



MAY 2022

# SCHOOL MINISTRY

# Mailing





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# SCHOOL MINISTRY MAILING

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# Alight

FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS



## In All Things

“Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 THESS. 5:17-18

May is a time for reflection. A parent of a student in a Lutheran school writes, “Thanks for everything you do. I always knew it was the best thing we would ever do for our kids sending them to a Lutheran school. I miss those days, but the lessons live on in my children that are no longer children. Thanks for being such a blessing to so many. The lessons we teach our children reach further and live longer than any of us can ever know.”

What a great time to thank God for our churches and schools! And we have a national opportunity in May to give thanks as well. In 1952, a formal National Day of Prayer was established by Congress and signed into law by President Harry Truman. In 1988, President Reagan signed an amendment that designates the first Thursday in May as a National Day of Prayer.

This year, the theme for this day of prayer is *Exalt the Lord Who Has Established Us*. The theme is based on Colossians 2:6-7, “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

Prayer brings people together. Prayer builds bridges and reminds us that we are created in God’s image and that He desires for us to represent Him everywhere we go. Scripture tells us that prayer is effective and that our loving God responds to His children in powerful ways. It is an honor and



privilege to gather together to pray for our nation, churches, schools, educators and the communities we serve.

Our 16,241 educators serving in 1,854 Lutheran schools are on my list during this month of reflection. In all things, children and students in early childhood through high school hear the life-changing Gospel message daily. Our educators are blessed to be a blessing to those they serve.

An alumnus writes, “Of all of those incredible teachers, my seventh-and-eighth-grade teacher, and also the principal, left the most indelible impression. He was cool, he was Christian, he made us play by the rules, but loved us all no matter what. He was the reason I went to college at Concordia in Nebraska and became a Lutheran school teacher.”

As we pray together for the faithful educators serving children and families across the nation, we are reminded that God listens to our prayers. A second-grader affirms this with a thoughtful note, “We have the best teachers in the world. I love my teacher and my friends too. The teachers and I get to learn about God and Jesus and the Lord.” *In all things, God’s Word makes this way of life possible.*



# Community & Enrollment

This is the **last** 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?”



## What's Next?



students and encourage families to stay. For Lutheran schools it is about more than this. The community/climate/culture we build at our schools provides the opportunity for intimacy and trust to be built. Relationships are formed *so that* those we interact with are more receptive to the Gospel of Jesus we share. In this way, community helps us follow Christ's command to “make disciples” (MATT. 28:19).

Attracting and maintaining students at our schools increases the number of people who hear the Gospel because of our ministry. This is good news. We can share God's Word, forgiveness and love with students while they are in our classrooms. Praise God for Lutheran schools that are standing in the gap to bring the Gospel to those

who don't yet know Jesus! But can our reach be broader? Yes! If we want to see the Gospel *move* among the people in our schools, neighborhoods and communities — not just touch students for a moment while they are in our classrooms — our jobs cannot end at making disciples. We must make disciples *who make disciples*.

In order for Christ followers, disciples, to know how to make disciples, they need access to a discipling culture.<sup>1</sup> Lutheran schools certainly teach Christ. We have religion class, students memorize Scripture and by the end of eighth grade most students are familiar with the

**C**ommunity ... Third Place ... Home. Whichever description resonates with you, our Lutheran schools should be a place of belonging, support and fun for our students, families and staff.

There is a reason the most popular school weekend across the country is called “homecoming.” Being a part of a school should feel like coming home.

But to what end? Students learn better in an environment where they feel safe and loved. In this way, building a caring, loving environment helps us to fulfill our educational purpose. Strong communities can attract new



six chief parts of the catechism. We are excellent, as we should be, at sharing information (teaching) about our need for a Savior, the forgiveness of sins and life eternal in Christ Jesus. But what happens when students leave our classrooms? Do they continue to faithfully gather in worship, study and prayer with other believers? A common story I hear from Lutheran schools is that this is a challenge. Students (and families) often disappear from church participation after graduating from a Lutheran school. How can we change this?



In addition to teaching the Christian faith, we should also invite our students and families into a Christian culture with replicable patterns, practices and disciplines. We need to give them a place to see and practice living as disciples of Christ. These practices include patterns of rest, spending time with Jesus, prayer, forgiveness, serving, telling others about Jesus and giving of ourselves and our possessions.<sup>2</sup> Our students should practice speaking words of faith in both the context of school and in the context of their lives beyond our doors. Do we help our students develop faith practices that extend beyond the school day? Do we do this for parents as well? How about our staff? Do our people know God as Father and their identity as children of God? Do they also know this Father God is a King who gives His power and authority to His people to do His work here on earth? Is this culture of Jesus so ingrained in the school that it overflows into the homes as well?

For Lutheran schools to grow and flourish, students, families and staff need to be included in a warm, vibrant community. They should feel they belong as members to this community, know they have influence over the community and be receptive to the influence of the community. Personal needs can be met by the community, and everyone contributes to meeting the needs of others. As life is lived in the context of community, shared emotional connections happen.<sup>3</sup>

As people are invited into deeper community, they must be challenged as well — challenged to serve the community, challenged to take greater ownership of the success

of the community and challenged to live a life reflecting the values of the community. In the case of Lutheran schools, if we value making disciples, sharing the forgiveness and love of Jesus and living lives with discipleship rhythms and patterns, the people who make up our communities should value these things as well. As we form relationships with students and parents, we should also challenge them to join us in a deeper walk of faith — a walk that does not happen only within the walls of the school, but in their

homes and neighborhoods as well. In this way we expand our reach in how the Gospel moves through our cities.

