



JANUARY 2022

SCHOOL MINISTRY

Mailing





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SCHOOL MINISTRY MAILING

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Alight

FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS



NEW YEAR BLESSINGS in School Ministry!

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (HEB. 13:8).

Happy New Year! Many people wonder what it's going to be like in the year ahead. When we take time to reflect on the joys and challenges of the past year, we can look forward confidently with joy to a new year knowing that one thing is certain: our future is in the hands of a loving God! This is clearly evident in the LCMS School Ministry office where we serve more than 1,880 Lutheran schools across the nation and around the world.

We begin this year with two new members of the School Ministry team! We welcome Alan Freeman who is serving as our new Associate Director. Alan brings a wealth of experience in school leadership with previously serving as Headmaster of Concordia Preparatory School near Baltimore and more recently as the Education Executive in the LCMS Missouri District. Additionally, Alan serves as the President of the Missouri Council for American Private Education and Vice President of the Missouri Non-public School Accrediting Association Board. Alan has a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education from Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Neb.; a master's degree in Education Administration and Supervision from Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, Wis., and an Education Specialist degree from



Members of the LCMS School Ministry team are, from left, Katie Ervin, Dr. Rebecca Schmidt and Alan Freeman.

the University of Nebraska at Kearney, and he is currently completing his dissertation for a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. Alan shares, “I look forward to working with the team at the National Office of School Ministry as we joyously support and serve church workers and school ministries as they spread the Gospel message and train the next generation of Christian leaders!”

We also welcome Katie Ervin! Katie has served in the LCMS Office of National Mission (ONM) as the Coordinator for Witness & Outreach Ministry for the past two years and is now continuing her service in ONM as the Coordinator for School Ministry. Before working for the LCMS in St. Louis, Katie graduated

from Eastern Illinois University with a bachelor's degree in business in 2019. She is also a proud graduate of St. John's Lutheran School in Mattoon, Ill., where she attended preschool through eighth grade. Katie lives in St. Louis and enjoys exploring the many coffee shops, restaurants, parks and sporting events the city has to offer. Katie shares, "In my new role as the Coordinator of School Ministry, I'm excited to learn more about the 'ins and outs' of Lutheran education and support our educators and schools in the valuable work they do. I have wonderful memories from my time at St. John's and am thankful for the holistic academic, social and Christ-centered education that set me up for success in high school, college and beyond."

In reflecting on this new year in school ministry, we also give thanks for the faithful service of two beloved team members, Matthew Bergholt and Kristin Freeman, who are now serving in new positions. They will continue to be a blessing to the church with their many gifts and talents. God has blessed the work in School Ministry in the past and will continue to do so in the future. With joy, we look forward to all that will unfold with the gifts that Alan and Katie bring to the School Ministry office!

"This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (PSALM 118:24).



TIME TO GO HOME! Teachers lead students to their cars and buses after school at Trinity Lutheran School, Freistadt, Wis, on Oct. 20.



Community & Enrollment



This is the **fifth** 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?”

Influence and Building Community



Control, power, authority, decision-making ... influence. No matter the context, these words can raise hackles for most people. In the U.S. particularly, the “I’m OK; you’re OK” culture with a “you do you” mentality often makes individual autonomy more valued than honoring authority and conforming to expectations. In a school setting, the opinions parents have and voice to classroom teachers and administrators can be overwhelming and understandably more than teachers/administrators care to hear. However, when it comes to belonging to a community, McMillan and Chavis say “for

a member to be attracted to a group, he or she must have some influence over what the group does.”¹ That means, to attract families to your school and have them return year after year, parents need to have a feeling of influence over what happens at the school. How can this be done in a healthy way for both the school and the families?

This article will speak to the specific way parental influence intersects with the school community and how it impacts enrollment. My dissertation study found schools with declining enrollment had lower parent *sense of community* than schools growing and stable in enrollment.² Therefore, the practical question is how to increase *sense of community* with the end goal of increasing enrollment. McMillan and Chavis’s definition of *sense of community*, which was used in the study, included four elements: 1) membership, 2) influence, 3) integration and fulfillment of needs, and 4) shared emotional connection. The article last month focused on membership, this month will focus on *influence* and the next two months will cover the last two elements.

During the qualitative portion of my dissertation, I had the privilege to interview the nine principals of the participating schools. One principal, who was working to improve the community among parents and staff at the school, said, “Having *parents in power* is important.” He recognized the importance but also knew some parents in power brought negativity to the overall community.

Therefore, when hearing a call to allow parents to share power, also keep in mind the experience must be positive for parents, the school and the overall community.

Parent/teacher associations (PTL, PTA, etc.) are great ways for parents to share power and have influence at the school. Whatever the structure, however, parents must feel welcome to participate and know their voices matter. PTLs that are dominated by a close clique of parents are not helpful. Nor are PTLs where the school must beg and coerce parents to participate. For many schools, this means the PTL of days gone by needs to be put to rest. Another Lutheran principal agreed that a non-experience is better than a negative experience. Re-imagining PTL into a parent volunteer structure that allows everyone the opportunity to serve the school in a meaningful way in line with their skills and passions may be better than trying to revive an existing PTL program.

Are there other ways to allow parents to share their opinions and concerns so their voices can be heard? COVID limited parent interactions at many schools during the 2020–2021 school year. Regular doorway conversations between parents and teachers or parents and administrators did not happen. During this time, one principal in the study found an increased participation in surveys. Regular surveys asking questions that parents care about can be a great way for parents to feel heard. However, if you are going to send out surveys, you must also find a way to communicate that you have looked at the results, read people's comments and are taking them to heart. Taking action on every comment is not necessary, but people need to know they are heard and their voices matter. This can be done by sharing a summary of survey results, pointing to survey responses as helping to guide decision-making and referencing the survey in conversations with parents and staff. Regular, brief surveys with results that are analyzed, read and used in a meaningful way can help parents feel a cohesion to the school and a greater desire to remain at the school.

