?

T Technology

- › **Ask families to share pictures** of their family. Put these together into a book by laminating pages and binding them (e.g., punch holes, put in plastic-ring binder and secure with colored cord; it will be a favorite!).

R Reading and Language Arts

- › **Books:** *Families* — a picture book by Shelley Rotner and Sheila M. Kelly (Holiday House, 2016), *I Hear* — a board book by Helen Oxenbury (Candlewick, 1995)
- › **Rhyme/Poem:** Nursery Rhyme: “There Was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe.” Use a finger play about families [e.g., “The Whole Family” (*FTS*, P. 42)].

E Engineering

- › **Abraham and Sarah** packed up their tent and moved. Make/set up a tent in the classroom! You might have Jesus’ Time/circle time in the tent.

CONNECT WITH PARENTS in your newsletter

The Bible tells us families are a gift from God. We shared the story of a special family: Abraham, Sarah and Isaac. God gives us our families; and, because of Jesus, we become part of God’s family.

A Arts (art, music)

- › **Art:** Since Abraham and Sarah walked through desert areas, mix sand with finger paint/tempera and paint. Call attention to the “bumpy” look. Use sandpaper, call attention to texture; use crayons on sandpaper. How does it look?
- › **Music:** God gives us families too. Sing (tune: “Mary Had a Little Lamb”) **God gave me a family, family, family, family. God gave me a family. They love and care for me!** Add verses: **Mommy, Daddy ... Mommy tells me of God’s love...**

M Mathematics

- › **How many people** were in Abraham and Sarah’s family? First two, then three after Isaac was born. Look for sets of three in the classroom.

S Social Studies

- › **God gave Abraham and Sarah** a son, Isaac. God gives you a family. Who are the people in your family? Note: because of Jesus’ saving work and through Baptism, we become part of God’s family.



School Shepherd

TIPS AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONS WITH SCHOOLS



THEME | THANKS in All Things

All Things Thankfully Considered

“Rejoice in the Lord always ... Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God” (PHIL. 4:4, 6).

There are special times and places of thanks. The National Youth Gathering (Houston, July 2022) will be a thanksgiving event for tens of thousands of youth of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Lutheran schools are thanksgiving settings joining a nation in thanksgiving in the month of November. Lutheran schools give thanks in all seasons and in all things in Christ.

The book of Philippians is one of Paul’s prison letters as the apostle was a prisoner in Rome awaiting his trial before Caesar. In spite of the uncertainty and inconvenience of his situation, Paul could “rejoice in the Lord.” Paul’s joy in Jesus is a central theme of this epistle.

Thanksgiving cornucopias of earthly blessings are filled by students and displayed in classrooms. It is fitting to remember and to give thanks for all that God has graciously and bountifully provided. However, the greatest blessing to Paul and to us is the blessing of a Savior who loved us enough to die for all our sins. Our Lord is risen from the dead and gives us all things for our salvation.

A pastor received a Divine Call to shepherd a congregation with a Lutheran school. In considering the call, he observed, “Lutheran schools take a lot of time and are a lot of work.” The experience of many Lutheran school shepherds supports the pastor’s observation. Effective Lutheran school ministry may involve extra



responsibilities. There may be, in the words of Paul, things for which to be “anxious” — staffing, financing, student and family ministry and so on. However, in Christ, Paul could look beyond the earthly circumstances (even prison) and rejoice in the Lord who had saved him and called him.

The school shepherd gives thanks to God in all things. He gives thanks for the opportunities and even the challenges that come with serving in a Lutheran school setting.

Giving thanks to God in all things, the shepherd works with the Lutheran school administration, board and staff to foster a spirit of thanksgiving in all things.

The school shepherd gives thanks for all ministry partners. The observation is made that a school is only as strong as its support staff. School custodians, bus

drivers, lunch room assistants, office aides and every partner is critical to the success of the ministry. Each partner should be genuinely valued and thanked.

With the staff, the shepherd gives thanks for all children. A teacher, frustrated by the behavior of a particular child, is reminded, “He, too, is a child of God.” Seeing the children as created and redeemed children of God adjusts our perspective.

Lutheran schools give thanks for all families. Lutheran school ministry is family ministry. Family structures are increasingly complex — single parents, blended families, foster families, children raised by grandparents To teach and minister effectively to the child is to understand the family dynamics and support the family in raising Jesus’ children.

The school shepherd gives thanks for all situations. In my own school administration experience, I came to expect at least one very humbling situation every school year. While I didn’t enjoy the challenge at the time, I always grew personally, professionally and spiritually during those times. God was at work shaping me and strengthening His school.

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

- › Complete the statement, “I am thankful for _____ at our Lutheran school.” How can this year’s school Thanksgiving remembrance be more than a national holiday or school break?
- › What’s unique about the school and church emphasis on giving thanks for spiritual blessings?
- › How are teachers, staff, donors and others thanked for their ministry contributions?
- › When and how have you been challenged to give thanks “in everything”?

HYMN:

“Teach us to thank You, Lord, for love and grace,
For life and vision, for a purpose clear,
For Christ Your Son, and for each human face
That shows Your message ever new and near.

