

MARCH 2021

SCHOOL MINISTRY

Mailing



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Alight

FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS



Thriving Schools in NLSA

“Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus” (REV. 14:12).

Lutheran Schools serve families in the task of providing an excellent academic preparation for their children, and even more importantly, Lutheran schools serve families in the task of raising up the next generation of faithful Christian disciples.

In 1986, National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) grew out of a strong desire on the part of the Office of LCMS School Ministry to assist schools to accomplish their stated missions and improve the quality of

Lutheran schools. Under the direction of Dr. Carl Moser, standards for Lutheran schools were developed and a national system of accreditation for LCMS schools was established. Today NLSA serves 670 accredited schools with programs serving early childhood, elementary and high school students.

NLSA is a voluntary process of school evaluation designed to assist Lutheran schools to improve in all areas for the benefit of students and their families. NLSA encourages, assists and recognizes schools that provide continuous improvement and is designed to provide schools with the tools to conduct a self-evaluation assessment of actual practices by the school-based national standards. This process helps schools to



identify strengths and areas of concern and to develop a School Action Plan to address the concerns. Annually, schools report the progress of improvement initiatives to NLSA district commissions. At the end of the five-year accreditation cycle, schools repeat this process and develop the next path of school improvement.

Spring is here and, for many schools, this is the time for completing the NLSA process that culminates in a Validation Team Visit consisting of educators who review and verify the work of the school. The Validation Team spends two to three days on campus meeting with church and school leaders, governing board members, students, families and community members. It is a time of affirmation and celebration for schools.

This has been an unusual year for schools. The pandemic has challenged schools to adapt the delivery of education to meet the needs of students by providing socially distanced classrooms, remote learning and hybrid options, as well as by often having to prevent visitors from coming into schools. Strict adherence to state and local guidelines has added a new dimension for all attending schools in person or remotely.

The onset of the pandemic not only brought significant changes to school classrooms, but it also impacted the accreditation process. NLSA is also adapting and working to support schools throughout this challenging period. Pandemic procedures and protocols are developed to support and assist every school to stay on the path of school improvement. Guidance is developed for virtual Validation Teams and national meetings. The



addition of a mid-year meeting of the National Accreditation Commission addresses the expanding needs of Lutheran schools during this time of in-person, remote and hybrid learning.

The result is that schools continue to thrive and provide an excellent Christ-centered academic education preparing students for a life of Christian discipleship. Students are thriving in schools that have adapted to the challenges brought on by the pandemic. These schools are strengthened by NLSA and continue to proclaim the Gospel message of hope that through God's gift of His Son, the power of the Holy Spirit and faith in Jesus Christ, all may have the promise of eternal life.



Computer File



Developing Technology for Remote Learning

It has been almost exactly one year since the phrase “remote learning” became a common term used by parents, teachers and schools throughout the country and the world. Over the last 12 months, we all have learned a few things about teaching and learning in non-traditional spaces. We learned what works and what does not. We learned how to use new technologies and redefined how we could use old ones. We found new ways to teach what had always been taught. We made it work to the best of our abilities, and our students benefitted from the time, dedication and unfathomable effort put in by countless teachers, administrators and parents.

Through all of the changes, however, many schools and teachers have been working with tools, policies, procedures and plans either established before the pandemic began or put in place with haste when physical classrooms were abruptly forced to close. For many it was out of necessity to undertake a rapid pivot to remote learning, and in many cases certain aspects of planning and developing technology to address the need were overlooked.

So, what happens when you intentionally think through what is needed for remote learning?

Before we explore this thought, you may be wondering why address this topic now, at a point when the reduced threat of the pandemic has allowed schools to



reopen in many parts of the country. To be honest, the general idea of remote learning is not going away any time soon. A recent NPR/Ipsos poll found that 29% of parents indicated that they “were likely to stick with remote learning indefinitely.”¹ That number is shockingly high and shows the reality of remote learning going forward, and this result should also encourage us to explore the implementation of remote learning a little more deeply.

Thus, with all of this in mind, what important topics need to be explored to effectively implement remote

¹ Anya Kamenetz and Eda Uzunlar, “NPR/Ipsos Poll: Nearly One-Third Of Parents May Stick With Remote Learning,” *NPR Morning Edition*, March 5, 2021, accessed March 15, 2021, [npr.org/2021/03/05/973373489/npr-ipsos-poll-nearly-one-third-of-parents-may-stick-with-remote-learning](https://www.npr.org/2021/03/05/973373489/npr-ipsos-poll-nearly-one-third-of-parents-may-stick-with-remote-learning).



learning, and what technology needs to be put in place before you begin? The following six topics should serve as a starting point to get you thinking about what is needed before jumping into remote learning. As always, be sure to think through this and see how it could apply to your specific location and needs, and remember that it will be immensely impacted by your recent remote learning experiences and offerings at your school.

What Is Your End Goal?

From the very beginning, the first question that should be asked is “why.” Why are you as a school looking to implement remote learning? What is your end goal? Are you addressing a need expressed by your families or looking to offer instruction to students who do not live near your school? There are innumerable reasons for wanting to implement remote learning, but you need to define your “why” first and let the answer to that question guide the rest of the planning process.