Town hall meetings are another way to allow parents to hear information and share their opinions. Town hall meetings offer a small setting that allows for a more personal conversation between school leaders and stakeholders. When a big decision needs to be made or a significant change is coming, it is good to offer many



town hall meetings so that all school stakeholders can participate in the discussion.

McMillan and Chavis said that influence goes both ways. Members want to feel they have influence over the community, and the community also has influence over them. In a Lutheran setting, we know when people spend time with Jesus, the Holy Spirit molds them to be more like Him. The power of the community of a Lutheran school is not just about increasing enrollment. Lutheran schools that are rooted in their values to share the forgiveness and love of Jesus, be Gospel-oriented and help students, parents and staff grow as disciples of Jesus will be communities that rub off on others. If nothing else rubs off other than the love of Jesus, the school has been successful. Allow people to influence your community, so that they will allow the community to influence them. In this way, we do kingdom work together.

Footnotes

¹ 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.

² 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.

Community & Enrollment

VOL. 1, NO. 5 // JANUARY 2022

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Kristen Newell Designer: Frank Kohn

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Computer File



Creating 3D DESIGNS & OBJECTS

Over the past several years, technology has developed at an incredible pace in the realm of allowing users to become almost part of the online environment or to bring the online environment to the world around themselves! Just take a look at all of the virtual reality experiences that are out there! Consumers can buy virtual reality headsets to play games and experience areas around the world. There are entire companies built around the amazing virtual reality experiences they offer. Going a step further, augmented reality is also becoming a larger part of our lives. Augmented reality is any time a phone or tablet is used to see something in the real world that is only digital in nature. The digital item or object adds to, or *augments*, the real world. The focus this month is how students can benefit from creating these digital 3D worlds or experiences.

According to the Interaction Design Foundation, using creative design skills is “key to a solution-based approach to solving real-world problems. Design thinking involves ‘creating many ideas in brainstorming sessions, and adopting a hands-on approach in prototyping and testing,’ as well as ‘ongoing experimentation: sketching, prototyping, testing, and trying out concepts and ideas.’” 3D modeling develops design thinking by supporting the creative processes that go along with it.¹

Connecting design thinking to 3D printing takes things a huge step further! The students are then able to physically touch and hold the items they have designed. Creativity, communication/collaboration, critical thinking, design thinking and iterative development are all actively part of the 3D printing process.²

¹Sammy Ekan, “Nurturing Creative Skills in Classrooms with 3D Modeling,” *eLearning Industry* (February 17, 2018), accessed September 15, 2021, elearning-industry.com/creative-skills-in-classrooms-with-3d-modeling-nurturing.

² Dremel Digilab, “Five Benefits of Using 3D Printers for Education,” accessed September 15, 2021, digilab.dremel.com/blog/five-benefits-using-3d-printers-education.

In the list above, “iterative development” is probably the idea that needs a definition for most people. I know I needed it defined! Iterative development is a process in which previously completed design cycles are reviewed and updated to produce a (hopefully) superior design and final product. Most apps on your phone are developed through iterations. That’s why you keep getting updates!

We’ve been given an amazing and wonderful world in which to live, so why not create our own worlds? So, this month, we’re looking at how to get your students designing 3D objects and environments!

“In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.
The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land”
(PSALM 95:4–5).

Minecraft (minecraft.net/en-us) **Video:** youtu.be/KTBTo96doas

My View: Minecraft is about as close to a perfect technology application as you will find. It may not be the first thing that comes to mind when some people think of 3D design, but it is a wonderful way to allow students to design a complete world with views from multiple perspectives. Add to that the options to do advanced design and coding, and you have something truly amazing.

Concerns: The devices you use could be an obstacle. Due to ownership, the pure education application is only available on laptops. In my school, we use tablets.

CoSpaces (cospaces.io/edu/) **Video:** youtu.be/KvouXADAVtI

My View: CoSpaces is fairly close to the level of Minecraft. You get access to a classroom dashboard and have the ability to assign tasks. Students can develop 3D worlds that can be experienced through virtual reality. Block-based coding is also a strong component, allowing students to program objects in the environment to move and become interactive. Students also have the ability to search for and import 3D objects from other platforms! All of this creates an amazing digital storytelling experience!

Concerns: CoSpaces does have a per-student cost that may be somewhat of an obstacle. Check it out and decide if you’ll use it enough to justify the cost. I think you will — CoSpaces can be used in so many areas!

Tinkercad (tinkercad.com) **Video:** youtu.be/gOs6Mdj7y_4

My View: This is my go-to for anything related to 3D printing. I start students in third grade on Tinkercad for their first 3D design experience. This is a robust creation platform. Students can start on a basic level designing and move at their own pace to more advanced designs and structures. There are also options for importing designs from other creators as well. Interestingly, you can even use Google Drawings to design SVG files that can transfer to Tinkercad (youtu.be/Kax6bur-e34). Oh ... and it’s free!

Concerns: The only concern is that Tinkercad lacks a built-in environment for students to create within. You will need to have an idea of what you want them to do before using it. There are, however, many lesson plans available! (tinkercad.com/lessonplans)

SketchUp (sketchup.com/products/sketchup-for-web) **Video:** youtu.be/I_bJPNnO3HQ

My View: SketchUp is a wide-open 3D environment ready for designing. There are very robust tools for building and manipulating creations. Teachers can establish classes and projects for students. Those students can import existing designs and download their creations for use in other platforms and even for 3D printing.

Concerns: SketchUp is not as easy to use as Tinkercad. While there are more features here, they are more challenging to use. Still, some advanced users may enjoy the more fully developed options.