“Teach us, O Lord, true thankfulness divine,
That gives as Christ gave, never counting cost,
That knows no barrier of “yours” and “mine,”
Assured that only what’s withheld is lost.”
(LSB 788:2, 4)



prayer

ALL THINGS IN JESUS’ NAME

Lord, we confess that we do not give thanks “in all things.” We complain about our circumstances. We covet more. Thank You for the Good News of Jesus in all things. Send Your Spirit that our church and school not only may be a place of praise and thanksgiving, but also may be a place of thanks-living in all things, in Jesus’ name. Amen.



Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



The Joys of Creativity



The Bible is filled with creativity! Genesis 1:1 shares that “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” The Bible begins with a special highlight of God’s power! A few verses later, God again shows His artistry as He creates Adam and Eve (v. 27). God’s handiwork is marvelous! God made you in His image; you are loved!

Throughout Scripture, there are numerous examples of God’s work amongst His people, and there are stories of how God’s people used their gifts and talents to serve Him and others. Think of the Israelites as they built the temple or as they furnished the tabernacle with gold and beautiful cloths. There is great beauty in all things God has created.

Because you are created by God in His image, you have a gift of creativity too. While you may not think of yourself as creative or artistic, you likely have skills that you share each day with your students. Perhaps you have the gift of creative organization or the gift of planning engaging activities to enhance learning; perhaps you

love leading songs of praise during classroom Jesus Time lessons. Think about it ... you do have at least one creative bone in your body! Celebrate it and use it to glorify God!

Children love to be creative; it’s a natural desire for them to explore. According to Gibson and Ewing (2011), the arts are key for children to grow in their understandings of the world around them as they develop. When children engage in the arts, they grow in development of both knowledge and skills — they use a physical application in their creation (Alperson, 1991). The arts are recognized as important for children’s learning, both physically and intellectually, and also spiritually. Participation in the arts enables children to experience success in their learning (Sinclair, Jeanneret and O’Toole, 2009). Whether it be dancing, dramatizing, music, visual arts or even some technology, when children participate in creativity that leads to deeper learning, they are growing in their overall holistic development.



Engagement in the creative arts allows children and adults to participate in active roles. During the early years, an appreciation of learning that naturally occurs through play allows teachers and students opportunities for creative encounters and active engagement. During these times of creative encounters, where play and creative arts are woven together, experimentation is supported, encouraged and given time. Children need ample time to play; unstructured free-play is a key component of an early childhood learning environment.

When children engage in creative play in the arts, they begin to understand more about the world around them; as an educator in a Lutheran school, you can further this understanding by fostering the knowledge that God created the world around them. Through such play, children can engage in the gifts and talents God has given them. Using these gifts and talents allows children to communicate their thinking and feelings in multiple ways (Wright, 2012). Such engagement allows children to actively participate in and value the sense of wonder that the arts can bring.

Think about worship for a moment. More specifically, think about worship that you foster in your classroom. While listening to a Bible story, children can see pictures and craft meaning in their mind or they can visualize the scene in their memory. When singing songs, children can be creative in their voice and offer movement that corresponds to their feelings about the words, tempo, tune or volume. Utilizing art materials provides children an opportunity to think more deeply about God and His Word. Drawing or painting a picture that they feel represents Jesus gives children an opportunity to express their faith and share with others.

For professional learning, you could spend hours online reading about the benefits of creative arts for young children. Enhanced experiences in self-regulatory learning, executive-function skills and social-emotional intelligence are just a few examples of how artistic creativity is beneficial for children. Risk-taking and exploration is nurtured when children better understand various art mediums and develop skills with caring and facilitating adults.

As God demonstrated His creativity early in Scripture, one could say this shows that creativity has great value. As a teacher in a Lutheran school, you can be prepared to share the importance of engagement in the arts for student benefit as it relates to holistic education — physically, emotionally, academically and spiritually. Cheerlead the Arts throughout the curriculum.

Too often, artistic exploration for children gets limited or confined. Children need time, ample supplies and encouragement to fully participate in the arts. They need to be allowed to create what their mind inspires, not just from a template or predetermined goal.

Finally, as your student grow in creative arts, engage them in conversation on how they can be creative and use these gifts and talents to share God's love. Can they paint a picture that represents Jesus' love for them? What song can they create that shares the importance of showing kindness to others? How can they use dance to praise God for His love and forgiveness? In all things, children can take pride in their creativity and use it to glorify God in ways that embrace their playful, creative natures!

References:

Philip Alperson, "What Should One Expect from a Philosophy of Music Education?" *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 25, no. 3 (Autumn 1991): 215-242.

Robyn Gibson and Robyn A.M. Ewing, *Transforming the Curriculum through the Arts* (Melbourne: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Christine Sinclair, Neryl Jeanneret and John O'Toole, eds., *Education in the Arts* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Susan Wright, ed., *Children, Meaning-Making, and the Arts*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: Pearson, 2012).

Time Out for Directors

VOL. 26, NO. 3 // NOVEMBER 2021

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Drew Gerdes Designer: Lisa Moeller

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line "Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry."

Published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod // 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295 // 314-965-9000 // lcms.org

© 2021 LCMS

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES