SCHOOL MINISTRY
Mailing

THE **LUTHERAN CHURCH**
MISSOURI SYNOD

School Ministry

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Contents

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Alight

The Lutheran School Missionary

Mission outreach is essential to Lutheran schools. 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. The Lutheran school is an integral part of a congregation's ministry to children and families entrusted to their care. The main priority of a missionary is to bring the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to people who haven't had the opportunity to hear the Word of God. Today, a rich mission field exists in every classroom in Lutheran schools. Many students enrolled in Lutheran schools do not have a Christian background. Clearly, the educators serving in Lutheran schools are missionaries in every sense of the word.

Missionaries introduce people to Jesus Christ through God's Word and Sacrament. Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, is at the foundation of what is taught in the classroom. Teachers represent the Lord when His Word is shared with students and families. Educators serving in over 1,800 Lutheran early childhood, elementary and high schools are blessed with the opportunity to open Scripture, the most important teaching resource in a Lutheran school, and share it with children of all ages. Working under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, educators nurture the faith of children and students of all ages.

Missionaries model what it means to be a Christian living in a fallen world filled with dissention and strife. Lutheran educators share God's mercy, paid for by Jesus Christ with His perfect sacrifice, and are able to guide students through times of temptation. Teachers model and practice forgiveness on a daily basis. They strive to challenge students to grow in their faith and experience the kind of forgiveness that can change hearts and lives.

Serving in Lutheran schools, teachers are a blessing to the children and families entrusted to their care. They join with pastors, directors of Christian education and outreach, deaconesses, lay ministers, directors of music, lay ministers and countless volunteers serving as missionaries in Lutheran schools and around the world. All are working together, in all things, to proclaim the Good News of salvation found only in Jesus Christ.

> **For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.** (COL. 1:19–20)

Community & Enrollment

This is the **second** 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?"

Why *Sense of Community?*

"What can we do to increase enrollment? Maybe our community wants Spanish immersion or homeschool partnerships, better sports programs or computer coding classes. Maybe we need to look into busing. Maybe our tuition needs to be re-evaluated. It's too high; no, it's too low." Does this sound familiar? Schools across the country have similar conversations. These ideas, and a plethora of others, all may be viable options to increase enrollment. But is there a more foundational variable affecting enrollment, universal to all schools regardless of their context?

Last month, I explained what impelled me to choose LCMS elementary school enrollment as the topic for my dissertation. That is, enrollment at LCMS schools matters because it creates opportunity for students to learn about our savior Jesus Christ! This month, I will explain how I came up with the accompanying research variable, *sense of community*.

Before getting into research methods and sample selection, I searched existing literature for insight on what motivates parents to enroll their child at a school. The number of varied reasons was overwhelming! One research study alone found 102 unique reasons.[1] These reasons included student academic histories, social concerns, holistic reasons, administrative and logistic variables. Other studies found student emotional concerns, proximity to the home, alternative curriculum, band, sports, school legacy, racial identity, class size and free after-care all influence school choice.[2-6] With these seemingly endless reasons why parents choose a school, how can a school determine an area of focus that fits within their vision, values and *budget*, to work toward enrollment growth?

Two researchers stumbled upon a possible solution. Beal and Beal (2016) studied marketing and recruitment at a magnet school in Louisiana. At this school, the parents were responsible for the majority of school marketing.[7] Beal and Beal found, rather by accident, that the parents developed a *sense of belonging* toward the school, and that it was this "sense of community" among parents that positively affected student recruitment, *more so* than the marketing efforts (p. 95). This caused the researchers to see that "school choice is less about selecting a school than it is about joining a community" (p. 93). In this case, and the case of schools in general, community is more than a geographical location; it is a relational concept.[8] All schools have the potential to develop a tightly knit community. Therefore, the concept of *sense of community* is something all schools, regardless of their context, can build on to increase enrollment.

But is *community* and the need for *community* powerful enough to attract and retain students and families to a school? Fournier and Lee, who studied brand community, wrote, "In today's turbulent world, people are hungry for a sense of connection."[9] The need for community is prevalent in our current culture. The air conditioner

causes people to stay inside rather than sit on their front porch and interact with others in their neighborhood. Attached garages and fenced backyards allow people to come and go without ever talking to their neighbors. Social media creates a digital community lacking in human touch. COVID prevented people from gathering together. Evidence shows people need community, now more than ever.

Businesses have recognized this need and harnessed its power to develop loyal customers. Dholakia and Vianello found brand communities can strengthen customer loyalty and increase positive word of mouth marketing, which attracts new customers.[10] In addition to customer loyalty, Ozcelik wrote that a sense of belonging creates more committed employees.[11] Most striking, Kam Fung So, King, Sparks and Wang found, above four other variables affecting brand loyalty, *customer engagement* was the strongest predictor of customer loyalty.[12] Engagement comes when customers take an active part of the community. Being active in a community results in a higher *sense of community* toward other members and the organization.

Schools are not businesses, at least not like the ones in the above studies, and parents are different from business customers. Services provided by a school are distinct from the products for sale on Target shelves and car dealership lots. Regardless, if community can help a business sell coffee or motorcycles, how much more can the community of a Lutheran school give people a *sense of belonging* that causes them to remain at the school and to invite others to join them?

School-choice literature, the Beal and Beal study and business literature on customer loyalty, customer engagement and community show *sense of community* is a potential variable influencing enrollment growth. *Sense of community* could motivate parents to choose a school, remain loyal to a school and draw others to the school. In other words, *sense of community* could aid in both retention and recruitment of students, resulting in stable and growing enrollment. Now it just needed to be determined if *sense of community* actually makes a difference on enrollment at LCMS schools. Spoiler alert: it does, at least as found in one study.[13] Details on that next month; don't miss it!