Makers Empire (makersempire.com) **Video:** youtu.be/M_u9kpKZXvU

My View: Makers Empire is a wonderful platform to begin introducing 3D design to students at younger ages. The interface is easy for early elementary to understand, and the design is appealing. The paid version has a teacher dashboard with access to many lesson ideas and assignments. There is even a game design element built in!

Concerns: Cost again is a concern. For one classroom to use this at a paid level, you would need to explore the lesson ideas well and implement the program frequently. Also, tablets would be needed unless you have Chromebooks that support the Google Play store.



Merge Cube (mergeedu.com/cube) **Video:** youtu.be/PjVj2AH1Q8A

My View: Merge Cube has a ton of options and apps that work with the cubes! Virtual reality capability has also been introduced recently. There is a wide variety of content area tie-ins and ways to design right with the cubes. This also allows students to hold designs that come from applications like Tinkercad.

Concerns: The yearly price is quite high for a single classroom. As with other apps, you would need to use this frequently to justify the cost. It does what it does very well, but I don't see enough creative components here. Still, it does a very nice job of using augmented reality and virtual reality. Finally, devices with rear-facing cameras (phones, tablets) would be needed.

Cura/Creality Ender 3 Pro (ultimaker.com/software/ultimaker-cura) **Video:** youtu.be/NsGOoi3677M

My View: These are my recommendations if you are ready to venture into the world of 3D printing! The Ender 3 Pro printer is an affordable and reliable option. There is assembly required, but that is part of the learning potential for older students! Cura is a slicer, which means it takes what you've designed and slices it into layers so the printer knows how to print. It's an easy-to-use program with very detailed options if someone is looking for more.

Concerns: Cost, speed, fine tuning. Of course, there are costs associated with 3D printing. Also, due to the speed of printing, you'll find yourself wishing you had two or three or more printers to handle the printing load of items students design. Assembling and fine tuning the printer can be a bit challenging. Finally, a laptop will be needed to run Cura; it won't run on a Chromebook.

Hopefully, you can try one or more of these ideas for designing 3D objects and environments! Just have fun with it! If you show an adventurous spirit, your students will follow! Here is this month's **video overview:** wevideo.com/view/2379852876.

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 Metaverse (studio.gometa.io/discover/me, **Video:** youtu.be/m6AvPEmooU4). This is an incredible augmented reality app that allows students to create quizzes and interactive tales. Logical and sequential thinking is key here! Try it out!

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. 5 // JANUARY 2022

Writer: Mr. Corey Nelson Designer: Erica Schwan

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY



Early Childhood Devotions

FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7

IN ALL THINGS **JOHN 1:3**

FOCUS: Jesus in All (Col. 1:15–20)



Jesus Came for All

(Wise Men Meet Jesus, Matt. 2:1–12)

Before You Teach

“The story of the journey of the Wise Men confirms again that Jesus came for all. These eastern sages were foreigners — not of Jewish nationality or faith. But their memorable inclusion with all those who were led to meet Jesus shows that God’s salvation plan is extended well beyond the local borders of time and place. The adoration and gifts of these strangers were no doubt a surprise to Mary and Joseph, and especially to Herod, and their appearance demonstrates God’s plan to reach all people, everywhere. We can learn from this story to always be ready for God to surprise us with opportunities to bring others with us to meet Jesus.

Greeting

Throughout this New Year, use the critical first five seconds upon a child’s arrival to establish a positive tone for the day. Greet and welcome each: **Good morning child of God!**

Gathering

Signal children to gather in your worship area. Light your Christ candle (see December issue).

Tell the Story

You will need: A five-point star (purchased or made). Tell the narrative as you place a finger on each of the five points.

- 1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Wise Men from the east saw a bright star, different from all others in the sky.
- 2 There, they asked, “Where is He, the boy who has been born King of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose in the sky, and we have come to worship Him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled.
- 3 Gathering the leaders, he asked them where Jesus, the Christ, was to be born. The leaders told him, “In the town of Bethlehem.” Herod then sent the Wise Men to Bethlehem and said, “Search everywhere for this child, and when you have found Him, bring me word so that I may also worship Him.”
- 4 The Wise Men left, following the star until it stopped. Filled with great joy, they went into a house. Seeing Mary with Baby Jesus, they knelt and worshiped Him. Then,



Following God’s guiding star, the Wise Men came to the city of Jerusalem.

opening their treasures, they offered Jesus precious gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

- 5 Warned not to return to Herod, the Wise Men left and traveled a different way back to their own country.

PRAY:

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

Jesus, our Savior and King.

To You, our gifts we do bring.

With love, Your praises we sing. Amen.

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

Pre-K & K: “Oh come, let us sing to the LORD” (PSALM 95:1).

Grades 1 & 2: “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him” (MATT. 2:2).

Activities

CREATE: GUIDING STAR. *You will need: Five-point stars, precut from tag board or construction paper (one per child), markers, crayons, decorative materials and glue. Children decorate precut stars. Review the narrative, encouraging children to use the five points of their stars to retell the biblical story to family members and others.*

DO: WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? Invite children to share ideas about what the Wise Men may have said or done after their visit with Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus. Option: Write and compile, or record, children’s comments, then share the collection with families.

SING: “Little Children, Can You Tell” (LOSP, P. 86); “Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful” (LOSP, P. 87).

FUNDAY FRIDAY: Happy New Year! Make and decorate crown party hats. Provide outlined and pre-printed numbers “2022” for children to decorate. Have a parade complete with rhythm instruments to play and streamers to wave.

CAMP SERVE: Identify needs and opportunities for service in your community with your *Camp Serve* Leader. Prayerfully consider which can realistically be addressed. Set goals. Build a core service team, identifying individuals with the connections to achieve goals. Enlist others for short-term service, based on skills needed.

Sending

You will need: A star to pass.