Planning vs. Plans

It may seem like semantics, but there is a difference between “planning” and “plans.” Planning in many instances is simply talking about what to do and then going and doing it. However, plans are more in-depth and specific. More importantly, plans are often written down, and that is the key takeaway. School leadership needs to work with stakeholders and others to put

plans in place that are written down and can be shared with others, that address not only the why but also the how. Keeping these updated is key, and having them written down keeps you focused and honest.

Time, Time, Time

One thing that schools did not have a year ago when they pivoted to remote learning was time. Now, as you take a step back and think about how to more effectively implement remote learning, it is essential to remember that the process should and will take a lot of time. The planning process should be long enough that conversations take place at all levels to ensure that there will be as few “we didn’t think about that” moments as possible. Remember also that extra time doesn’t simply materialize, so whoever is tasked with developing the plans for remote learning is going to need something else removed from his responsibility list. Overburdening someone will only make the process take longer and the result may suffer.

Teacher Preparation

One specific piece of the time element is that teachers need to be prepared to teach in the remote learning environment. This preparation ranges from official professional development, shadowing and coursework to simply taking the time to rethink how their instructional practice and content delivery will look for their specific class. Teacher preparation is often the most



overlooked step, but it is actually the most important — the more the teacher is prepared and has thought through her concerns and questions, the better the student experience will be. An increased comfort level in teachers only comes with preparation and time, so be sure to make this a focal point of planning and implementation.

Technology Needs

At this point you may be wondering, “what about the technology?” Hopefully you have realized that the exploration of effective remote learning does not lean heavily on the actual technology. However, it is often the most “painful” and visible part of the program, so it is important to think about and explore as well. Key points to explore are network bandwidth requirements for both on and off campus, making sure that all programs and systems can run on any device at any time from anywhere, and keeping everything in one learning system as much as possible. While there are a myriad of other technology needs (video options, streaming hardware, curriculum reinforcement subscriptions, etc.), these are the big three that will define and help refine the implementation and rollout of a successful remote learning plan.

Student and Parent Education

It is important to remember that just as teachers need time to learn about the needs and processes of remote learning, students and parents need time to become familiar as well. Simply assuming that these groups will be able to pick up and become comfortable with the process is setting yourself up for failure. Dedicated and intentional training as well as education events and resources for parents and students need to be developed and distributed well in advance of any potential remote-learning rollout. Keeping this in mind will help keep everyone on the same page and ensure that no one is excluded throughout the process.

Planning, preparation, training, time and a little bit of technology. These key pieces are what are needed to develop an effective strategy for remote learning. Keeping these in mind will go a long way in making sure whatever route you take to remote learning goes as smoothly as possible.

Remember, at the start of this year’s *Computer File* articles, I issued a challenge. When each month’s article is published, I want you to read through it, find something pertinent to you and your specific situation and then post about it on social media to start a constructive discussion with your peers. As educators we well know that learning only takes place after the internalization of topics and having our thoughts and ideas challenged (or being forced to defend them). Thus, it is essential that we ourselves reflect on, internalize, express our thoughts and have constructive discourse on how the topic will impact our ministry both today and in the future.



Early Childhood Devotions

FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7



SENT TO SERVE **MATTHEW 20:28**

FOCUS: Freed to Serve. Galatians 5:13

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

(John 13:1–17; Gal. 5:13)

Before You Teach

Jesus provides an example of humble service. To wash His disciples' feet, Jesus had to take the position of kneeling on the floor as He cleaned the dirtiest part of the body. It was a lowly servant's task, and Peter objected. Jesus said, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me." Wow! Jesus invites us, with this signature act of service, to take part in His own ministry. Let us take up the "towel" of service, and help children to joyfully do the same.

Welcome/Greeting

Greet each child upon arrival, **Good Morning, child of God! Today we are going to learn about clean feet.** This brief greeting time is critical for establishing a positive tone for the day.

Gathering

Light the battery-operated candles in your worship area. Gather children. Sing. Pray. Introduce the narrative by asking, **What does a servant do?** Allow time for responses. **Today we are going to learn about our Servant Savior, Jesus.**

Tell the Story

YOU WILL NEED: Photos, or magazine images of feet — all sizes, shapes, genders, colors and ages (infant to elderly).

DO: Show the various images when the word "feet" appears in the narrative.

Jesus knew the time was near for Him to save God's people — us — from our sins. Jesus also knew that it would not be long before He would leave the world to return to His Father in heaven. Jesus loved His disciples very, very much, and He wanted to show them His love in a special way.

One evening before the Passover Feast, Jesus and the disciples gathered together for an evening meal. Jesus stood up and wrapped a towel around His waist. He poured water into a bowl and He began to wash the feet of His disciples, drying them with a towel. Knowing this was a servant's job,





Simon Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus told him, “You will understand what I am doing later.” Peter said, “You shall never wash my feet!” Jesus answered him saying, “Serving you by washing your dirty feet is My gift of love to you. Now you know to do the same for others, serving in My name.” Peter replied, “Then, Lord, wash not only my feet but my hands and head as well.” Jesus answered, “A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet: his whole body is clean.” When Jesus had finished washing the disciples’ feet, He said, “As I have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have shown you that you should serve other people as I have served you. Now that you know this, you will be blessed if you serve, helping and caring for others.”