Footnotes

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[13] 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.

Computer File

Creating Community

One of my big takeaways from distance learning with my students was that the daily interaction in the classroom couldn't be replicated online. When we were able to be together, the sense of connection and community was evident. Research has even shown the benefits of creating community in schools. In a school with a strong community sense, students are more likely to be academically motivated,[1] to act ethically,[2] to develop social and emotional strengths[3] and to avoid problem behaviors.[4]

I believe the school community is one of the (perhaps natural) strengths of Lutheran schools. But what about the classroom? Are there specific benefits for creating a *classroom* community? The benefits of establishing a community-oriented classroom climate were researched by Dwyer et al. (2004), who found that "Fostering a positive climate and sense of community for students in educational settings has been linked with retention and academic success"[5] (p. 265).

Well, that's all great for our school and classroom, but can technology actually help in creating that community? Yes, absolutely! The following apps will give you the tools and opportunity to create a classroom community that actually connects your students, yourself and the school families!

Google Chat/Hangouts (*hangouts.google.com/*; view tutorial *youtu.be/i5eahHCwK8g*)

Google Chat/Hangouts is a communications app that allows members to create and participate in text, voice or video chats, either one-on-one or in a group. Chat/Hangouts are built into Gmail, and mobile apps are available for iOS and Android devices.

My View: This is easily my favorite way to connect with my students. It's also the platform used most consistently by my students to connect with each other. They can chat with me about questions on assignments, and I can quickly change the chat into a video call if I need to demonstrate something. The video call is a Google Meet, which allows users to share a screen or even collaborate on an online whiteboard! For me, I love the fact that the messages from my students show up on my phone, but they don't need to have my cell number.

Concerns: Well, if you connect the dots listed above, the students have access to teachers and each other constantly. I'm not going to even use the word *could* here — it **will** create difficulties. Schools need to know what their expectations are before allowing students to use Chat/Hangouts. Students will use it whenever and wherever they can! Communication with parents is key also. Make sure parents are prepared for home expectations! Teachers also need to know what they are willing to put up with from students contacting them.

Flipgrid (*info.flipgrid.com/*; view tutorial *youtu.be/ aLzX13jw7bw*)

Flipgrid is a free, education-focused platform to create and share short videos. Basically, Flipgrid is a video tool that allows teachers to post "Topics" that can consist of videos with some explanatory text. This is then shared with students, who can respond. The responses are made using the device's camera to create videos that are then connected to the original Topic. These videos can be recorded as many times as needed before uploading and can have the options of using emojis, text, stickers, drawings or even a whiteboard function.

My View: Flipgrid is wonderful for giving students a place to respond to subjects and assignments in many different ways. I've had students use it for memory work and Bible reflection. I know of teachers who have used it to allow a class to create help videos for tricky math problems. Sharing completed projects on Flipgrid provides more of a long-term curation. Plus, Flipgrid is fun! Students love all of the different options! There are safeguards built in for teachers to review created videos before posting. This also allows teachers to receive videos from students who don't want anyone else to see what they've created.

Concerns: There aren't many concerns I can even find online for Flipgrid! The only one I can think of is with the wide variety of options. Some students could be distracted by all of the cool tools and forget to aim at the core of the assignment.

SeeSaw (*web.seesaw.me/*; view tutorial *youtu.be/ v3erC7teWf8*)

Seesaw is a great way for teachers and students to record and share what's happening in the classroom. It creates a place for students to document their learning, be creative and learn how to use technology. Each student gets their own journal and will add things to it, like photos, videos, drawings or notes.

My View: SeeSaw is simply incredible for connecting teachers, students and families. Teachers can create assignments for students to complete right through SeeSaw. Then, teachers have control over allowing families to view completed work at home. The phone and tablet apps work very well for students and parents to access items at home. All design elements are clearly designed with developmentally appropriateness in mind. SeeSaw has a lot of the same options as Flipgrid, but it allows the next step of project completion (and even worksheet completion).

Concerns: The overall look and feel of SeeSaw can

come across as directed at early childhood and early elementary. Some students and teachers of older children may not give it a try. That's too bad, because I love the features enough to consider using it with my middle school advanced math students! Additionally, heavy users will need to upgrade to the paid version.

Padlet (*padlet.com/;* view tutorial *youtu.be/ x9IQVofS43I*)

Padlet is a place where you can create walls for all the posts you want to share. It is literally a blank slate for videos, images, documents and audio. It's also collaborative; students, other teachers and even parents can add items to the walls!

My View: Padlet is great for collaborative sharing of resources and thoughts. Several of us in TEC21 use these with our centers to share best practices and prayer requests. It's a very quick and easy place for students to share thoughts or ideas. I could definitely see it used for prayer requests in the classroom. Also, it's a great place to have students put quick responses to topics in class. It's easy to set up and use as well!

Concerns: The main concern with Padlet is the limited features on the free version. Padlet doesn't have the same features as something like Flipgrid or SeeSaw. Currently, the best price for an individual teacher is $8 per month. I'd suggest trying the free version to see if you would use it enough to justify the cost.

Google Sites (*sites.google.com/new*; view tutorials *youtu.be/OsNat-3-D3s*; *youtu.be/Vm1ASTEYuUA*)

With Google Sites, you can literally create a website — all without designer, programmer or IT help. It's easy! Just drag items where you want them. When you create a new site, it's automatically added to Drive. You can collaborate on a Google Site with someone else in real time and see each other's changes live. You can publish the site for everyone to see, or limit sharing permissions and make the site open only to people you want to share it with.