Gather children in your “Sending Circle.” Review highlights of the day. Pray together, inviting the children to offer a prayer as the star is passed and received or to silently pass it along. Dismiss, saying to each, “**Go, tell others about Jesus.**”

Live the Story

The Magi, learned men from the east, came and humbly knelt before the Child Jesus to worship Him. We can only wonder about the long-term impact meeting Jesus had on their lives and their faith after they returned to their own country. Having met Jesus, what is your story of faith? How is it shared?



Early Childhood Devotions

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Judith Christian Designer: Erica Schwan

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

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Family Matters

A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS



In All Things ... Hope

By now, the beginning of 2022, we had thought this pandemic would surely be over! Yet, it still lingers.

By now, we had hoped things would be back to normal — but they are not. Things, in fact, may never be quite the same as they once were — we hear the terms “new normal” or “emerging normal” entering our discussions. However we characterize what lies ahead, the feelings can perhaps be summed up in one word — hope. We hope this virus will go away. We hope that no one else gets sick. We hope that we can feel safe again as we move about and gather in social settings. We hope, indeed.

We hope for a lot of things in life! We hope for simple things, like the elevator will get us to the next floor. We hope that the light will stay green. We hope that the weather will be nice today. We also direct our hopes to more complex concerns, such as we hope crime rates will go down and that our children will get a good teacher this coming year. We hope for safe travel for our loved ones, and we hope for peace in the world.

Hope is more than just wishful thinking. While some may consider hoping and wishing to be the same, as people of God we know they are different. For the be-



liever, hope is anchored in faith and tied to love. The writer to the Hebrews noted, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (HEB. 11:1). Hope is something that can happen, that is indeed possible as guided by God! Wishes are usually just fanciful thinking and dreams that we know probably won’t come true.

So, as a parent, what are you hoping for this coming year when it comes to your family? Certainly, health and safety for your family during the waning days of the pandemic. Financial security is something that parents seek. What else? Do you hope for an increase in faith of those in your household? What about your leaders? Your boss, supervisors and those in local, state and national government positions — what hopes do you have for them?

As previously mentioned, hope is tied to faith, and one example of faith in action is prayer. With the wonderful gift of prayer, we can direct our hopes to God. We can turn our wish lists into prayer lists — putting our hopes into requests to God in the name of Jesus.

In all things, let us remain hopeful and prayerful.



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: A PRAYERFUL START TO 2022

PURPOSE

To engage family members in creating a more active prayer life as a family and as individuals.

OPENER

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

- › What is something you hope will happen for you during 2022?
- › What is something you hope will happen within our family during 2022?
- › What is something you hope will happen in our church or community during 2022?



PARENT SHARE TIME:

Allow each parent and any other adult gathered with the family to share their responses to the follow open-ended questions.

- 1 Share one thing you hoped for as a young person that came true later in life.
- 2 Talk about how long it took for this to become reality, and how you managed to stay hopeful about things along the way.
- 3 Identify for the young people gathered some tips on staying hopeful in the midst of uncertain times.

TURNING HOPES AND DREAMS INTO PRAYER!

Prayer is conversation with God. It is sharing our thoughts, hopes, concerns and requests with Him (even though He knows them already). There are many circumstances to pray about and many people to pray for as 2022 starts to unfold. As a family, take a look at the chart below and discuss:

- 1 Who your family will want to be praying for — friends, other family members, leaders, neighbors, pastors, teachers, coaches, etc.
- 2 What the prayer focus could be during the coming year — health, success in school or work, wisdom in leadership, etc.
- 3 When and where you will pray — in the morning, evening, dinner, on your own, during family devotions, etc.
- 4 How often you will pray — daily, multiple times a day, weekly, etc.

	WHO	WHAT	WHEN/WHERE	HOW OFTEN
Dad	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mom	_____	_____	_____	_____
Child 1	_____	_____	_____	_____
Child 2	_____	_____	_____	_____
Child 3	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____	_____

Fill out the chart and post it somewhere in the home where family members will see it often and be encouraged in their prayer life.

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 giving us hope in Jesus, who died for our sins, and rose to give us the hope of eternal life. Help us to always trust in Your promises, to always put our hope in You and to remain faithful in the year ahead. In the name of Jesus our Savior. **Amen.**



Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



Rebuilding Student Agency

Student agency can be defined as a student's ability to engage in efforts to reach a goal. This is critical to learning because we know that teaching and learning is not as simple as a teacher conveying information and students passively taking in that information. Students need to understand the role they play in their own learning. This has become even more important over the last two years with disruptions to a typical school schedule and times of distance learning. Students are not necessarily seeing their efforts pay off to reach goals in the same way as they did previously. Rebuilding student agency is another key component for educators to consider as a learning opportunity for the remainder of this school year.

Teaching practices and style play a large role in building student agency. When students do not experience much autonomy in the classroom and teaching practices are highly controlled, relying on compliance and achievement, students may not see that they have the ability to take action in their learning. They come to view learning as something that happens to them, and this can result in learned helplessness. Teaching practices that increase students' autonomy help to build agency. These practices include encouraging discussion, asking for and listening to students' points of view, giving specific and informative feedback and showing students how their actions lead to improved learning.



In order to rebuild student agency this year, provide students with opportunities for self-reflection and self-assessment. A strategy previously shared this school year was having students develop portfolios, but there are additional strategies that help students reflect on their progress on a regular basis. Having the opportunity to frequently self-assess helps students make plans for their own improvement and makes them more aware of their strengths and challenges. This builds student agency. One way to accomplish this is to, at the start of each unit or chapter, share with students the skills or success criteria that the unit of study will entail. Have each student self-rank these criteria in terms of the relative level of difficulty of each item. This helps them develop agency and know where they may need to focus their efforts at learning the material, and it also helps you as the teacher to know areas certain students feel they might need more assistance. This is different than a standard pre-assessment because students must think about



their own knowledge and skills rather than demonstrate mastery of specific skills through answering questions.