Pray

Children repeat each phrase after you.

**Savior Jesus, show us Your loving way.
Help us to serve in all we do and say. Amen.**

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

PRE-K & K: “Through love serve one another” (GAL. 5:13).

GRADES 1 & 2: “For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations” (PS. 100:5).

Activities

CREATE: Bulletin board. *You will need: A large precut cross; traced outlines of the soles of children’s footwear; tempera paint or colorful markers.* Guide children to

each draw around (adults trace for younger children) footwear, cut out and color/paint their tracings. As children work, review the narrative. Adhere the completed footwear cutouts around the cross. Display with the words from Gal. 5:13.

DO: Fun with Feet. Guide children to think of different foot activities. (*Movement:* running, climbing, hopping, skipping, jumping, dancing, etc. *Games:* baseball, soccer, football, hockey, etc.).

SING: “We Love” (LOSP, P. 54); “Love in a Box” (LOSP, P. 35).

CAMP SERVE: Work with a local homeless shelter to provide foot coverings (shoes, boots, sandals, socks) to those in need. No homeless shelters near you? Work with your LCMS district to gather these items and ship to state, national or world areas of need.

Sending

You will need: A precut heart. Gather children in your “Sending Circle.” Review highlights of the day. Pass the heart, inviting children to pray as the heart is passed and received, or to quietly pass it along. As children exit say to each, **Go and serve.**

Live the Story

Servant leadership means placing the needs of others before our own. Doing so is challenging to live, and challenging to teach. Our sinful nature often gets in the way of our best intentions. We look to the cross for forgiveness when we fall short, and forgive others when they fall short. Our Savior, Jesus, shows us the way.

Writer: Dr. Judith Christian Designer: Chrissy Thomas

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



SENT TO SERVE Sent to Nourish

We expect growth.

As parents of younger children, we like to see them grow physically and emotionally. We are pretty good about getting them to the pediatrician for regular check-ups to mark their progress.

When children get into the schooling years, we continue to track them physically and emotionally, and by then we are also interested in their social and intellectual growth. As parents, we want to know that they fit in with their peers, and we want to make sure they are gaining needed knowledge appropriate for their current stage of life. When children get into their teenage years, and especially when they get ready to be on their own, we are concerned that they have sufficient skills to manage their time and plan their finances.

What about spiritual growth? Where does that fit in as our children grow? Well, it fits in every step of the way! We know that once a child has been baptized, that child is part of the family of God. Because of the gift of Baptism, children can, from a very young age, continue to grow in their relationship with Jesus. Parents want to provide opportunities for children to grow and mature across the life span, following the example of Jesus who grew in “wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (LUKE 2:52). How might we as parents intentionally support the spiritual growth of our children? Here are three areas that you will want to incorporate into the lives of your children in your role as parent.

Read = When children are very young, read them Bible story books. As they are able to read on their own, provide them with their own Children’s Bible, and have them read the Bible out loud during family

devotions. Show to them Christian symbols such as the cross, the Christian fish (*ichthus*), a dove, rainbow, etc., and explain the meaning of such symbols to them. As they move into those tween and teen years, help them discover other appropriate Christian fiction, history and devotional materials. Parents should also continue to read the Bible, devotional materials and other Christian literature for themselves to assure continuing spiritual growth over the course of their lives.

Serve = Spiritual growth can occur as we give of ourselves in service to others. Yes, in the giving of ourselves in service, we end up receiving! That is one blessing of serving others — as we enjoy the satisfaction in doing things for others, we are also blessed. As a family, we can try to have an ongoing service project that we participate in on a regular basis. We can also seek out those special one-time service events that we can be a part of that create growth and give joy!

Worship = While we may not be able to fully attend church as in the past, hopefully you can view your local church’s on-line broadcast. It is important to explain to your children the various parts of the worship service and to invite their participation in singing hymns, in reciting the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed, helping them to understand the importance of hearing God’s Word, participating in Confession, giving an offering and all the other aspects of worship. In worship we have the opportunity to give praise and glory to God and to be refreshed by the Spirit within a community of faith.

Yes, we desire to see our children grow, especially in spiritual ways. That is part of God’s design. We know that it is God who will bring growth, but as parents we have the privilege, honor and responsibility to be part of the “planting and watering” process as described in 1 Cor. 3:5–9.



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: GROWTH PROJECT

PURPOSE: To engage family members in an activity that provides a physical example of how things grow.

OPENER:

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

- › When is a person considered a grown-up?
- › What helps people to grow up?
- › What do you think is most important in helping you grow up?

FUN FAMILY ACTIVITY: HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

DIRECTIONS:

1. In the place where the family members are gathered, please provide the following supplies:
 - Several types of dried beans; lima, lentil, pinto and mung will work best.
 - A variety of small containers that are waterproof: baby food jars, Styrofoam coffee cups, cut-off portions of milk containers, coffee cans, etc.
 - A roll of paper towels.
 - A small bag of potting soil.
 - Masking tape and a permanent ink pen.
 - A pitcher of water (no softened water!).
2. Ask family members to choose which type of dried beans they would want to see grow.
3. Ask family members to choose the type of containers they would like to use.
4. Have each family member then plant a seed or two in a container. It might be interesting to wrap one bean in a wet paper towel and also one placed in a container, in order to see how differently they might grow. Try to have a dozen or so plantings in total.