My View: Google Sites are so unappreciated! This is such an amazing tool for creating websites that also function as learning portfolios and collaborative platforms! Students can be given their own pages on a class site, or they could create their own sites to share with the teacher and/or other students! For collaborative projects, Google Sites is perfect. Now that the sites are created directly in Google Drive, students won't need to hunt for what they've made!

Concerns: This may be picky ... but in *classic* Google

Sites, you could limit access to individual pages of the site. Currently, there is no way to give a student an individual page without preventing others from accessing it. Other than that, I don't see too many other concerns. There isn't a built-in option for taking photos or recording video.

Google Classroom (*classroom.google.com/*)

Google Classroom provides a teacher/student-friendly way of managing classroom documents. It allows you to make assignments, make announcements, store classroom materials and give students a place to interact. It provides a central location for your students to keep track of all assignments across different subjects. You can assign documents directly from your Google Drive, allowing each student to open a document and have a unique copy. The platform allows several ways for students to interact with you and each other. Students have the ability to comment on assignments and announcements, as well as email each other through the Classroom site.

My View: Google Classroom is getting pretty close to being the perfect tool for organizing a classroom. It is a centralized location for assignments, due dates, communication, resources and connecting media. If your students need to keep track of it, you can put it in Google Classroom! In a departmentalized setting, it allows students to see things from multiple teachers in one place.

Concerns: Students can work on Google Drive-based assignments right through Classroom, but can't directly respond with video or images as in other apps. Still … that seems minor.

Ziplet (*ziplet.com/*; view tutorial *youtu.be/5RIGFSO5kUM*)

Ziplet is a free tool for teachers that allows sending an exit ticket in under 30 seconds. You can send suggested questions, collect responses and even see student responses as word clouds and charts. It's a convenient way to interact with students and receive feedback on lessons!

My View: Ziplet works well with Google Classroom and is very efficient to use. There are built-in templates and ideas. This may even convince those of you who are hesitant to use exit tickets to give it a try! It is very easy to use!

Concerns: This is so new that I haven't been able to use it with students enough to know of concerns. So far, it seems to do a great job of what it's designed to do!

Hopefully, you can try one or more of these ideas for creating a classroom community that connects everyone: teacher, students and parents! These tools will help lay the groundwork for creating throughout the school year with the topics coming up each month! Here is this month's **video overview:** *drive.google.com/file/d/1NlyHiVLXYCSJVEAsRGh97vpbX_PeGlES/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 *canva.com/.* Here is a short informational video about Canva: *youtu.be/zJSgUx5K6V0.*

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/.*

Endnotes

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Early Childhood Devotions

IN ALL THINGS   **JOHN 1:3**
FOCUS: Jesus in All (Col. 1:15–20)

A Promise for ALL
(Genesis 3)

Before You Teach

Adam and Eve were not content with God's plan for His creation. Their willful disobedience ushered sin and death into the world. But God did not give up on them, nor does He give up on us, who have inherited their rebellious character and behavior. In a somewhat complex passage (3:15), He promises the ultimate defeat of evil and the triumph of salvation through Jesus. The unfaithfulness of humanity is, then and now, overcome by God's eternal faithfulness (see Lam. 3:22–23), and His love and promise endure forever.

Greeting

Greet each child upon entry, establishing a positive tone for the day. **Child of God, I am so happy you are here today. We are going to learn about a big promise God made.**

Gathering

Signal children to gather in your worship area. Sing the chorus of "Hello, Everybody" (*LOSP*, P. 7). Introduce the biblical narrative.

Tell the Story

*Directions: Guide children to make a hissing sound when the word **serpent** is spoken and to raise both arms, looking to heaven, when the word **God** is spoken. Practice. Tell the story.*

In the garden created by **God** was a **serpent** — a snake. The sneaky **serpent** said to the woman, Eve, "Did **God** really say that you should not eat from every tree in the garden?" Eve said to the **serpent**, "We may eat the fruit from the trees. But, **God** said not to eat the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, nor to touch it, or we will die." The **serpent** said to Eve, "You won't die! **God** knows that if you eat from that tree, you will be just like **God**." Eve, believing the **serpent**, took the fruit and ate it. She gave some to Adam, who also ate.

Hearing the Lord **God** walking in the garden, Adam and Eve quickly covered themselves with leaves and hid among the trees. **God** called, "Adam, where are you?"

Adam said, "I heard the sound of You walking in the garden and I was afraid. So, I hid myself." **God** asked, "Have you eaten the fruit of the forbidden tree?" Adam said, "The woman gave me the fruit of the tree, and I ate." **God** said to the woman, "What have you done?" Eve said, "The **serpent** lied to me, and I ate." Having disobeyed **God's** command, Adam and Eve were sent out of the garden. But **God** still loved them, promising to one day send a Savior. **God** kept His promise, one day sending Jesus to save Adam and Eve, you and me, and all people. **God** always keeps promises!

Praying Together

PRAY: **Jesus Savior, sent for me,**
From my sins, You set me free.
Help me Your words, to obey,
Trusting You to show the way. Amen.

Sing Verse 3 of "We Pray for Each Other" (LOSP, P. 15).

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

Pre-K & K; Grades 1 &2: "The LORD is faithful in his words and kind in all his works" (PSALM 145:13).

Activities

CREATE: A PROMISE TREE. *You will need: A precut tree and hearts (see "Do").* Display on a wall or bulletin board. Adam and Eve did not obey God. But God loved and forgave them, promising to send a Savior. God kept the promise, sending Jesus for all God's people, including us! We share God's promise with others.

DO: SHARING GOD'S PROMISE. We share God's promise by caring for others. Children provide words or phrases which show care (e.g., love, hug, share, give, forgive, saying "thank you" and "please,'' taking turns. Print their words on precut hearts. Add the hearts to the "Promise Tree." See "Funday Friday."