As educators, you're likely used to comparing a student's work over time, but are opportunities provided for students to do this with their own work? Rather than placing the focus on how students are improving compared to other students in the classroom, have students conduct self-assessments. Have them compare an assignment from six weeks ago to a similar assignment from the current unit of study. This allows them to build agency and further reflect on their own learning and growth. This is often motivating for students who have larger gaps in their learning and often compare themselves to their peers rather than looking at their own progress. This is particularly important as students have different areas of unfinished learning this school year, and each student may need to improve in an area that is different from classmates.

One final idea for rebuilding student agency and addressing areas of unfinished learning is to collaboratively set individual goals with each student. These goals should be specific, challenging to that individual student, based on self-improvement and valuable to that student. A goal to "get better grades" may seem worthwhile to educators, but it is too vague, does not show the actions students plan to take to achieve it and may not be meaningful to that student.

Getting better grades is likely an example of a goal a student would set because the teacher told the class to write a goal. Have conversations with each student as they individually set goals that have value to them, and help each of them develop a plan for how self-assessment will occur to see progress toward these goals over time. These goals are not focused on comparing the student to others in the class, but they are personal-best/growth-oriented goals. Check in with students about their progress over time and help them adjust as needed.

These ideas help students rebuild agency, which is a critical component to their learning especially after the last two years of uncertainty and change. First Thessalonians 5:11 says, "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." Rebuilding student agency is a way to encourage students and build them up, recognizing that each of them is fearfully and wonderfully made. For more ideas, 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. 5 // JANUARY 2022

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Kara Bratton Designer: Erica Schwan

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Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



Loving Your Teen through Brain Reconstruction

To reconstruct something is to rebuild it and restore it to working order. God's design of our brains includes several times of reconstruction. The first occurs at the beginning of toddlerhood, when the brain needs to create order out of neurological chaos. Do you remember the challenges of the toddler years? Your teenager is undergoing another significant brain change. The brain changes happening between the tween and teenage years reconstruct the neural pathways to enable the brain to do wondrous things. Prior to this change, children are learning to use logic and reasoning, but they will be using these skills more effectively after this change. The challenge is getting through the time of reconstruction when the brain seemingly loses some skills while rebuilding. It is a stage which should have the title "What were you thinking?"

The length of this article does not allow us to dive into all of the brain changes happening, but one we can readily see is the change in proprioception. Proprioception is the map our brain has of every part of our body. It allows the brain to keep track of movement and touch. When a teenager experiences a

growth spurt, the brain change can't keep up with the new longer torso and limbs. This lagging is seen when clumsiness occurs and a child who just last week could fly up the stairs now finds himself tripping. Soon, the brain updates those body maps, and agility returns. This is a good metaphor for what is happening in terms of reasoning skills and behavior choices. The brain has some new, unfamiliar tools that need to be installed. In the meantime, old tools are temporarily off-line.



The brain changes happening between the tween and teenage years reconstruct the neural pathways to enable the brain to do wondrous things.

"For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace. In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me" (PSALM 86:5-7).

This prayer of David gives us insight into how to navigate these years with our children. As God meets us with steadfast love, grace and a willingness to address the trouble we find, we can see this as a model for parenting during brain reconstruction.

Accept that problems will occur and be prepared to react in a firm, calm manner. We are all sinners living in a sinful world, so we cannot prevent the consequences of poor choices and

bad behavior. Although it feels like your teen is giving you a hard time, it's because she is dealing with new challenges. Now is the time to set aside anger in favor of patience and forgiveness.

Facilitate learning from failure and mistakes. This learning will help to avoid all-or-nothing thinking so common with young people. A mistake made today is not a life sentence; it is a lesson learned tomorrow. We live as simultaneous saints and sinners. Our lives are a struggle against sin, but our Savior has accomplished the victory.

Talk often and about everything. Teenagers pull away from interaction with parents, so parents need to be proactive in initiating conversation. It's OK if the conversation is short. Each interaction serves as a reminder that you are available to talk during times of difficulty as well as times of rejoicing. Don't shy away from the uncomfortable subjects. The world is talking about sex and drug use, so you will want your children to hear about God's plan for their growth and health. Here again, short, frequent conversations will accomplish the goal. You don't have to tackle the entire subject in one sitting. You will want faith learning to be included in the brain remodeling.

Teach your teen tools to handle peer pressure. Those short conversations along with stories from your youth will help your teen to see that anytime friends are together, someone is influencing, and that influence can be healthy or damaging. Brainstorm ideas of what he can say to steer a group toward healthy choices. Be



committed to picking her up under any circumstances if she finds herself in a situation with the potential to cause problems. Rescue first — talk about it later.

Lead your child in the practice of spiritual disciplines such as weekly worship, Bible study and daily devotions. You don't have to be perfect in this modeling, but it is essential for your teen to see that these practices are integral to your family's life. Now is the time to build such practices into brain reconstruction.

Remember that raising your teen is not about you; it's about what God accomplishes through you. Keep yourself in the Word. Give your concerns to God in prayer. Form an informal support group with parents from your church so you can encourage one another and pray for each other.

When in doubt — lead with grace. Be steadfast in your love for your child, knowing that God is working in his life and in yours.



Professionally Speaking



Follow God's Lead, IN ALL THINGS

The role of an educator is one of leading. While this is obvious for early childhood directors and principals, it's just as accurate for teachers. You lead students in your classroom. You lead the basketball team in practices and games. You provide leadership for the Parent/Teacher organization, the spring musical, the summer Fourth of July float committee. Whatever your role, people look to you to follow your lead. Some follow enthusiastically, others with some reservations, but for the most part they look to you as a professional educator expecting you to lead positively. They trust you are committed to lead them well. I'm here to tell you today, make sure you don't let these people down, whether staff members, school parents or the children looking up to you at circle time.