5. When the seeds have been planted, make sure they are labeled.
6. Make a decision as a family about a variety of places where these plantings will be placed: in a window sill with direct light, in a shady area, in a closet, etc.
7. Create a time line of when you will check on the plantings to see how they grow and water as needed, especially depending on the various locations where they have been placed.
8. As you watch these seeds grow, may your family be reminded of and talk about often how God is the One who brings growth in plants and other aspects of nature, and in all parts of our lives as His children in the family of faith.

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.

Father in Heaven, we thank You, that You have created us to grow. Help us to grow taller and stronger. Help us to grow in our desire to serve others. Help us to grow in our love for others. Help us to grow in our relationships with You and others. In the name of Jesus. Amen.



A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Family Matters VOL. 25, NO. 6 // FEBRUARY 2021

Writer: Dr. Steven Christopher Designer: Erica Schwan

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Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



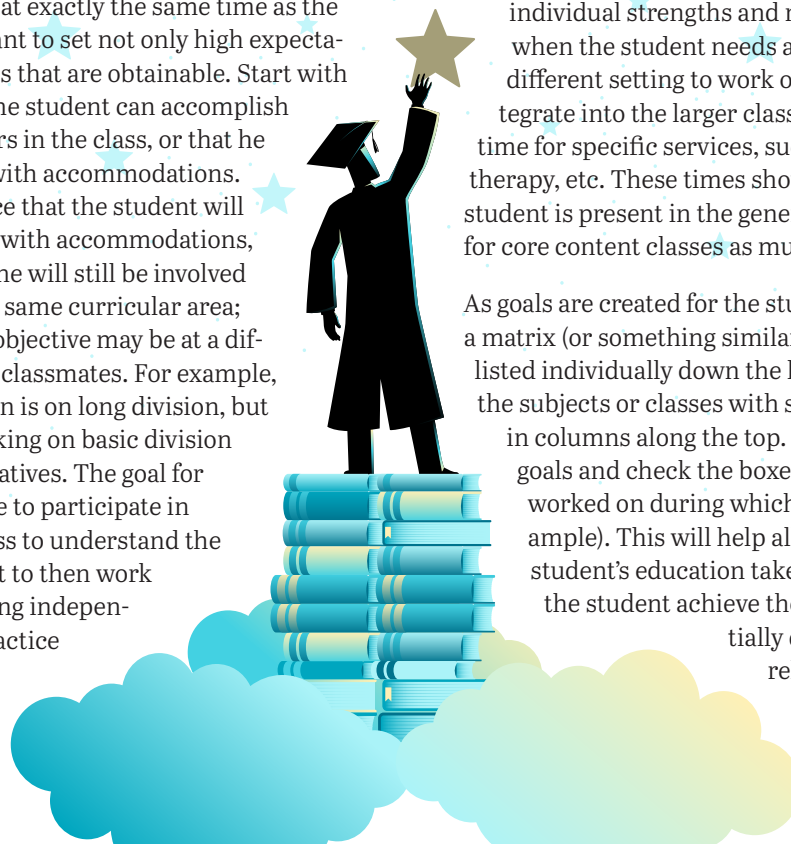
Inclusion Strategies: **Goals Matrix**

As we introduced the topic of student goals in inclusive settings, we established that presuming competence, starting with strengths and setting goals as a team are important elements of this process. The next step is further refining the individual goals to reflect the general education curriculum as much as possible, while also having a method for keeping track of this information across different settings.

While discussing appropriate goals, remember that it is OK that students with disabilities do not accomplish exactly the same thing at exactly the same time as the rest of the class. We want to set not only high expectations but also objectives that are obtainable. Start with the idea in mind that the student can accomplish the same thing as others in the class, or that he can accomplish goals with accommodations. If the team has evidence that the student will not be successful even with accommodations, move to the idea that she will still be involved in the same lesson and same curricular area; however, the learning objective may be at a different level from other classmates. For example, perhaps the class lesson is on long division, but the student is still working on basic division facts by using manipulatives. The goal for that student can still be to participate in the lesson with the class to understand the concept of division, but to then work at a different level during independent work time and practice modeling division with single digit numbers using manipulatives.

Another option would be to integrate a related goal into the lesson. For example, students may be working in small groups to discuss a novel they are reading. A student with comprehension difficulties might have read or listened to a version of the book with a lower readability level or a different book on a similar topic at the appropriate independent level. One of the student's additional social goals is to wait his turn and ask questions of his peers. These goals could be worked into this setting, along with accomplishing the reading objectives. This student participates in the general education curriculum and activities but has adjusted goals based on her individual strengths and needs. There may be times when the student needs alternate activities in a different setting to work on concepts that do not integrate into the larger classroom setting, or he needs time for specific services, such as speech, occupational therapy, etc. These times should be selected so that the student is present in the general education classroom for core content classes as much as possible.