SING: "God's a Father Kind and True" (*LOSP*, P. 30).

FUNDAY FRIDAY: Plan a "Funday Friday" once a month. This month, lead children in a tip-toe visit to surprise and give non-teaching church and school staff "Thank You" hearts. See "Do."

CAMP SERVE: Paint Pumpkins. Camp leader organizes and invites school families, or other groups/organizations, to paint and donate small or medium-sized pumpkins. Distribute painted pumpkins to shut-ins or nursing home residents. Note: Use craft paints, which can be purchased from Michaels, Hobby Lobby or other craft stores.

Sending

You will need: A cross to pass.

Gather in your "Sending Circle." Review the day. Pray together, inviting children to pray as the cross is passed and received by each or to silently pass the cross along. Dismiss, saying to each upon exiting, **Care for others, just as Jesus loves and cares for YOU!**

Live the Story

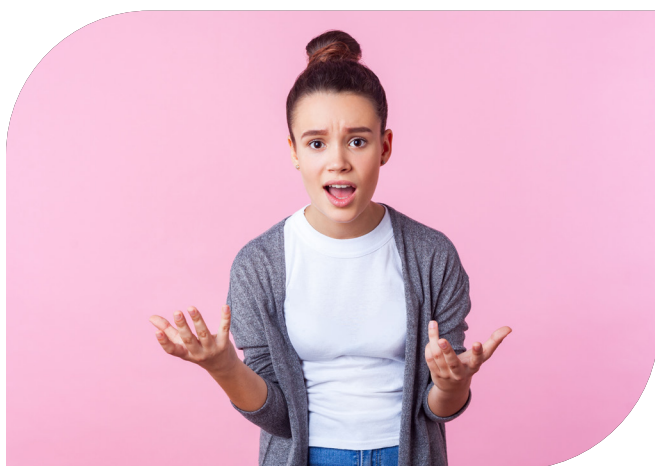Share the love. BE who you say you are. DO what you say you do. LIVE the language and actions of caring and sharing.

Family Matters

A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS

IN ALL THINGS

Truth

The TV program "To Tell the Truth" ran from the mid-1950s all the way up to the early 1990s.

It has now been reimagined with current host Anthony Anderson and a few variations, including the presence of his extroverted mother who gives input at various times. There are usually three contestants who claim to tell the truth about who they are, what they have done or what they do. A panel of judges asks questions, with the hope of discerning which one is the truthful individual. It is usually a lot of fun and often filled with surprise endings.

As parents, one of the most important values we want to see our children put into practice is to tell the truth — not just occasionally, not just when it benefits themselves, but all the time.

In our current culture, we often seem to experience people who deny the truth, just won't tell the truth or have their own spin on what is the truth. There are also those who tell false truths — claiming to be truth. None of these behaviors are helpful.

Back in the early 1500s, an Augustinian monk named Martin Luther was having trouble finding truth within the church, as there were several leaders teaching what he found to be contrary to the truth written in the Bible. Luther had been doing a great deal of study in Scripture and began to recognize the many errors of these church leaders. He shared his concerns in 95 sentences or theses, which he posted on the door of the local church in Wittenberg, Germany, initiating the start of the Reformation.

The Reformation was a quest to find the truth of God's Word in proclamation and practice in the church. This quest still continues to this day in the church and in society. Truth can be elusive and difficult to discover among fallen people who can't always recognize and speak truth, but we press forward, knowing that it is the right path to follow as it is truth which sets us free.

As people who want to put faith into practice in our communities, and as parents who want truth in our homes, it is our goal to raise up our children to be faithful to God's truth. Even more than 500 years later, we can continue to follow the example of Luther to seek the truth, speak the truth and put the truth into practice.

May your home be filled with words of truth centered on Jesus, who is the way and the truth and the 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:
BECOMING TRUTH TELLERS

PURPOSE

To engage family members in an activity that helps them see the value of always telling the truth.

OPENER

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

> What makes it hard to tell the truth?

> Has there ever been a time when you found it hard to tell truth? What did you do?

FUN FAMILY ACTIVITY:
TWO TRUTHS AND ONE FIB

❶ This game involves family members thinking about what they like and enjoy and then trying to trick the others in the family into believing something else.

❷ The leader will read each of the following topic areas, one at a time, and then ask family members if they can come up with two truths and one fib about that area. Members then see if the rest of the family can guess the fib. Not everyone has to respond in each area. Give family members time to think and be creative in their answers, and — most of all — have fun!

My favorite sports are:
I like to eat:
My favorite TV shows or movies are:
I have been to: (location: city, state, country)
My favorite Bible stories are:

❸ Game recap discussion:

> How did you like the game?

> How did you feel when someone believed your fib as truth?

> Was it easier to tell a fib or the truth?

> Why should we always tell the truth?

Have a member of the family read the following out loud:

Even though it was fun to play this game and get someone to believe our fib, we know that God will want us to always tell the truth. Words of truth build trust among friends and family. We should always be truth tellers. Jesus died on the cross to set us free from our sins, so we don't have to fib or hide from the truth. We know that God loves us and wants us to love others as well, and being a loving person means that we are always a truthful person.

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 Father in Heaven, thank You for Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life. Let us always come to Him with our problems. Help us to always be truth tellers within our family, with our friends, at our school and in our church. In the name of Jesus our Savior. Amen.

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Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Learning Opportunities:
Unfinished Learning

Last month, the possible negative connotations of the phrase *learning loss* were discussed, along with how it is more beneficial to approach these educational challenges in a positive way. I proposed looking at this school year as an opportunity to rethink some aspects of education and how we view student success rather than viewing student learning as something that is broken and needs to be repaired. Building on that idea, let's look at some things we might need to unlearn before we can relearn and reframe what progress looks like going forward.