Now, let's add a relevant verse of Scripture: "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea" (MARK 9:42).

No pressure, eh?

There is definite pressure on us to lead well. Teachers are to lead their students accurately in all things academic, in social-emotional learning, in spiritual development. Parents and the children are counting on us. Leaders are expected to enable faculty and staff members to fulfill the school's mission in a manner that is sustainable, so that Gospel truths continue to impact children and families in deeply relevant ways for many years to

come. Every decision we make, every word we share, contributes positively to or impacts negatively the ministry effectiveness of our Lutheran Schools.

So how can we do it well? I put forward that you follow the lead of the One who modeled excellence in all things — our Savior Jesus. He provides us with tangible and realistic examples of how to lead well, whatever role. As He demonstrated, stick to these methods and you should do well:

- Speak with integrity, but not without kindness and care (JOHN 4:4-26);
- Feed your faith regularly with the Word of God (JOHN 8:31);
- Empower those you lead to practice what you teach (LUKE 10:1-23);
- Remember to reserve time for self-care, and for prayer (LUKE 5:16); and
- Cling to God's priorities and purposes (LUKE 22:42).

Finally, let me emphasize something I'm sure you recognize — only Jesus was perfect. Lead with humility and be prepared to acknowledge your errors and then to ask for forgiveness. About the worst thing an educator can do is to say or do the wrong thing and then try to pretend it was the right thing. Model confession and accept forgiveness, and by so doing you will be teaching the way of God's people.



Professionally Speaking // JANUARY 2022

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Mr. Jim Scriven Designer: Lisa Moeller

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Rattles & Prattles

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS



Jesus Came for ALL. “CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL” (COL. 3:11).

Bible Story: The Wise Men Worship Jesus

Scripture References: Matt. 2:1–12

What it teaches us: Matthew wrote this biography of Jesus for the Jewish people. It includes many Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah. In this account Matthew makes it clear Jesus came to be the Savior of ALL people.

Prepare to teach

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

› **Think:** We don’t know much about the Wise Men, except what we read in Matthew. We do know they believed that the special star meant a king (MICAH 5:2) had been born — note Micah 5:4 says the new king’s kingdom would include the world. They came and worshiped Him. The Holy Spirit revealed Jesus was not only a new king, but also the Savior/King for All.

› **Pray:** Dear God, please inspire us to be a light to show the children, and their families, Christ is all, in all and FOR ALL. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.



WORSHIP TIME AND BIBLE STORY PRESENTATION

You will need

- Little Ones Sing Praise (*LOSP*), copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House (CPH), St. Louis, Mo.
- Picture of Jesus (do an internet search or use the one chosen in September)
- Pictures: Wise Men and star; camel; Wise Men riding camel; Wise Men kneeling to give Jesus gifts

Gather for Worship

Use tune of “Good-bye, Good-bye” (*LOSP*, P. 40).

Hello, Hello, He-lo-o-o, Hello, my friends, to you.
Please come here and sit with me; we'll learn of Jesus too. He-lo-o!



Invocation

Use melody from above.

Hel-lo, Hell-o, Hel-lo; Hel-lo-o-o. 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).

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.

Bible Story

Use pictures that form a star as you tell the story.

Long ago on the first Christmas night, God put a star in the sky — SO bright.



Wise Men who lived far, far away — were sure a new king was born that day.

They looked at each other, smiled and said, “Let's go and see Him.” And, that's what they did.

They packed up some gifts, food, clothes and their blankie too — Said to their families, “Bye, bye, see you.”

They rode their camels and followed the star — Until it stopped; see where they are.

They go inside the house, give Jesus their gifts and say, “Thank You, God, for this happy day.”

Jesus was born! Jesus was born! Jesus was born! Yippee!

What the Story Teaches: God put a star in the sky for the whole world to know He sent His Son to be the Savior of ALL.

Song to Sing: “In a Little Stable” (*LOSP*, P. 81). Add a verse: “Wise Men came to see Him following the star; bowed down low before Him, Lord and God of all.”

Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank You for coming to be the Savior of all people, and me. In Your name we pray. 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.

CURRICULAR MATERIALS //

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

S Science

➤ **God made the moon** and stars to shine at night. God put a special star in the sky when Jesus was born. Read a book — see “Books” below.

➤ **Physical Education:** Use duct/masking tape to make star and moon (circle) shapes on the floor. Play music and ask the children to “walk, run, hop, stomp” while the music is playing and go to the nearest shape when the music stops.

➤ **Nutrition:** Serve moon-shaped (circle) crackers/cookies with sliced moons (bananas) and star-shaped pieces of cheese.

T Technology

➤ **Pretend the Bible story.** Tape a Christmas star on a wall and put a manger scene on the floor beneath. Use flashlights to find the star, Mary and Jesus.

R Reading and Language Arts

➤ **Books:** Reread Christmas books that include the story of the Wise Men; *Good Night, Moon*, board book by Margaret Wise Brown (Harper Festival, 2007); *I Love You, Sun, I Love You, Moon* by Karen Pandell (G.P. Putnam’s Sons Books for Young Readers, 1994).

➤ **Rhyme/Poem:** Revise “Ride a Cock-horse to Banbury Cross” for our Bible story:

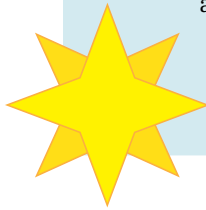
“Ride a camel to Bethlehem to see Boy Jesus in a small house; Kneel down before Him and give Him gifts, three. Jesus is the Savior for you and for me.”

E Engineering

➤ **Ask what the Wise Men would need to pack.** Put various items in backpacks. You might pack a snack, book and blankies to take out for rest time.