As goals are created for the student, it is helpful to create a matrix (or something similar) in which the goals are listed individually down the left side of the page and the subjects or classes with specific teachers are listed in columns along the top. The team can look at the goals and check the boxes for which goals can be worked on during which times of the day (see example). This will help all teachers involved in the student's education take responsibility for helping the student achieve the goals, even if the goal initially does not seem obviously related to that subject. It also helps teachers remember each student's goals throughout the year.



Example Goals Matrix

Goal	Religion	Language Arts	Recess	Math	Art
Follows three-step written directions without prompting 80% of the time.	X	X		X	X
Listens to and responds to teacher verbal directions with no repetition 80% of the time.	X	X	X	X	X
Recognizes and reads 10 sight words from individualized list 70% of the time when encountered in text.	X	X		X	

It is also helpful to think of the common routines that occur in classroom instruction, and to brainstorm ideas for how the student may be able to participate differently. As a team, come up with ideas for how the student might participate in whole class instruction, contribute to whole class discussion, demonstrate solving a problem at the board, work in small groups and complete both individual projects and independent class work. Talk through how the student might communicate as part of this process as well. Ensure that there are strategies in place for the student to give answers, ask questions, make comments, take notes, write and draw. What are the skills the student may still need to work on in order to do any of these things? Are there accommodations that some or all teachers need to provide and be aware of so that a student can do these things and fully participate? It may seem natural to assume that a student with limited verbal skills cannot contribute to a small group discussion or give answers to questions, or teachers may jump to the conclusion that such a student will not understand enough to participate. Going back to the list of student strengths will help identify what the child CAN do, and then the team can figure out the best way to make that happen in different settings.



Some final thoughts on student goals and providing modifications to classroom work will be addressed in next month's *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, as we continue the work of including all of God's children in our classrooms to the fullest extent possible. Reach out to Lutheran Special Education Ministries at lsem@luthsped.org or visit our website at luthsped.org and let us know how we can help you plan for inclusive instruction for students in your classrooms!



Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



Are Your Children Securely Attached?



The process of attachment is the way an infant learns the patterns of his relationship with his parents. “Will these people keep me safe? Will they meet my needs? Can I count on them?” Attachment occurs during the first two years of an infant's life and is all about bonding.

Healthy attachment creates children who see their parents as a safe home base. Children are comfortable trying new things and working with new people, and they will turn to their mom or dad when they need reassurance. This response is a healthy way for children to take the risks they need for learning.

Infants and toddlers who do not develop a healthy or secure attachment will see an impact on their personality development and future relationships with people close to them. Attachment occurs during the first few years of life but does not lose its impact even into adulthood.

Developing a secure attachment is all about patterns of behavior and the nurturing of trust. When infants have needs, they cry. When they cry, someone comes to take care of that need. They don't require immediate, constant or perfect attention. Instead, they note a pattern of attention from those they see most often. This pattern of attention nurtures their trust that the world and the people in it are safe. This process is how infants learn they are not alone, people are trustworthy and help is available.

When infants are left to cry with needs unmet, the world does not feel safe, and the child does not learn to trust adults. In severe situations, the infant or toddler may stop asking for help. Such a child will not develop a sense of trust, and that lack of trust will impact learning and future relationships. The ability to trust allows individuals to take risks, which puts them in a position to learn or develop a relationship. Trust is a gift from God.

Parents do not need to be perfect to promote healthy attachment in their infants and toddlers. Remember that the infants are not paying attention to each incident, but their brains look for patterns over time. A time or two of having to wait for food or a diaper change will be forgotten in the overall experience of love and care. The essential pieces are to show love, to care for the child and to bond in other ways such as playing games,

touching and talking with the infant. These things tell a child, "You are safe, cared for and loved."

Years ago, scientists did a study called the Still Face Experiment. In this test, a mother was told to play with her infant strapped into a baby seat. At some point the mother was asked to turn away and then look at the child with an expressionless face. The infant responded with much evidence of stress. It was not that the mother had a strange expression, but that she broke the pattern of response and interaction. The brain seeks out patterns in many things and builds learning connected to those patterns.

The development of a secure attachment is not solely dependent on the parents. Each person is born with particular character traits that influence how she responds to situations. These character traits combine with experiences to form personalities. Some infants display character traits that make them more easygoing, while other infants and toddlers may experience more agitation and show less patience. One theory that developmental psychologists have noted is something called goodness-of-fit parenting. This is the tendency of parents to adjust their responses to the

individual traits of the infant. These adjustments mean it is possible for even an easily agitated child to develop a secure attachment.

How we react to stressful situations can be traced back to early attachment. Stress leaves bare our stronger emotions, which can be unsettling and make it more of a challenge to trust. If you or your children find it a more significant trial to trust those in authority or trust people with expertise, it is an excellent time to talk about the secure attachment that God provides.

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (ROM. 8:14-16).

Because of the Father who created us, the Son whose death and resurrection saves us and the Spirit's work, we have a perfect attachment to our God. This truth is an incredible gift that we share with our children to remind them, amid a chaotic world, our relationship with God is faithful and sure because of His love for us. Let God's love strengthen your ability to trust.