With God's help we can build vibrant Lutheran schools where the Gospel is shared with a growing number of students and families who then go out and spread the love of Jesus with those around them. Can you imagine a ministry movement like the LCMS experienced at the time of its founding where thousands were coming to faith and for 100 years churches were being founded each week!?<sup>4</sup> This is a movement our country needs today, and Lutheran schools play an integral role in making it happen. Let us rise to the challenge to make disciples who make disciples, and let us be a witness to the powerful work God has planned for the schools of our generation.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Mike Breen, *Building a discipling culture: How to release a missional movement by discipling people like Jesus did*, 3rd ed. (USA: 3DM Publishing, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Zach Zehnder, *Red letter challenge: A 40 day life changing experience*, (USA: Red Letter Living LLC, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> 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.

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

<sup>5</sup> 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

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Writer: Dr. Kristen Newell Designer: Frank Kohn

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# Computer File



Rejoice  
in the  
LORD always  
PHILIPPIANS 4:4

## Creating with Faith

**T**echnology can be defined as “the use of science in industry, engineering, etc., to invent useful things or to solve problems” (“technology,” accessed January 24, 2022, [merriam-webster.com/dictionary/technology](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/technology)).

Technology has been around, arguably, since the creation of the world. Clearly, by the time Noah was given the responsibility to build the ark, scientific knowledge was being utilized to solve problems. Then, not long after that, people were able to use technology as part of moving away from God: the Tower of Babel. Both of these earliest prominent uses of technology show that the use of technology can be a double-edged sword. It can be used as a God-given tool to serve others, but it can also help us to lose sight of Him.

There are definite concerns about the effect of technology on the faith life of children and teens. One article from 2018 states three concerns ([christianpost.com/branded/3-ways-technology-is-hurting-the-faith-of-children-and-teens.html](https://christianpost.com/branded/3-ways-technology-is-hurting-the-faith-of-children-and-teens.html)). **First**, technology glorifies self above all. Especially in the era where everyone seems to have a personal cell phone, the current daily access to hand-picked apps and social media makes sure we have plenty that’s focused on us! **Secondly**, technology is creating distracted brains in children. The quick engagement of many platforms creates a habit for children’s attention spans. This is seen easily in the rise of apps like TikTok, where the average video is much shorter than on YouTube. **Finally**, technology and social media constantly reinforce secular culture. Unless users actively seek out Christian content, they will be

continually besieged with secular content.

Sometimes it may seem that everything involved with technology is trending toward the base level of human behavior! While that may make us feel overwhelmed, it is also a great time to use technology in a redeemed way! What does that mean? Again, let's start with a definition: redeem means "to extricate from or help to overcome something detrimental" ("redeem," last modified March 7, 2022, accessed March 18, 2022, [merriam-webster.com/dictionary/redeem](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/redeem)).

Using some aspect of popular culture in a redeemed way has been highly effective in my teaching and youth ministries. Over the years, our groups have taken movies, music and other entertainment and used them to look for application in our lives as Christians. To me, it fits in with 1 Corinthians 9:22, **"To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some."**

If we can use the current popular technology as a platform to spread God's Word, we could take His message to places and people not easily reached in our daily lives. Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, **"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."** This should definitely apply to technology! When we are consuming or creating with technology, what we do should be to the glory of God! So, this final month of this school year, let's take a look at some ways you and your students can create faith-based activities through technology.

### Flipgrid ([info.flipgrid.com/](https://info.flipgrid.com/))

**Application Ideas:** Flipgrid can easily be used for students to record themselves saying memory verses. More than that, students can record reflections on Bible readings or religion lessons. I've had students record short skits based on a section of the Bible. The ability to pause and restart the recordings actually allows students to have more than one part in a skit ... with costume changes! Some students will even take memory work to another level with Flipgrid: some will be willing to sing or rap their Bible verses, if they can record in private! All videos submitted can easily be made private for only the teacher's eyes!

### QR Codes ([qr-code-generator.com/](https://qr-code-generator.com/))

**Application Ideas:** Anything that has a link can be made into a QR code! If your students record videos, make Google Slides or even write a reflection in a Google Doc, you can take the link and create a QR code. Then, anyone who has the opportunity to scan the QR code can see what was made! This would be a great way to share Christian art that the students have created.

The art can be displayed on the walls of the church or school with a QR code nearby that links to a video of the student explaining what is shown in the art. This could also be done for students sharing their favorite verses or confirmation verses!

### Google Slides - Creator Studio ([workspace.google.com/marketplace/app/creator\\_studio/509621243108](https://workspace.google.com/marketplace/app/creator_studio/509621243108)) **Video:** [youtu.be/FrCvXO6UKfE](https://youtu.be/FrCvXO6UKfE)

**Application Ideas:** Over the past few years, I've had a significant number of students join our middle school who have little to no church experience. Memory work has been a totally new concept to them! So, in an effort to get some students to spend more time with Bible verses and understand the meaning, I've had them create GIFs using Creator Studio. The students create Google Slides presentations and put one word on each slide. They love making things look very colorful and having the words move around on the slides. Here is an example: [drive.google.com/file/d/1jDNaZge164PESbnjmsMI6P\\_A64MHZgVx/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jDNaZge164PESbnjmsMI6P_A64MHZgVx/view?usp=sharing).

### Bible Gateway ([biblegateway.com/](https://biblegateway.com/))

**Application Ideas:** Where would I be without Bible Gateway? This is in daily use in my religion class. It is so helpful for locating verses quickly and finding verses around a topic or concept. My favorite feature? The comparison of translations! That is my top application: comparing translations and leading students to a better understanding of the Bible verses.