CONNECT WITH PARENTS in your newsletter

Jesus, God’s Son, came to be Savior of all the people in the whole world — no matter what language they speak or what culture/country they are from. Jesus came for everyone. He lived, suffered, died and rose alive again for ALL. Do a chant with your child: “Jesus was born. Jesus was born. Jesus was born. Yippee!”



A Arts (art, music)

➤ **Art:** Crayon Resist: Invite children to use crayons to draw stars on a piece of paper. Then use a brush to lightly apply a black watercolor wash on the paper. When it dries, they will see stars in the sky!

➤ **Music:** Sing the traditional “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” Add a second verse:

“Twinkle, twinkle, special star. Wise Men saw you from afar. Rode their camels through the night; found Boy Jesus in-the morning light ... Twinkle ...”

M Mathematics

➤ **Focus on shapes:** full moon (circle) and star shapes. Duplicate sizes of both and make several. Laminate and cut out. Invite children to find the same shapes (match stars or moons); find ones that are the same size; sort by twos, threes, fours or fives.

S Social Studies

➤ **The Wise Men came from a different culture.** The children in our classrooms probably come from different cultures too. Learn about them, celebrate them, and remind them Jesus came for ALL people.



School Shepherd

TIPS AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONS WITH SCHOOLS



THEME | The **LIGHT** of Jesus in All Things

All Things **LIGHT**ly Considered

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations will come to your light” (ISAIAH 60:1-3).

The many and varied lights of the Christmas season are extinguished or packed away. The short, often dreary days of winter give way to long, dark and, in many regions of our country, cold nights. For some, the realities of the season lead to a SAD (seasonal affective disorder) diagnosis. Physicians and psychologists prescribe *light*.

The darkness of sin affects all seasons and all people: “for at one time you were darkness” (EPH. 5:8). We live in the darkness of our sinful desires, words and deeds. The prince of darkness hovers over the world, our homes and Lutheran schools.

The theme text (COL. 1:15-20) for the “In All Things” Lutheran school Chapel Talks resource and National Lutheran Schools materials is preceded by the Good News: “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (COL. 1:13-14). Isaiah’s prophecy has been fulfilled. Jesus came as the Light of the world to experience the darkness of death on Good Friday and the darkness of the tomb. In the sunrise of Easter, the Light conquered the darkness of sin and death for all who believe.

Lutheran schools experience darkness. The darkness comes to children, families, teachers, administrators

and pastors. The darkness may come in family struggles or tragedies. The darkness may come in depression or other mental health struggles. The darkness may come in conflict between children, parent and teacher or administrator, administrator and pastor, congregation and school or other entities.

In Lutheran schools the darkness is not denied. The darkness is confronted and confessed so that the light of Jesus may again shine through. There is a feeling of warmth when the lights are on in a home or school. The message to children, parents, staff and ministry partners is “The LIGHT is always on in our school.” The Lutheran school is the *light* on the hill (MATT. 5:14).





prayer

ALL THINGS IN JESUS' NAME

Thank You, Jesus, for being the Light of the world, my life, the church and our school. Shine brightly in and through us, in Your holy name. Amen.

The Epiphany season is a special season of worship in the Church and in the Lutheran school. Throughout the season, the light of Jesus glows more brightly each week of worship as the lessons of the season emphasize that the miracles and teaching of Jesus confirm that He is the one true Light. In classroom and other contacts, children are reminded, “YOUR Light has come.” We hear little (and big) children singing, “This little Gospel light of mine, I’m going to let it shine” [*Little Ones Sing Praise (LOSP)*, copyright ©1989 Concordia Publishing House (CPH), St. Louis, Mo., p. 103].

The Epiphany season is a mission season in the church and Lutheran school. “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (MATT. 5:16). Through mission offerings, service projects and other avenues, Lutheran schools share and live the light of Jesus. “Light” Lutheran schools don’t market light beverages with fewer calories — they teach and share Jesus, the Light, who is always fulfilling.

The Lutheran school shepherd has received the Light of Jesus in his Baptism. He has been blessed to experience the Light through the study of the Word. He is called to share the Light and live the Light in the unique context of a Lutheran school and the congregation or partners that support the ministry. When the world or others try to turn off the Light, the school shepherd turns the Light on again!

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

- › When have you experienced or seen the darkness? How did the light of Jesus dispel the darkness?
- › Where are the temptations and distractions of darkness still present in your school or church ministry? How can the Light shine on and dispel the darkness?
- › How is the Epiphany season celebrated in your school? How can the light of Jesus be emphasized and shared?
- › Many congregations present a candle at the Baptism of a child: “Receive this burning light to show that you have received Christ who is the Light of the world,” (Lutheran Service Book Agenda, p. 9). How is the significance of Baptism taught and celebrated in your school?

HYMN

“I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus. God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus. In Him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike. The Lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.” (LSB 411:1)



Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



Yes ... Even in the Rain ... or Heat ... or Snow!

Educators and students in Finland are known for their heartiness and bravery in facing the weather elements. If there is rain, it is common for children in Finland to go outside each school day — for a portion of the day. If there is snow, it is again common for children in Finland to spend part of their school day outside. And, even when the sun is shining but the temperatures are low, children in Finland are seen outside playing and learning. There is a common phrase used in Finnish schools: “There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing.”