A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Parent Pages VOL. 20, NO. 7 // MARCH 2021

Writer: Dr. Kim Marxhausen Designer: Lisa Moeller

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Professionally Speaking



Sent to Serve ... with a Song



Mission statements are set to affirm focus and direction for a school. From curriculum to sports, mission statements should guide decisions in choosing new resources and seeking staff.

Lutheran schools and all involved with their ministry would do well to lean on their mission statement ... and lean hard. The education world offers plenty of distractions and misguided materials that can steer a Lutheran school from its purpose. For us to blindly adopt them because the resource is the new shiny toy will bring failure. Remember, the bright shiny fruit in the Garden of Eden led our first parents into rebellion with their Maker.

We have within our Lutheran heritage a rich treasure. Our founders reformed the Church to a mission statement that moved back to the grace and all-fulfilling work of Christ for the world. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for

good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (EPH. 2:8-10).

Do we understand the influence of this and other teachings on our schools? Just as much, do we treasure the practices and traditions of the LCMS that reflect and share the precious message of a loving and gracious Lord?

At a recent event with The Lutheran Schools Partnership, the Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz, our Synod’s executive director for the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty, reflected on his treasured faith and how his Lutheran teachers fostered it. As he shared quick stories on each individual, he shared one particular teacher who especially impacted his life: the music and choir director. Seltz said that this teacher “sang faith in our heart.”

Many of our schools tout a strong fine arts program. In fact, we encourage our students to take up a musical instrument, sing in a choir and appreciate fine music. Purely from an education perspective, music needs a

strong focus in our schools. Studies confirm the academic benefits of music education. Music instruction has been shown to help build reading skills such as vocabulary and verbal sequencing.¹ A 2013 Northwestern study provides biological evidence linking the ability to keep a beat to the encoding of speech sounds.² For all this, many parents look at music as a needed experience for their children to determine what skills and talents God has given them.

But in our Lutheran schools, we do more with our music ... and we should realize the treasure music is for the most important goal of our schools: sharing Christ. Before diving into the need for singing what we believe, a quick reminder that our schools need not exist if our goal is to be an excellent academic institution — that’s the goal of any school. Our schools are about Jesus and how His redeeming work penetrates every subject and routine of the school.



peace on earth has arrived in her infant son. The words of Luke 2 spring to life with joy and excitement.

Many do the same during Holy Week. We sing the Hosannas of those greeting Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem with “All Glory, Laud, and Honor.” We’re part of the crowd, we feel the excitement, we reflect on Old Testament promises. In “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted,” we confess our own part of Jesus’ gruesome death while also hearing the groans of our Savior hanging on the cross. With “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Alleluia,” we shout our alleluias of an empty grave, a risen Lord and death defeated.

However, all too often, we don’t continue a confession through our hymns during the other parts of our school year ... and we could ... and we should. The Church’s hymns are the Church’s witness and confession. As we sing these hymns, as we teach these hymns for young and old, we sing faith into the hearts of our students.

So let’s do it! Let’s teach faith through our songs and be confident that we are living our mission. Do it as the school confesses that it seeks God’s will and God’s direction instead of a worldly, secular design. Because in fact, only “one thing is needful; all others are vain — I count all but loss that I Christ may obtain” (LSB 536:1). Let’s seek hymns that remind us how valuable we are, that we are treasured, that we can be confident in all things because, being baptized, “God’s own child, I gladly say it” (LSB 594:1). When things seem overwhelming and hardships occur, we can be certain of the sure foundation of faith found in Jesus and sing, “Fear not I am with you, O be not dismayed. For I am your God and will still give you aid” (LSB 728:2).



Succinctly, the Church sings her theology through our hymns (and its liturgy — the subject for next month’s *Professionally Speaking*). How many Christians recite the Christmas Gospel via “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” or “Joy to the World”? With those hymns and many others, the Christian sings with the angels and joins with the excitement of the shepherds. We marvel with Mary that

¹ SAGE Publications/Psychology of Music, “Music Education Can Help Children Improve Reading Skills. *ScienceDaily* (March 2009), accessed March 12, 2021, [sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/03/090316075843.htm](https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/03/090316075843.htm).

² Wendy Leopold, “The Importance of Keeping the Beat,” *Northwestern Now* (September 2013), accessed October 1, 2020, [news.northwestern.edu/stories/2013/09/the-importance-of-keeping-the-beat](https://www.news.northwestern.edu/stories/2013/09/the-importance-of-keeping-the-beat).

Professionally Speaking // MARCH 2021

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Rattles & Prattles

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS



Freed and Chosen to Serve

“THROUGH LOVE SERVE ONE ANOTHER” (GAL. 5:13).



MARCH THEME

Bible Story: Jesus washes His disciples' feet (JOHN 13:1-17).

Focus: God sent His Son, Jesus, to be the Servant Savior.

What it teaches us: Jesus, God's Son, our Savior, loves us so much He willingly performed the lowliest of tasks (e.g., washing His disciples' feet). Think about the ways God's Spirit works through you to serve His precious little ones (e.g., changing diapers). Thank God for the privilege/responsibility to serve.