The first thing we might need to unlearn is previous definitions and models of what successful learning looks like at specific grade levels. In the past, you likely had academic assessments, universal screenings and progress monitoring tools to show you what concepts and standards students had mastered and areas in which they still needed to grow. While these assessments are likely still available and being used, you have or will probably see different results than you saw in your classes prior to 2020. These differences don't mean that students haven't and aren't learning however. They don't mean that learning has been lost and you'll never find it! The results mean that learning in some of these key areas is not finished yet. Students are still in the process of learning some of these skills that students in other years had already mastered. Going forward, you may need to unlearn and clear your mind of the comparison to students of previous years. Start with the clean slate of where your class left off with their learning from last year and what skills they absolutely need to master going forward.

What are the critical skills that were left unfinished (rather than thinking of them as lost)? There also may be some less critical skills that don't need to be thoroughly covered or prioritized.

Assessment has its place in determining what learning has been left unfinished. The potential danger comes in using and interpreting assessments in the same way as before. Assessment data should be used to guide our responses to individual student needs rather than using it to assign students to deficit-based groups based on how far they are below grade level. If we use this as the measuring stick for students, they will likely spend much of this year working in below-grade level content. We can't expect students to be successful with grade-level expectations and critical skills if our instructional groupings place them in below-grade-level content for a significant part of the school day. We need to unlearn the idea that for students to learn any new information, they must master everything that has been left unfinished.

This doesn't mean that we should ignore important prerequisite skills or not address these as we see students haven't finished mastering them. It does mean that we should be purposeful in addressing the concepts and skills that students haven't finished learning and tie these skills into a context that prepares them for new learning opportunities. These prerequisite skills should be worked into grade-level instruction prior to new skills being taught rather than all at once before moving forward with instruction. We need to make sure we're assessing students' abilities in a way that motivates them to grow, not in a way that discourages them. In the 2021 article by Stephen Merrill, "Too Much Focus on 'Learning Loss' Will Be a Historic Mistake" (*edutopia.org/article/too-much-focus-learning-loss-will-be-historic-mistake*), he outlined research showing that when students had an interest in math but were only assigned remedial work due to their lack of skills, they lost all interest and motivation and performed worse in the subject area. Students who were assigned more challenging math tasks performed much better, even in some areas of math in which they were weak.

John Hattie, in his extensive research for the book Visible Learning (Routledge, 2008), pointed out the relationship between the degree of difficulty of student goals and student performance. He found that students with the most challenging goals scored more than 250% higher than those with the easiest goals. This reinforces the idea that we need to continue to help students set high learning goals for themselves this year and know that they can achieve them! We can be strategic about addressing critical skills and unfinished learning while celebrating student successes and focusing on the opportunity God has given us to rethink some of our views of progress and what learning looks like in our schools. 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 as you help students with unfinished learning!

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made   VOL. 5, NO. 2 // OCTOBER 2021

Parent Pages

Building Brave Children

Have you ever worried over a child who was unusually timid or perhaps afraid of a specific event? Many children have difficulty performing in front of a crowd or experience fear going to the doctor. Most children are leery of doing something new unless they have watched someone do it first. We might be tempted to refer to timid children as shy or worry over their fearfulness, but in reality being cautious is a good thing.

While caution can be a birth-characteristic, children must learn how to be brave too. Part of being brave is assessing your situation correctly, so children who dive in without any caution are not brave — they are foolishly fearless.

It is good news that an emotion such as bravery can be learned because teaching this to our children helps them to make full use of the gifts with which God has blessed them. Even timid children can be brave when needed. The first thing to teach a child is that being brave does not mean you are not afraid. Fear is an emotion that helps us stay safe by making our brains pay attention to the situation. Being brave means you can keep yourself calm and use your ability to do what you need to do.

We should note that if your child shows fear because he or she suffered a recent trauma, then the best course of action is to seek out a good Christian therapist. Check with your pastor or principal for recommendations. If you are unsure whether what your child experienced caused trauma, consult your child's healthcare provider.

Children learn about their emotions in a process called *scaffolding*. Scaffolding combines experiences with input from essential people in the life of the child. Parents, siblings, peers and other trusted adults respond to a child and help him to understand an experience and grow from it. Scaffolding tends to happen in little bits over time rather than in one monumental conversation.

The goal of scaffolding bravery is not to demand a child be brave or to give her a "how-to" lesson on bravery. The goal is to guide the child to become more self-aware of the emotions God gave us and how to grow into them. Here are five techniques for successful scaffolding:

1. Help your child to remember similar events that caused fear or worry.

2. Evaluate the past situation to determine if the fear was necessary.

3. Teach that we grow into bravery.

4. Teach how to develop a plan for when we feel afraid in a given situation.

5. Help your child to refine emotion words by modeling a more appropriate term.

Here is an example of these techniques used in scaffolding:

CHILD: I don't want to go to the dentist. I'm scared.

PARENT: Let's think about the last time you went to the dentist. I remember you were scared then too. Did you get through that visit OK?

CHILD: Yes! I was brave. They took pictures of my teeth, and the toothpaste tasted like cherries.

PARENT: I think you are a bit worried about the dentist. What can you do to help yourself stay calm?

Here, the parent asks questions that help the child remember a similar event and how it played out successfully. The parent also did a subtle switch of the words to help the child realize that he was worried instead of scared. The conversation serves to gently remind the child that going to the dentist is a safe thing even if our brains worry over it a bit. All of this helps the child learn to cope with emotions and plan for future coping. It is a small conversation that packs a big learning punch.