### Drones

**Application Ideas:** I'm guessing this doesn't seem like the most obvious technology application for faith exploration. I contend, however, that much of faith exploration involves seeing things from a different perspective. Drones can do just that. In some ways, just seeing the world right around us from a different perspective can begin to open a door to God's view of us. More practically, I've had students do large-scale memory verse art with sidewalk chalk. Then, a drone was used to take pictures or record video!

### Videos WeVideo ([wevideo.com/](https://wevideo.com/)); Canva ([canva.com/](https://canva.com/)); Animoto ([animoto.com/](https://animoto.com/))

**Application Ideas:** Video creation is possibly the most powerful technology application in exploring and expressing our faith. Performing skits and retelling Bible stories has been done for a long time in religion class.





Technology allows those skits and retellings to be shared with parents, in a chapel service or even in a church service. Video creation allows students to utilize settings and props not always easily included in a classroom or church. Additionally, creating videos helps students with preparation and decreases potential stage fright. These videos could be viewed for years as part of a website for the school and/or church! A video showing a Christian witness or testimony could be viewed by people anywhere! Of course, all of this would also be true for videos of songs and/or musical performances.

**Podcasts** **Bandlab** ([bandlab.com/](https://bandlab.com/)); **WeVideo** ([wevideo.com/](https://wevideo.com/))

**Application Ideas:** Creating a podcast is a great opportunity for students to share their faith with others. Not only that, but podcasts also provide the platform for sharing conversations about faith. Sometimes, individual witnessing and/or reflecting on topics of faith can produce limited results. Putting students in small groups with the same topics, however, can unleash some real witness moments and pure reflection!

**Hopefully**, you can try one or more of these ideas for creating with our faith! Just have fun and be brave! If you show an adventurous spirit, your students will follow! Here is this month's **video overview**: [watch.screencastify.com/v/jCtxVwKghQwAbIGDheWQ](https://watch.screencastify.com/v/jCtxVwKghQwAbIGDheWQ)

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 **BibleMemory.com** ([biblememory.com/myverses/](https://biblememory.com/myverses/)) **Video**: [youtu.be/bF3oFpPzMLO](https://youtu.be/bF3oFpPzMLO) I've looked for a way to help with memory work online and with apps. This one could be the one! There are ways to practice verses and create groups! See what you think!

**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](https://tec21connect.com).

## Computer File

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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)

## Ascension of Jesus

(Matt. 28:16–20; Acts 1:8–11)



### Before You Teach

Jesus promises to come again. Paradoxically, though physically absent, Jesus continues to remain with us always. The Holy Spirit guarantees Jesus' presence in Word and Sacrament. As Jesus' followers today, we continue to tell others what He has done for us, showing His love to others through our words and actions.

### Greeting

Greet each child upon entry: **Good morning, child of God** ... These critical first five seconds upon a child's arrival set the tone for the day.

### Gathering

Signal children to gather in your worship area. Together, make the sign of the cross. Introduce the biblical narrative, saying, **Jesus has a job for us to do. He wants us to show and tell of His love to others.**

### Tell the Story

*You will need: Pictures of a figure of Jesus (adhered to a tongue depressor) and a cloud with a precut slit through which the Jesus figure can easily slide and be hidden.*

After Jesus rose from His tomb, He appeared to His eleven disciples. Then one day, Jesus told the disciples to go to a mountain. Seeing Jesus (**show Jesus' figure**), the disciples worshiped Him. Jesus said, "Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to do everything that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always." Then, Jesus was lifted up into the sky (**slowly slide Jesus' figure through the slitted cloud**). A cloud hid Him from their sight. As the disciples were looking up into heaven, two men in white robes stood by them. They said to the disciples, "Men of Galilee, why are you looking up to heaven? Jesus, who

was taken up into heaven, will come again one day in the same way you saw Him go.”

We do not know the year, the day or the time, but Jesus will come again! Until then, Jesus wants us to show and tell others about His love. Although we cannot see Him, Jesus loves us and is with us ALWAYS! Just as He promised.

## Praying Together

Sing “We pray for Each Other” stanza 3 (LOSP, P.15).

**Thank You, Jesus,  
For loving me all the time. I am Yours and You are  
mine. You are with me night and day, as I work and  
when I play. Amen.**

## Remember the Story

### BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

**Pre-K & K:** “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (MATT. 28:20).

**Grades 1 & 2:** “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ... Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (MATT. 28:19–20).

## Activities

**CREATE: KITES.** You will need: colored construction paper cut into diamond shapes (one per child), crepe paper streamers cut into 15-inch lengths (three per child), 18-inch lengths of string (one per child), markers, glue.

**DO:** Have children draw lines connecting points on the back of the diamond to create a cross. Attach streamers to the bottom of each kite. Add a string to the opposite point (the top).

**SAY:** Kites go UP. The cross on the back of a kite can remind us that Jesus went UP into heaven, but promised to be with us always.

**DO:** Chant “All the Time.” Children repeat each phrase after the leader.

Jesus loves me all the time; I am His and He is mine!  
He is always, always near; I don’t ever need to fear.  
Jesus’ love is ours to share, showing others love and care.  
Amen.

**SING:** “I’m with You” (LOSP, P. 32); “Go Tell” (LOSP, P. 104)

**FUNDAY FRIDAY:** Jesus went up into heaven. What else goes up? You will need: Objects, some of which will go up and others that will not (e.g., a paper airplane, a balloon, a feather, a pencil, a rock, a book). Children predict whether an item will go up or not. Test their predictions.