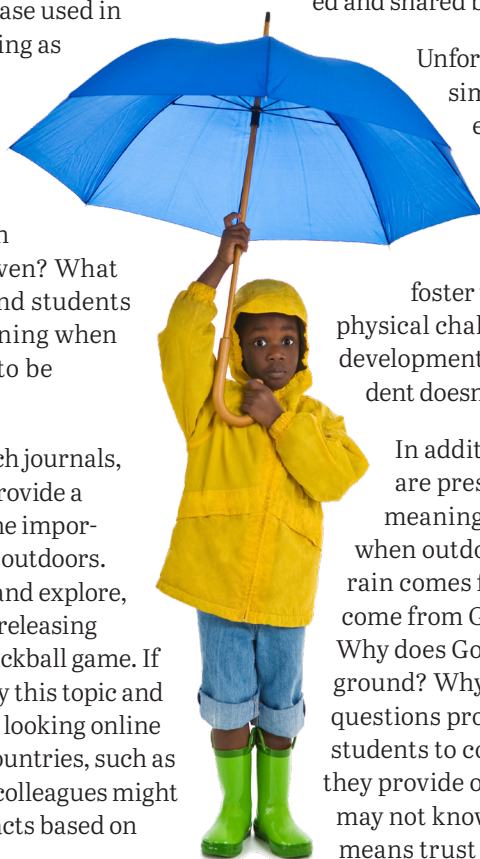
How often do you think about being outdoors with your students? What do you do when it’s cold, when it’s wet from an overnight rain or when the heat feels like a pizza oven? What provisions exist for your teachers and students to still enjoy the gift of outdoor learning when the weather is considered by many to be inclement?

Reading through professional research journals, or even a simple Google search, can provide a plethora of materials that highlight the importance and significant value of playing outdoors. Young children need the time to run and explore, but the benefits are much more than releasing energy, running fast and winning a kickball game. If you have time and really want to study this topic and gather research-based facts, consider looking online for resources that come from other countries, such as Finland, Australia or Germany. Your colleagues might be quite impressed when you share facts based on the Australian education system!

In addition to research-based facts about the importance of outdoor play in many different types of weather, it is also worthwhile to consider the gift and beauty of the outdoors that God has given. Teachable moments abound when you are outdoors with children. Large and small motor development, vocabulary learning, social-emotional intelligences and many other curricular areas are present when outdoors — they just need to be highlighted and shared between children and caring adults.

Unfortunately, outdoor time is seen too often as simply a break — for students and teachers both. While this is somewhat true, it’s important to not lose the value in being outdoors — for students and teachers both. Do not forget to interact with students, ask them questions, foster their creativity and provide them with physical challenges that promote their growth and development. What five-year-old kindergarten student doesn’t enjoy a challenge to race and run fast?

In addition, the faith-filled conversations that are present when outdoors can be extremely meaningful. God created everything that is seen when outdoors. The sun comes from God — the rain comes from God — and the trees and birds come from God. Why does God give rain or snow? Why does God make leaves turn colors and fall to the ground? Why does God make the sun so hot? These questions provide opportunities for teachers and students to converse about God’s might and power; they provide opportunities to model faithful trust. We may not know all the exact answers, but faith in God means trust in Him ... in all things!



Other benefits of outdoor play in all types of weather include growth in self-regulation and practice of executive functions. Children have to be patient when putting on warm clothes before going outside in cold weather. Waiting is hard for children but, when done appropriately, promotes growth in self-regulation. Children need to remember how to button and zip, the order of items to put on, where items are placed or hung when returning inside and much more.

Social interactions and emotional intelligences are also quite present in outdoor play but especially play when the weather isn't what most would consider perfect. Some children may need the encouragement of peers to get their feet wet or splash in a puddle. Other children may not know how to pack snow together, and still others may not know about sitting in shade when feeling too hot. Conversations between and support provided amongst peers are valuable tools!

Yes, there are preparations that must take place in order to be outdoors in all types of weather. Conversations with parents are important as you detail the value of playing in the rain, snow or heat. Precautions are necessary to keep children and adults healthy and safe. Modeling is important for children as they prepare themselves and participate in the environment. Reflective practice by teachers and school leaders is necessary to see what works well and what may need to be avoided when out in the elements. Consideration may need to be given to additional covered areas for shade and shelter on a playground, and additional spaces may be needed for the storage of rain boots, snowsuits or water bottles.

Do not be afraid to get started and try being outdoors, for learning and enjoyment, the next time the weather seems uncooperative. Here are some ideas to consider when your next rainy days presents itself:

SING AND DANCE OUTDOORS

Children love being able to describe their surroundings through song and dance; being outdoors in the rain and enjoying music is a great form of self-expression. In advance, learn some simple songs about rain, and, when outdoors in the rain, provide some safe instruments for the students to use. Old pots and pans and wooden spoons are always favorites.

BRING OUT BATH TOYS

When outdoors in the rain, toys that can safely get wet are necessary. From pool noodles to watering cans to floating items, see what can be found and look for opportunities to engage with children when using them.

CATCH RAIN DROPS

Pictures of children, chin up, trying to catch raindrops on their tongues, often make a happy visual. Sometimes simple pleasures are the best. Enjoy giggles and laughter with students as you catch raindrops on your tongue. Wear sunglasses or goggles if students are anxious about getting water in their eyes.

WATER COLORS

Provide students with colored pieces of construction paper and have them see what designs the raindrops make when they land on the paper.

ENGAGE IN THE SENSES

Take a few moments to engage students in conversations about their senses when it is raining. What do they feel? What do they see? What do they hear? The vocabulary and language used when conversing about senses can be very meaningful.

God has blessed you with a great environment that includes both indoor and outdoor components. Carefully think about how you will use the outdoors to enhance students' learning, not only when the weather is great, but also when the weather presents unique challenges, or opportunities, for a different type of learning.

God created all things, and in all things there is beauty! Remember that after it rains there is often a rainbow. Do not forget to share with students the beauty and importance of rain. Use the story of Noah's Ark to share the beauty of God's love and promises!

When the weather seems to be uncooperative, think of how to participate in the weather, as is possible, as a complement to student learning. God provides different types of weather, and, in Him, all things are good!



Time Out for Directors

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Drew Gerdes Designer: Lisa Moeller

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