Scaffolding teaches a child how to regulate emotions. We are born with six basic emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, disgust, fear and surprise. God gave us these emotions to help us to learn and to stay safe. However, as we grow, we need to express these emotions in more nuanced ways. Just like screaming infants learn words and gestures to tell us what they need, children can learn to step down their anger to frustration and their fear to caution. Having a range of ways to express emotions helps us to be better problem solvers.

The opposite of fear is not daring; it's calm. This is a mindset that acknowledges fear but puts it in its place so the brain can do its work. Help your children to understand that the reason we can be brave is because of God. Jesus died for us, and we were brought into the family of God through Baptism. God not only earns our trust but also gives us the ability to trust in Him. This trust stays strong even when situations cause us confusion, worry or fear.

"But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me" (2 TIM. 4:17).

Teach your child this simple Bible verse to remember when worry tries to turn into fear. Compose a short prayer together to recite at these times, or find a simple song to sing that speaks of God's strength. Our emotions and how we use them are always better when experienced with our God-given faith.

Professionally Speaking

Partnering with Parents, IN ALL THINGS

No matter how brilliant you are as a teacher, if you fail to partner effectively with parents of your students, you fail as a Lutheran school teacher. What we do in Lutheran schools is about so much more than educating children. It's about making disciples, whether you work with toddlers or teenagers. Lutheran educators daily share the faith with young ones, integrated into all things we do. But, we aren't the primary teachers of the faith for these children. God gave that role to the parents. That's where partnering with parents becomes essential.

In our Lutheran schools, we see many different types of parents. We've got nuclear families who worship with us every Sunday, families from other churches and denominations and parents who don't attend church at all. Some may not even be Christian. We've got unwed parents, single parents, divorced parents and grandparents as parents. I once had a family where mom had three children in our school, each with a different father, not married to any of them — but with all three dads still engaged in the children's lives! As educators in Lutheran ministries we have the opportunity — the mission — to share the faith with these parents. We pray that God's Spirit works through our words, engagement and interactions to touch these parents, to impact them positively. This may strengthen already-active faith, but it may also plant seeds of faith or even help correct a life course that is on a dangerous path.

We educators don't tend to teach directly to parents, but so much of what we teach the students trickles over. Additionally, we have many opportunities to interact with parents: talking about their children, chatting at events, meeting for conferences, engaging over field trips. Every interaction gives us the chance to shine God's love into the lives of these parents, demonstrating how God has impacted our own lives. Let your joy shine through! Then, as Peter writes, be "prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 PETER 3:15). Your relationship with parents will open doors.

As you help nurture the faith in parents, what you teach to the children has an exponentially greater impact. This is true of math, reading, history — but most powerfully regarding our faith. Thus, I'll say it again: to succeed as a Lutheran educator, partner with the parents. It's essential.

Rattles & Prattles

God Promises a Savior for ALL
"CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL" (COL. 3:11).

Bible Story: Adam and Eve disobey God.

Scripture References: Genesis 3:1–16

What it teaches us: God loves us, no matter what! He loves us so much He sent His Son, Jesus, to live a PERFECT life for us and to be punished, die and come alive for us.

Prepare to teach

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

› **Think:** Adam and Eve's disobedience changed man's relationship with God, but God didn't stop loving them. He showed His love and shared His plan to send a Savior. The first promise of the Savior in Genesis 3:15 is written in figurative language (i.e., Jesus would crush/kill the serpent/Satan when He lived, suffered, died and rose again).

› **Pray:** Dear God, as we share this pivotal event in the history of mankind, please help us focus on Your great love for us and ALL You did to make us Your children. In Jesus our Savior's name, we pray. Amen.

IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES

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).

❯ Pictures: do an internet search to find pictures (a) happy Adam & Eve, (b) tree with fruit, (c) sad Adam and Eve, (d) cross and heart and (e) happy Adam and Eve.

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, dear God. 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: 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.**

Sing the Story: Use the tune from "Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush." (Show pictures found above).

1. God made a home for Adam and Eve, Adam and Eve, Adam and Eve.
... food to eat and a place to sleep. God made a home for Adam and Eve.

2. Adam and Eve did something bad, something bad, something bad.
... ate some fruit God told them not-to; Adam and Eve did something bad.

3. But, God said, "I still love you, still love you, still love you.
... I'll send a Sav-i-or, Je-sus-My-Son." But, God said, "I still love you."

4. He-will-live, be-hurt and die for you, die for you, die for you.
Adam and Eve were happy again. Jesus would be-hurt and die for them.

5. Jesus-would-came alive again, alive again, alive again.
That news made them so hap-py; Jesus-would-come alive again.

What the Story Teaches: God never stops loving us, even when we make wrong choices. He loves us so much He sent His Son, Jesus, to be our Savior.

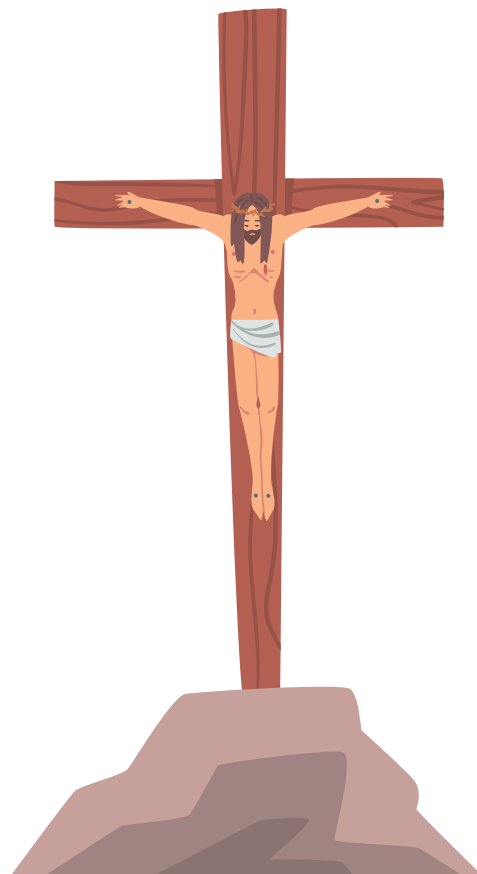**Song to Sing:** "Do You Know Who Died for Me" (*LOSP*, P. 93; begin with a verse:

"Do you know who loves me so" then use verses: lived, was hurt, died and lives.)