**CAMP SERVE:** Gather 52 “Family Favorite” Scripture verses. Publish and distribute the collection for families to post on their refrigerators. Encourage families to read, learn and speak each week’s verse with and to one another, and others.

## Sending

You will need: An image of Jesus.

Pray together. Show the image of Jesus, reminding children that Jesus is with them always. Dismiss, linking your little finger with theirs, giving each a “Pinkie Handshake” as you say, **Jesus is with you always!**

## Living the Story

How is your balance: spiritually, physically, mentally, relationally and professionally? To be the person God intends for us to be, and to be fully present for others, we must first practice self-care. Assess areas where improvement may be needed. Set attainable goals. Celebrate achievements big and small.



# Early Childhood Devotions

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Judith Christian Designer: Lisa Moeller

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

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IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES

# Family Matters

A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS



## IN ALL THINGS THIS SUMMER ... Jesus



### “What are we going to do for fun this summer?”

This was a legitimate question from the 11-year-old boy at the dinner table. The oldest of three children who, along with his siblings, had experienced many restrictions over the past two summers. It was a question that was first, trying to elicit hope, and second, in search of some possible details. Hope that there might actually be a somewhat normal summer and interest in what kind of activities might possibly occur.

“I’m not sure yet,” replied his father in a matter-of-fact sort of tone.

Uncertainty.

It has plagued us for some time now. It is hard for children who need routine and patterns of predictability to figure out what’s coming next. It is a challenge for parents who, while trying to keep informed about how to live safely, don’t always have answers — no matter how much they search, plan and even pray — so the response is still, “We just don’t know.”

This coming summer, we sure hope our kids get to play on their sports teams, go to a friend’s house, go to the movies, enjoy parks and other public spaces. We want a real family vacation! We want to see extended family and travel without worries. We just want things to get back to normal. We have grown weary, have gotten angry and just feel sad about the effects of this pandemic.

Whatever happens this summer, the one thing we do know is that Jesus will be with us. He will be there to comfort us if we are still sad. He will console us if we are still angry about things. He will be there to lift us from our weariness. Christ, who suffered and died for us, knows the pains of the world, and He won’t leave us by ourselves. No doubt, the world is a tough place a lot of the time — especially over the past 25 months. As the people of God, we know that Jesus comes alongside us, through His Spirit, to bring us comfort and hope, to guide us and direct us in every step of our life journey.

Due to the carefree nature of summer we often refer to it as “a little bit of heaven.” It certainly can be a delightful season as we enjoy beautiful settings and less-scheduled days, and as it is guided and blessed by Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

May God bless you and your family this summer — in all things!

## 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: FAMILY TIME CAPSULE

#### PURPOSE

To engage family members in an activity that helps them reflect on their feelings and how their family has experienced the pandemic.

#### REFLECTING

Ask family members to reflect on their experiences over the last 25 months, and have someone in the family write down their responses to the following prompts. Encourage family members to give details and personal perspectives regarding their responses.

#### IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES BECAUSE ...

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

6) \_\_\_\_\_

7) \_\_\_\_\_

#### IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES BECAUSE ...

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

6) \_\_\_\_\_

7) \_\_\_\_\_



### TIME CAPSULE PROCESS

As a family collect items from the list below. Add other items that you feel are appropriate for your family.

Supplies Needed:

- › Large box, plastic tub with top or large coffee can with lid. (Something that you can put several items in and then easily close.)
- › Face masks, representing each family member
- › Empty hand sanitizer container
- › List of COVID-19 restrictions
- › Newspaper or magazine article(s)
- › Various family photos
- › Empty soap container
- › Family reflection list from above
- › Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### TIME CAPSULE DEDICATION

- 1 Place all the items from the list above in the container of your choosing. Select a place in the house where your time capsule will be stored (closet, basement, garage, shed, etc.). (On many occasions, it is normal to bury a time capsule in the ground, but this is not expected as part of this activity.)
- 2 Secure and seal the time capsule with tape or glue, as appropriate. Label it with the date and signatures of all the family members.
- 3 Select a date when you will gather as a family again to open it. (Make it a least one year into the future — perhaps longer.)
- 4 Gather as a family and have someone read the following echo prayer with family members repeating it, phrase by phrase.

Dear Heavenly Father in Heaven, thank You for watching over us, and for guiding us these past two years. Continue to walk with us, keep us safe, help us to help others as we can. Thank You for giving us Jesus, who walks with us every day. Help us always to remain faithful to You, no matter what happens, knowing that You always love us. In the name of Jesus our Savior. Amen.



# Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



## Finishing Touches

for Unfinished Learning



**If** you have followed along with the *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* articles this year, you likely have noticed multiple terms used in place of the phrase *learning loss*. As the year has gone on, terms such as unfinished learning, academic impact, acceleration and learning leaps have become more common and helped us get out of a deficit-based way of thinking about student progress. The reality is that there are areas in which students need to continue mastering content from previous years, but we want to also focus on the positive changes and address unfinished learning in a way that can help all students succeed.

**I'll throw one other concept** into the mix to replace the idea of learning loss and help focus on the positive. John Ewing, in the 2020 article "The Ridiculousness of Learning Loss" ([forbes.com/sites/johnewing/2021/12/28/the-ridiculousness-of-learning-loss/?sh=28e4c7aa7c32](https://forbes.com/sites/johnewing/2021/12/28/the-ridiculousness-of-learning-loss/?sh=28e4c7aa7c32)), said the following:

"Mathematicians know that stepping away from a topic for a while requires time to recollect the bits and pieces when you return. Those bits and pieces aren't lost—they only require reassembling, and often the reassembling leads to greater understanding. Similar things occur in every subject."