Prepare to teach

- › **Read** the story in the references and, if possible, a study Bible.
- › **Think:** People during Jesus' time wore sandals; there were no sidewalks nor asphalt roads. Washing feet, as well as washing hands, was important. Washing feet was left to a servant/slave. Jesus willingly does it. He shows us what it means to serve. Jesus, the Servant Savior, joyfully embraced serving/helping. He endured death by crucifixion (death reserved for the lowliest of people, the worst criminals). He willingly did this to make it possible for us to become redeemed people of God.
- › **Pray:** Thank You, Jesus, for Your great big love. You helped with little things like washing feet and big things like suffering, dying and rising again to save us from sin, death and Satan. Send Your Spirit to move us to respond by loving and serving others. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

WORSHIP TIME AND BIBLE STORY PRESENTATION



You will also need:

- › **Little Ones Sing Praise** (*LOSP*), copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House (CPH), St. Louis, Mo.
- › **Picture of Jesus** (find one doing an internet search)
- › **Pictures:** Jesus and His disciples walking and sitting down at a table; Jesus washing their feet and a heart shape. Reduce sizes to 2 inches; glue in circle shapes; color; cut out; laminate; cut out; make tree cookies or glove puppets. Use pieces of adhesive Velcro on the back.

Gather for Worship

Sing (use melody “Mulberry Bush”): **Boys and girls, come sit with me ... Boys and girls, come sit with me, right here on the floor.**

Invocation: Sing (using melody from above): **We gather here in God’s name ... Father, Son and Spirit too.**

Opening Song

Show picture of Jesus. **Jesus loves each of us. We learn about Jesus’ love in the Bible.** Sing “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know” (*LOSP*, p. 42).



Bible Story

Use tree cookies or a story glove with pictures suggested above.

Show Jesus & His disciples: **Jesus and His friends walked down the dusty street. They were-on-their way to have some-food-to eat.**

Show them sitting at a table. **They washed their hands; but, who would wash their feet? Then Jesus, our Savior, did something really neat.**

Show Jesus washing feet. **He-got-water-and-a-towel, then washed their feet.**

Show Jesus talking to disciples. **Jesus-said, “I did this to-show-I-love you.**

Show the heart. **Now you show-you-love Me in all you-say-and do.”**

What the Story Teaches: Even though Jesus was/ is a very important person, He was happy to do little things for others. Then Jesus, God’s Son and our Savior, showed His big love when He was hurt, died on a cross and came alive again. Jesus chooses us to show our love by helping others.

Song to Sing: “God Chose Me” (*LOSP*, P. 107).

Time to Pray

Thank You, Jesus, for Your great big love. Help us show our love for You — in all that we say and do. Amen.

Closing/Benediction

(Use “Mulberry Bush” tune.) **Now it’s time to say goodbye ... Now it’s time to say goodbye. Remember God loves — and cares — for you.**

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

S Science and Nutrition

- › **Science:** God gives us feet; name parts; investigate animals' feet.
- › **Snacks:** Eat a foot shape: use a foot-shaped cutter to cut sandwiches or serve Nutter Butter Peanut Butter® sandwich cookies (have a foot shape).

T Technology

- › Set out play equipment that requires children to use feet (e.g., riding toys children sit on and use their feet to move, balls of all sizes).

R Reading and Language Arts

- › **Books:** *The Foot Book* by Dr. Seuss (Random House Bright and Early Books for Beginning Beginners, 1968); *Shoes, Shoes, Shoes* by Ann Morris (Harper Collins, 1998); *Whose Feet?* (Melissa & Doug, 2016) [washable cloth book for toddlers].
- › **Poem:** "Galoshes" by Rhoda W. Bacmeister (from *Sing a Song of Popcorn: Every Child's Book of Poems*, Scholastic, 1988).
- › **Rhymes:** "Three Little Kittens;" Song: Wash hands/ feet to tune "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" **Wash, wash, wash your hands; get them nice and clean — tops and bottoms, all around and fingers in between.**

E Engineering

- › After playtime invite the children to help put away the toys (e.g., in bins on shelves).

A Arts (art, music and physical education)

- › **Art:** Foot or Shoe Art; use baby-safe ink or paint.
- › **Music:** "God Made Me, Every Part You See" (*LOSP*, P. 76,); repeat, change actions of feet.
- › **Large Motor:** Move feet in different ways: walk, run, jump, stomp, tiptoe, giant steps, skate, etc.

M Mathematics

- › Use permanent markers and tree cookies, stones, blocks, etc. to make a matching game (e.g., two 1s, two 2s) from one to five. Place in order and count.

S Social Studies

- › We wear different kinds of shoes (e.g. tennis, slippers, rain boots, winter boots). Invite children to find those that match.

CONNECT WITH PARENTS in your newsletter

Suggest families do something kind for a neighbor such as give them their mail, take a treat to eat together, etc.





School Shepherd

TIPS AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONS WITH SCHOOLS



THEME | SENT TO SERVE

Sent to Serve Peacefully



“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid”
(JOHN 14:27).

Peace through the Good Shepherd

The peace Jesus promised to His disciples in the Upper Room conversations prior to His Passion (JOHN 14), He delivered to them. The disciples who heard His promise were gathered together again on Easter evening. The setting was not peaceful. Scripture notes, “The doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews,” Jesus’ first words to the disciples were “Peace be with you” (JOHN 20:19). The message was repeated a week later as Thomas joined the group.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (ROM. 5:1). Lutheran schools share a message of peace because Jesus is the message. Lutheran schools are peaceful places because the peace of Jesus is there.