Time to Pray

Dear God, Thank You for loving us even though we make wrong choices. Thank You for sending Jesus to take away all our wrong choices. In His name. 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 as pastors do at the end of the service.

IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES

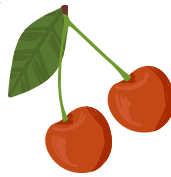**IDEA STARTERS** for integrating the Bible story and theme into STREAMS (curriculum)

S   Science and Nutrition

› **Science:** Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden — like a park. Take a walk In or look at pictures of a park. Name and talk about things they see.

› **Nutrition:** God told Adam and Eve to eat all the fruit from trees, except one. Serve a variety of cut-up pieces of fruit God gave us to eat. Before eating, lead children in a prayer thanking God for food.

› **Physical Education** (large motor): Adam and Eve walked around/took care of the garden/park. What can they do in a park? (walk, climb/hide behind trees, roll down hills, etc.)

T   Technology

› **Do an internet search** to find pictures to use for telling the story. What aspects of nature are the children interested in? (rocks, insects, etc.) Provide containers in which to place items; look at them with large magnifiers.
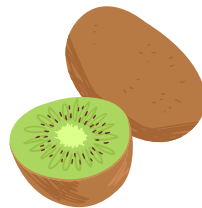
R   Reading and Language Art

› **Books:** *My First Book of Fruits* – a board book by Stephan Lomb (Amazon); *Llama Llama Yum, Yum, Yum!* a board book by Anna Dewdney (Grosset & Dunlap, 2016)

› **Rhyme/Poem:** piggyback of "Ring Around the Rosie." Ring-a-round the apple tree. Apples grow for you and me. Apples! Apples! They all fall down. (Repeat with oranges, peaches, pears, etc.)

E   Engineering

› **Ask, How do we eat food God gives us?** (fingers, spoons) Ask toddlers, How we might we get the

CONNECT WITH PARENTS
in your newsletter

Include a sample Bible story for parents to share. God cares for us no matter what we do. He loves us so much He sent Jesus to be our Savior. This story is a time to begin praying at mealtimes (thanking God for the food He gives).

fruit that's in a tree? Ladder? Hang a rope and climb? Shake the tree (like in the rhyme)? Ask for help?

A   Arts (art and music)

› **Art:** Use fruit-shape cutters and stamp pads. Encourage the children to make shapes by pressing the cutter in the stamp pad and stamp on a piece of paper.

› **Music:** Sing a song about the senses. "God Gave Me Eyes" (*LOSP*, P. 75); change verses to reflect things children know or are interested in.

M   Mathematics

› **Use the traditional action poem,** "Way Up High in the Apple Tree." Share math concepts; vary number of apples in the tree (1–5). Laminate cut-outs of fruit. Ask, How many of large/small? of the same color?

S   Social Studies

› **People are all alike.** God gives everyone eyes, ears, nose, tongue and fingers. Look at each other; see these gifts God gives us.

School Shepherd

THEME | The TRUTH of Jesus in All Things
All Things Truthfully Considered

"He is the head of the body, the church"
(COL. 1:18).

The Reformation celebration emphasizes the importance of the Truth of Jesus. In July 2022, youth of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will hear the truth "In All Things" at the LCMS Youth Gathering. Lutheran schools also celebrate the "In All Things" theme during the 2021–2022 school year. Lutheran schools share the truth of Jesus in all things.

The Apostle Paul had believed the lies claiming worthiness before God through his Jewish heritage and his own self-righteousness. God called Paul from darkness to light, from lies to the truth. Paul saw the resurrected Jesus and shared the truth of His resurrection. Paul confessed that in Christ, God had reconciled all things to Himself, "making peace by the blood of his cross" (COL. 1:20). In all things the main thing for Paul was the truth of God's grace only in Christ.

Martin Luther had believed in the lies of worthiness through his own works and reliance on the human hierarchy of the church. God called Luther from darkness to light, from lies to the truth. Like Paul, Luther confessed that salvation came only through "the blood of his cross" and only Jesus is "the head of the body, the church" (COL. 1:20; 1:18).

Lutheran schools are schools of the Reformation, teaching the truth of Scripture alone, Faith alone and Grace alone. It is important that Lutheran schools not only teach world history and our country's history, but most importantly teach biblical history and church history.

God has worked in and through history to continue to bring the truth of Jesus to all peoples and all times.

Lutheran school ministry takes place in a culture of lies. Human reason and human desires are prioritized and prized above God's Word. Multiple paths of spirituality are suggested as viable. Increasingly children and families enroll in Lutheran schools without a Lutheran or even a Christian perspective. A celebration of the Reformation provides an opportunity to celebrate the history of the church and God's grace through the ages. It's a time for the truth.

The School Shepherd is called to proclaim the truth of God's Word today. In the rite of ordination, the shepherd confesses "the Unaltered Augsburg Confession to be a true exposition of Holy Scripture and a correct exhibition of the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church" (*Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, p. 166). The pastor

confesses and is called to preach and teach the truth of Jesus. The truth of the Law is courageously shared bringing repentance. The truth of the Gospel is shared through Word and Sacrament.