**In order to reassemble something**, you first need to know what pieces you have. To reassemble learning, we need to make sure we know which pieces each student has to work with. This comes through meaningful assessment and observational data. By first looking at the pieces of learning each student has, you can figure out which pieces may still be needed. The danger comes in guessing which pieces of learning students have or do not have through deficit-based thinking that all students are five months behind, or seven

months behind, in their learning. As Ewing stated, many of the pieces are not *lost*, but need to be reassembled to be meaningful. When learning is reassembled, we may even find additional pieces we didn't know were there! These may be other skills students have acquired over the last two years that do not easily show up on assessments or specific strengths with technology or presentation skills.

**Making this shift away from** deficit-based thinking also allows us to come back to the idea that each child is fearfully and wonderfully made. Despite our concerns about student learning, student well-being, and our own well-being over the last two years, we need to remember that God designed each of us purposefully with unique gifts and strengths. We need to make sure that we are focusing on these strengths, even beyond the academics, so that students are encouraged

**What we can be confident in**, in addition to God's Word, is that lowering our expectations for learning and focusing the majority of our instructional time and efforts on deficit-based thinking will not work. It may seem familiar and comfortable to think about going back to prior ways of teaching and lessons that effectively worked two years ago. As educators, you have been pulled and stretched already, along with the students. However, much like a rubber band that is pulled and stretched, one of two things can happen: the rubber band snaps or it goes back to how it was before. Neither of these is a good option for your own well-being or the well-being of students! We need to acknowledge the impact the experiences of the last two years have had, both good and bad, and move forward from these with a positive mindset, not deficit-based thinking.



**The words we think and use** in our daily lives in our schools and classrooms become our reality and can guide our actions. The Persian poet Hafiz wrote the following: “the words you speak become the house you live in.” This is why I feel removing the phrase *learning loss* from my vocabulary is critical. That term encourages deficit-based thinking and the idea that learning is lost and will not return. Student learning will rebound, but we need to rethink some of our past practices and ensure that we are responding to student learning and their experiences appropriately now and going forward. Remember that each of us is fearfully and wonderfully made, and remember that God is in control! Contact LSEM at [lsem@luthsped.org](mailto:lsem@luthsped.org) or visit our website at [luthsped.org](http://luthsped.org) let us know how we can support you in planning for the next school year!

and motivated, and they have agency in their learning. This goes for us as educators as well! Resist the urge to only look at test scores and feel that you should have or could have done something better to help students with their learning or feel the need to catch up to previous years. We don't know the full impact of the last two years on students, their learning and social skills, but God does!



## Fearfully and Wonderfully Made VOL. 5, NO. 9 // MAY 2022

Writer: Dr. Kara Bratton Designer: Erica Schwan

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY



# Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



## Growing Happy Children



**I**t's not just our imagination. Research shows that today's children and adolescents are less happy and have a lower well-being rating than previous generations.<sup>1</sup> This trend goes back to 2011, so we can't blame COVID. Studies that look for a relationship between activities and well-being see two significant changes related to the decline, especially for teens. The first is less human interaction, and the second is a decline in religious services attendance. Let's address each of these.

Our world has made significant changes over the last ten years. When we want to communicate, we text instead of engaging in a conversation. When we want to know something, we no longer go to a public library and ask for help; instead, we ask Google. Teens monitor

several social media sites instead of meeting up at the local hang-out. Little by little, we have reduced our human interaction, which seems to be taking a toll. It is not that screen time is terrible for our teens. Instead, the damage is likely happening because of what they are missing: face-to-face interaction.

Attending religious services is the second reason listed. It may seem strange that secular research would look into religious practices, but a large body of research tells us faith practices promote well-being. For example, when children and teens attend church, participate in Sunday School or enjoy youth group activities, they spend time with others. In addition to human interaction, faith practices also offer a shared sense of purpose that increases fellowship and support for all involved. Furthermore, when we meet for worship and learn more about our Savior, we are encouraged to grow in our relationship with God and relationships with our fellow members. That is a potent recipe for well-being even in the face of struggle.

The research in this area shows the relationship of interaction and church attendance with happiness, but it doesn't indicate whether one causes the other. Because of this, we cannot definitively say that spending too much time on screens is harmful. However, we do know from related research that our brains seek out interaction. Even for those who see themselves as introverts, interacting helps with learning and emotional health. We can increase our children's time interacting with others, especially in a church setting, and know we are doing them good.

<sup>1</sup> This and all other information in this article about current research on happiness in adolescents and teens was drawn from Jean M. Twenge, "What Makes Teens Happier," *Psychology Today*, Aug. 31, 2018, [psychologytoday.com/us/blog/our-changing-culture/201808/what-makes-teens-happier](https://psychologytoday.com/us/blog/our-changing-culture/201808/what-makes-teens-happier).



Scripture tells us that God nurtures our faith and our relationship with Him through the Word and Sacraments.



Increasing interaction does not have to bring about major life changes. Music is a good example. Research shows that listening to music in a concert likely promotes happiness, while listening alone detracts from happiness. This doesn't mean you should prevent your child or teen from listening to music alone in his room. Certainly, this activity is an excellent way to relax. It does indicate, however a need to encourage your child toward music activities that also include human interaction for balance. A teen who enjoys listening to music will benefit even more from playing music with others or attending a concert with friends or family. The goal is not to avoid what might be harmful. Instead, the goal is to supplement what your children love with human interaction. This allows you to build happiness along with personal interests.

"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD!'" (PSALM 122:1).

We don't need research of any kind to demonstrate that spending time in God's Word and in worship is good for us. Scripture tells us that God nurtures our faith and our relationship with Him through the Word and Sacraments. As parents, we should be encouraged that God has blessed us with a powerful way to nurture happiness in our children. Anytime is the right time to

make a new commitment toward church attendance. We are always welcome in God's house! In addition, it is comforting to know that taking advantage of Sunday School, youth group and other family activities will not only promote happiness for children but will also develop lifelong skills.

Remember that the specific event doesn't have to be happy. Sometimes human interaction causes us grief. However, even this grief brings about good when the child learns to navigate challenging situations. When interacting with others causes struggles, and a teen finds ways to overcome them, happiness is nurtured and connected in the brain to problem-solving techniques. It really is all good.

As your family heads into summer, plan a family meeting to talk about balancing screen use with human interaction. Take advantage of what your church offers and set goals not only for church attendance but also for ways to spend time with people. Look for opportunities for your family to volunteer. Remember that spending time with others, worshiping together and learning to care for each other all work to help us feel grateful for God's blessings. Blessings are better than research because they are evidence of God's love for us.





# Professionally Speaking



## Bringing It – and Them – Home, IN ALL THINGS



**I**t's the final stretch. We've put in the time, sweat and tears to create the most amazing and meaningful experiences possible this past school year. Students have made academic advancements, experienced social and emotional growth and mastered new physical skills. And in all things, they've encountered Jesus. There simply is no way to separate Christ from the workings and experiences of a Lutheran school. That's a great part of why these ministries are special and so significant. Daily encounters with the Savior and the way the Christian environment informs all learning and interactions support a feeling that is unique and wonderful.

The children understand this. They've been bringing the Bible songs home. They've wanted to pray before meals. They've experienced the power of serving others. They've learned to forgive each other and to receive that forgiveness in turn. The children know there is more to their school than mere schoolwork, tests and progress reports.

The parents understand this also, at least to a greater extent than they may have at the start of their experience with you. These parents enrolled because while you seemingly checked all the boxes for what they were looking for, there was just something else, something intangible that they felt when they visited. And they could hear in the



recommendations of others that there was something unique and wonderful about your school. I mean, you charge tuition — perhaps a good deal of tuition — but something told them enrollment would be worth it. Now they understand. God lives in your school. His presence makes an impact, and whether or not they were looking for God in coming to your school, they are thankful for the difference He makes. They are glad to stick around!

As you look to wrap up and put a bow on the school year, there's one last task, one final key priority. It's time to close the deal on reinforcing what this has all really been about. Graduation, closing ceremony, picnic day — all these end of year events and activities give you an opportunity, as do final letters, emails and other messages you may send home. Each Lutheran high school, elementary school, preschool or childcare is a platform to share the Good News — everything we've done has been motivated by God's love. We love because He first loved us, and how we've chosen to show that love, to put it into action, has been the Lutheran school. Depending on your role, you'll have some final opportunities to stand in front of your students, in front of all the students or even in front of their parents, grandparents and the congregation. You have the chance to reinforce that it's really all about God's great love for us and how we teach this and share it with others.

Don't miss a single opportunity to tell this truth as the school year concludes. We don't simply want to "bring the school year home" with a grand finish. We want the students and families to take this message of God's love and what it means for all of us home with them. Even more importantly, we want to see them with us in our eternal home, and it's this Good News that the Spirit uses to lead them to heaven.

Here's my challenge and encouragement for you. Be intentional with your words and actions as you close out the year. Don't just accept the thanks and praise for your efforts; point the praise to God for giving you the ability and opportunity to play your role. Don't just listen to students talk about their good luck passing the classes or nailing the test and about making such good friends; point these things out as ways God has blessed them this year. Don't let colleagues just be thankful when the final day is over; give thanks to God with them for all He helped you through this year, as well as for the successes you all experienced.

In all things demonstrate your faith that all we have and all we do is thanks to our God. We never know when it may be the last time we see someone this side of heaven. Accordingly, use each opportunity as the school year ends to help ensure we'll see these people in heaven as well. We're working to "bring them home," our primary mission in all things of Lutheran schools.

## Professionally Speaking // MAY 2022

Writer: Mr. Jim Scriven Designer: Lisa Moeller

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY





# Rattles & Prattles

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS



## Jesus Commissions His Disciples to Share the Story of ALL He Did “CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL” (COL. 3:11).

**Bible Story:** Jesus commissions His disciples, then He ascends into heaven.

**Scripture References:** Matt. 28:16–20; Acts 1:8–11

**What it teaches us:** Jesus shares that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, His disciples can be His witnesses and will be able to communicate His mission (His life, suffering, death and resurrection) with everyone through their messages of what Jesus said and did.

### Prepare to Teach

- **Read** the story in the references and, if possible, a study Bible.
- **Think:** As educators in Lutheran early childhood centers, we have the special privilege to share Jesus’ love with the children and their families in all we say and do. We are Jesus’ missionaries in our classrooms and lives.
- **Pray:** Dear Jesus, send Your Holy Spirit to fill us with the same joy Your early disciples had as they shared the Good News of Your saving life, suffering, death and resurrection for EVERYONE. In Your 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, His disciples (do an internet search).

#### Gather for Worship

Use the 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.”