It is a challenging time to be a truth-sharing and truth-living Lutheran church and school. It is tempting to listen to and be pressured by political and cultural voices. It is often unpopular and lonely to be spokespersons for the truth. In the spirit of the Apostle Paul and Martin Luther, the school shepherd seeks to serve Christ and to speak the truth of His Word.

Paul was also inspired to write, "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (EPH. 4:15). While the truth is always spoken unapologetically, it is always spoken lovingly. Speaking the truth brazenly or arrogantly often closes doors to hearing it. It is always the Spirit working through the Gospel who leads the hearer to the truth that is Christ. The school shepherd is called to speak

truthfully and lovingly in all things to students, staff, parents and all involved with the Lutheran school ministry.

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

> What lies in our culture tempt us to wander from the truth?

> What makes it more challenging to share the truth in today's culture and contexts?

> How is Reformation and Lutheran history taught in your school setting? How could such instruction be improved?

> What does it mean to be a truthful Lutheran church and school in your time and place?

HYMN

"Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word;
Curb those who by deceit or sword
Would wrest the kingdom from Your Son
And bring to naught all He has done.

"Lord Jesus Christ, Your pow'r make known,
 You are Lord of lords alone;
Defend Your holy Church that we
May sing Your praise eternally." (*LSB* 655, v. 1–2)

prayer

ALL THINGS IN JESUS' NAME

Thank You, Jesus, for being the truth (JOHN 14:6). Forgive us for the times that we listen to and often live in the lies of the devil and the world. Send the Spirit of truth to lead us to and keep us in the truth of Jesus. We pray that You might bless the ministry of our Lutheran school so that children and families rejoice in the truth now and eternally, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Student Needs:
Believing All Things Are Possible

The school year has started. A few crayons have likely already been broken, and once-white shoes may have a few scuff marks on them. Fresh haircuts have grown out and student tardiness has begun. As the teacher, perhaps you are already asking when the next school holiday will be. Yes, the newness of the school year is gone, and regular routines have, hopefully, now been established.

As children enter the classroom and put their backpacks away, do you notice anything about their process? As they use the playground, are any children having trouble climbing and running? Does anyone struggle with using scissors? Do you have a student who struggles to produce specific letter sounds? Now that you have gotten to know your students, you likely begin to notice more about their strengths and areas for growth. As a teacher, you want to naturally celebrate their accomplishments, but how do you move forward in helping a student who struggles in specific areas? What steps do you take when a typical profile of child development is not present?

As an early childhood educator, you are perhaps one of the first professionals to notice that a student struggles with an area of development. This is not necessarily a bad thing for a child; there is often a large window of opportunity in a child's growth and development. However, when there are concerns that fall outside of typical growth and development, it is important for you, as a caring and professional Christian educator, to help the child's parents understand the concern and make plans for early interventions. As your students are all gifts from God, it's important to recognize them as unique individuals yet provide supports in areas that need attention.

In early childhood education, interventions that occur early can be highly effective in providing support for a child. Whether work with a speech-language pathologist is needed for a child with speaking/speech sound concerns or work with a physical therapist is needed for a child who struggles with fine or gross motor development, the timing of receiving such supports can play a big role in seeing progress.

It is extremely important for early childhood educators to know what is within the range of typical growth and development for the children they work with. What should a 3-year-old be able to demonstrate? What academic skills should a kindergarten student be able to exhibit at the start and end of a school year? There are many resources available — both in printed and online formats. Check with trusted colleagues for resources they have used, or check with a professional who works with students who have unique needs. It's not necessary for you to have complete insight or knowledge of next steps, but it is important for you to know where to begin.

The following online resources may provide a starting point as you determine what developmental milestones are common at specific early childhood age levels.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention designed these checklists for parents, but you may find some simple ways to engage parents in conversations on this topic: *cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/checklists/all_checklists.pdf*.

School Ministries of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Pacific Southwest District has also provided an update of the popular "Ages & Stages" resource that was previously made available from the LCMS Board for Congregational Services. You can find the age-specific links here: *psd-schools.org/early-childhood*.

This resource from Australia of developmental checklists and charts give a comprehensive overview of what educators should help students work toward in their progress of goals for learning and development (click the link for Developmental Charts on the left): *childdevelopment.com.au/resources/child-development-charts*.

This same resource from Australia provides educators with a list of behaviors and instruction of when to seek additional supports (click the link for Developmental Checklists on the right): *childdevelopment.com.au/resources/child-development-charts*.

You can also locate early childhood pedagogical books at a public library or check with a special education resources center of a local public school for additional resources. Even in a Lutheran school, you may have access to unique resources from a local public school that can be utilized to benefit your students and families.

As a faith-filled, Christian educator, you know that in Christ all things are possible. Look for ways to provide students opportunities to grow in their development — socially, emotionally and physically, but also spiritually. As a teacher and leader in a Lutheran school, spiritual development should be of utmost priority!

Know that planting the seeds of faith in young children takes a special gift; God had given you a special talent to work with young children. Use your talents to share God's love with your students in various ways: reading, art, music, exercise and so on. Jesus isn't just for Jesus Time — He is for all of the time!

Providing a holistic education means understanding and being mindful of a child's learning in all areas. As Jesus shares in Scripture, "All things are possible for one who believes" (MARK 9:23); you can be assured that God is "all in" for you and your students. Plan your daily lessons and activities with student success in mind, engage students in opportunities where they can be successful in their learning and growth and don't be afraid to provide additional supports and seek additional resources when necessary.

Believe in your students! Pray for them daily and ask God to bless their growth and development in all areas!