**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

Jesus and His friends went on a walk one day —  
to the top of a hill not far away.

Jesus said, “Don’t be sad or have a tear in your eye.  
I am with you always. Here’s what you can do —

Tell everyone, ‘Jesus loves you; He was hurt, died,  
and came alive for you too.’

Baptize them so they will be a part of God’s  
big family.

Tell them that I love them every day — and can show  
their love in all they do and say.”

As they looked at Jesus, He started to rise — up, up,  
up into the sky. Before a cloud hid Him from their  
sight, He said, “I’m still WITH you, day and night.”



**What the Story Teaches:** After finishing His work (i.e., living, suffering, dying and coming alive again to take away all our wrong choices), Jesus talked to His disciples and encouraged them to share the Good News of all He did.

**Song to Sing:** Choose a song from the ones listed under “Music,” on the next page.

#### Time to Pray

Dear Jesus, thank You for making me part of Your family. Please help me tell others You love them and what You did to show Your love, so they can be part of Your family too. 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 and Nutrition:

› **Science:** Clouds are a natural way to integrate the Bible story. Go outside; observe and describe the clouds.

› **Nutrition:** Just for fun, eat a cloud (i.e., whipped cream on blue gelatin).

#### T Technology

› **Do an internet search** to learn how to sign “Jesus loves you” in American Sign Language. View a YouTube of children singing, “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know” (LOSP, P. 42) in another language (one they might hear at home, in school or in their neighborhood).

#### R Reading and Language Arts

› **Books:** *Little Cloud* board book by Eric Carle (World of Eric Carle, 1998); *The Cloud Book* by Tomie dePaola (Holiday House, 1975).



› **Read** a familiar book in another language.

#### › Rhyme/Poem:

I often sit and wish that I  
was a cloud high in the sky,  
And ride upon the breeze and go  
whichever way it chanced to blow.

(adapted from anonymous source)

#### E Engineering

See art activity below.

#### A Arts (art, music and physical education)

› **Art:** Make clouds using large cotton balls dipped in white tempera to paint on blue paper; glue large white cotton balls on the blue paper.

### CONNECT WITH PARENTS in your newsletter

Children are natural missionaries. They love to tell you the Bible story and sing the songs they’ve learned. Embrace this, and ask God to help you as you serve as a missionary sharing Jesus with your family in your words and actions.

› **Music:** “I’m with You” (LOSP, P. 32); use melody of “If You’re Happy And You Know It” and sing: “**I can tell Jesus loves you, I can tell** (say ‘I can tell’).” Repeat. “**Jesus loves you and me and our whole family. I can tell Jesus loves you. I can tell** (say, ‘I can tell’)” (adapted from a version used in *Rattles and Prattles*, May 2010).

› **Physical Education:** Jesus’ followers traveled many ways to share Jesus’ story (e.g., walked, rode in a boat, rode a donkey/horse). Invite the children to show these (walking, rowing a boat, pretend to ride a donkey/horse, etc.).

#### M Mathematics

› **Use math terminology** when describing clouds (i.e. big, bigger, biggest; small, smaller, smallest). Use that same terminology to describe blocks, balls, riding toys, trees, cars and so on.

#### S Social Studies

› **Jesus asked His followers** to go and tell everyone He loves them and what He did. Encourage the children to tell each other of Jesus. Use Spanish: “Jesús te ama.” Teach them how to sign “Jesus loves you.”



# School Shepherd

TIPS AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONS WITH SCHOOLS



THEME | HOPE in All Things

## All Things HOPEfully Considered

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 PETER 1:3).

**“It’s hopeless.”** Those words have been heard in many contexts: the doctor shares the medical prognosis with the patient and family; the financial analyst shares the economic outlook; the rejected spouse enters the divorce hearing; the parent struggles with the substance abuse of the teenager. The devil, the world and our sinful nature shatter hopes.

Sometimes ministry in Lutheran schools also feels hopeless: will the resources be available to meet financial obligations; can the conflict be resolved; will staff positions be filled with capable and Christ-like personnel; will the enrollment level maintain or increase; can the church and school partner in the mission ... ?

When the grieving women came to Jesus’ tomb on Easter morning, they were hopeless. Their Lord had been crucified, died and was buried. Their messianic hope had been shattered. An angel greets them with the Good News: “You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He

has risen; he is not here” (MARK 16:6). Jesus was alive. Hope was alive!

The Apostle Peter was inspired by the Spirit to be a messenger of hope. In the context of his own trial and in the context of a church facing persecution, Peter writes, “He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 PETER 1:3). The source of hope is the resurrected Jesus. Sharing a litany of challenges, the Apostle Paul concludes “and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (ROMANS 5:4).

The Spirit of hope has been given to the school shepherd in his baptism. The Spirit of hope speaks to the school shepherd as he reads and meditates on God’s Word. The Spirit of hope nourishes the hope of the school shepherd at the Sacrament of the Altar. When things seem hopeless, the Good News of Jesus’ resurrection brings encouragement and endurance for the shepherd.

The school shepherd is privileged to be a messenger of hope in Jesus. When the school family grieves at the death of a student, staff member or church family member, the message of eternal hope through Jesus’ resurrection



is shared. When a struggling child or family comes to the shepherd's office, the message of Christ's presence and plan brings hope. When a ministry dynamic in the church or school drains personal or corporate energy or misdirects focus from the cross and empty tomb, the school shepherd teaches and preaches the common hope in a triumphant Jesus.

Lutheran schools are hopeful places. Lutheran school ministry takes place in the real world. Disappointments take place. Hopes are shattered. Hopes may seem to die also in Lutheran schools. In those situations, the inspired words of Peter guide and encourage us, "He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 PETER 1:3).

It's always the Easter season in Lutheran schools. The message and confidence of Jesus' resurrection bring hope to children, family, school, church, community and school shepherd.

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

- What's the difference between the world's hopes (I hope we win; I hope I get that job, etc.) and the hope of the Christian?
- Have there been times personally or in the school ministry when things seemed hopeless? How and when have your hopes been restored?
- What's our response when someone comments, "Things seem hopeless"? What confidence does

## prayer

#### ALL THINGS IN JESUS' NAME

Jesus, we are blessed in Baptism to be reborn into the "living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." When I look at the world or even the church and school with thoughts of hopelessness, bring the hope of Jesus to me and through me, in Jesus' name. Amen.

the Spirit of hope bring to you personally and to your ministry?

- What are your hopes for your church and school ministry?

#### HYMN

"Hope of the world, Thou Christ of great compassion;  
Speak to our fearful hearts by conflict rent.  
Save us, Thy people, from consuming passion,  
Who by our own false hopes and aims are spent.

"Hope of the world, who by Thy cross didst save us  
From death and dark despair, from sin and guilt,  
We render back the love Thy mercy gave us;  
Take Thou our lives and use them as Thou wilt."  
(LSB 690:1, 4)



# Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



## Changes and Challenges: A Reflection



**C**ongratulations! You have reached the month of May. For some, May marks the final month of the school year. For some, May means the school year will soon come to an end (in June). And for others, May marks the start of summer programming. Lutheran school early childhood programs are vast in the variety of programming options they provide. Lutheran school early childhood programs know how to best serve students and the community in which they exist. It doesn't matter if your school year is about to end, if the last day of school is within sight or if you'll be working through the summer months, now is an excellent time to reflect.

Often, people will give a short comment of reflection based on their feelings immediately after an event. After watching a movie, a comment of "wow, that movie was awesome" might be made. Or, after visiting the dentist for a root canal, a comment of "I'm glad that's over" might be shared. However, when did you last take time to deeply think about the previous months of a school year? Do you quickly reminisce, or do you really take the time needed to reflect on what happened, how things happened or maybe what didn't happen but was needed?

**Reflection is a teaching tool** that often goes untouched by many. Reflection helps a teacher move from just experiencing something to actual understanding. Do you understand why things happened the way they did? The past two years have been different, challenging and unique for educators, schools, children and families. No one could have predicted the result of the COVID pandemic or that its lingering effects would be felt this long after it all started. How have you changed as a teacher? How as your school changed? Has your philosophy of teaching been affirmed or strained? Have you modified your environment, lessons or student activities based on the events of the past two years? These are all questions that are part of a reflective teaching strategy.

It may be easy to think in hindsight and wish you would have done something differently. After the fall of Adam and Eve, they may have looked back and wished they would have not have eaten the forbidden fruit. After Joseph's brothers realized who he was when they visited him to ask for food, they may have looked back and felt badly about how they mistreated him. What



thoughts do you think went through Judas's mind after he realized what his betrayal of Jesus had caused?

On this earthly side of heaven, nothing will be perfect. Only eternal life in heaven with God will be glorious and without problems. As Christ shared with the thief on the cross, heaven will be paradise.

Think back to the changes and challenges you have experienced during the past school year. What was tough? What did you do differently? What did you excel at? Reflective thinking involves the whole picture; it is important to deeply think about the experiences you had, how you felt and how you moved forward. What were your reactions?

**Changes are not always bad.** God changes the seasons; the change is needed for sustainability of trees and other plants. Developmental changes in children are good; they grow into adulthood. While changes may be sometimes hard to understand, God knows the purpose. In all things, God has plans that are for good, as Jeremiah 29:11 shares, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Remember, God will not forget about you when changes occur; He will be there to sustain you and help you through the changes. Let Him guide your path! As the psalmist shares, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (PSALM 119:105).

**Challenges, too, are not always bad.** Challenges provide you with opportunities to experience something new and grow in a way that you may not have expected, or they can provide a new way of thinking that will be of great benefit for your future. Great inventions have been the results of challenges. Thomas Edison invented the light bulb because of the challenge of darkness in the home. Henry Ford invented the automobile because of the challenge to easily travel from one location to another. And, Martin Luther translated the Bible from Latin into German because of the challenge people had in reading Scripture in their home language.

While change can be difficult, challenges can be even tougher. Losing weight can be a significant challenge, but there are ways it can be done. Yes, obstacles may

exist during a challenge, but reflective thought and strategy can provide opportunities to overcome those obstacles. Faith and trust in God during challenging times is critical. 1 Peter 5:7 shares, cast “all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” Isaiah 41:13 shares, “For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, ‘Fear not, I am the one who helps you.’” Asking God each day to support you in your work — in your challenges — is a key component to maintaining a faith-filled heart and healthy mindset. A healthy mindset involves finding ways to grow from your thoughts rather than having them control aspects of your life. While eating healthy and getting enough sleep can help contribute to a healthy mindset, Christians know the value of participating in worship, prayer and study of the Scripture too.

**As your school year winds down,** or transforms into something new and different, spend time deeply reflecting on the past months. Look for those times where God's hand provided for you, led you in the right direction and challenged you for growth. Spend time reflecting independently, but also with a trusted colleague.

With summer approaching, give thanks to God, for in all things He has uplifted and sustained you — and He always will! Isaiah 46:4 shares, “even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.”



## 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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