The School Shepherd Sharing God’s Peace

Following the words of institution in the Service of the Sacrament, the pastor addresses the worshipers, “The peace of the Lord be with you always” (LSB 163). The communicants proceed to the Lord’s Table where the body and blood of our Savior are shared. There is peace with God because Christ has paid for our sins and brought us into the fellowship of the Church. The benediction sends worshipers from the sanctuary into the vocations of their lives, “The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace” (LSB 166). It is important for Lutheran school ministry to be worship centered. School staff, families and children make worship together a priority.

The school shepherd brings the peace of Christ into all aspects of the school ministry. Lutheran school ministry takes place in the “real” world. The reality of Christ is brought to all situations. The peace of Christ given in the means of grace is taught in the classroom. Fellow Christians living in peace is emphasized in conversations with disagreeing students or discouraged staff members; varying perspectives of board members are brought to peaceful conclusions.

Peaceful Lutheran Schools

In the devotional book *Give Your Life a Lift* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), author Herman Gockel shares a peaceful illustration (p. 78). To illustrate “peace,” an artist paints a picture of a roaring waterfall with a mighty oak overarching it. In the crotch of a limb bending low over the turbulent waters, almost within reach of the rising spray, a tiny sparrow sits, calm and unperturbed in her little nest.

School ministry takes place near the “roaring waterfall.” School schedules and calendars are full; hallways may be congested; relationships are varied; family backgrounds are diverse. In the midst of the complexity of a Lutheran school ministry, in the midst of trials and troubles, Jesus brings His peace.

Activities and actions that lead to serving peacefully include:

- › Bible study as part of staff and board meetings and other gatherings. Ted Kober [*Built on the Rock* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017) explored the characteristics of a healthy church. Kober notes, “Being in God’s Word is not just one of the many factors that characterize a healthy church. It is the foundation on which its health is based ... If a church wants to be healthy, she must be more than just another organization. She must be securely grounded in God’s Word—not just by reference, but by practice” (p. 53). Peaceful (and healthy) Lutheran Schools are built on the Word.
- › Trusting relationships. The school shepherd demonstrates that he is trustworthy and models trust and respect with others, especially with those who share in a team ministry.
- › Open communication. Formal and regular communication is important. The pastor and principal meet to share mutual joys and concerns. Also important is the informal communication with staff members, parents and even students.
- › Healthy conflict resolution skills and procedures. Satan sows discord. Even in the healthiest ministry contexts conflict will occur. Some school faculties and staff have developed a “team covenant” that commits everyone to the directives of Scripture (MATT. 18:15–20). *Responding to Conflict Confessionally: A Peacemaker Bible Study for Lutherans* [Ken Sande and Ted Kober (Peacemaker Ministries, 1998)] is a helpful resource for school faculties, boards and other partners to study together.



Forth in the peace of
Christ we go; Christ to the
world with joy we bring;
Christ in our minds, Christ on
our lips; Christ in our hearts,
the world’s true king.”

(LSB 920:1)



Sharing our Peaceful Thoughts

- ◆ When or where have you seen the peace of Christ lived or shared in your school?
- ◆ What situations or dynamics have threatened a sense of peace in your ministry?
- ◆ What does the Spirit’s “fruit” of peace (GAL. 5:22) look like in your church and school?



Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



When Have You Experienced Something New?

There have been many changes around the world in the past year. The arrival of COVID-19 has brought unrest, difficult decisions and uncertainty to many people. What was previously a relaxing evening at a restaurant has changed into social distancing or take-out eaten at home. Vacations to the beach have turned into home-remodeling projects. Just ponder for a moment what has happened to the field of education. Online lessons, games and communications with parents have become an uncomfortable norm for many teachers.

Yes, there is no doubt that many teachers have had anxiety or sleepless nights during the past year in relation to school, classroom, students and overall delivery of learning resources for students. Life as we knew it has changed. Perhaps you have worried about enrollment and finances. Perhaps you have worried about contracting the virus yourself or about what might happen if someone in your class contracted the virus.



Think about how some people in the Bible reacted to their experiences of something new. Did they have all the information they needed to make an informed decision? What did their community think about them? Did they doubt God?

Consider Noah. He was tasked to build a gigantic boat. How did his life change as a result of his obedience? What did Noah and his family think when the rain kept coming, and afterward when there was no land in sight? Their life certainly changed; thankfully, they kept their faith in God!

What about Jonah? He tried to avoid God's message to go to Nineveh. How his life changed when he was swallowed by a giant fish! He eventually did end up going to Nineveh, just as God had originally told him, but it was a difficult trip.

And, as you think of life-changing events, what about Mary — the mother of Jesus? Wow! She received a special message from an angel,

had to deal with a fiance who tried to break up their engagement and traveled across the land via donkey to give birth in a stable. Yes, Mary certainly did have a life-changing event; yet, her reaction was always one of gratitude and honor to be chosen as the mother of Jesus Christ.

Noah, Jonah and Mary all experienced something new in their lives. They likely all had moments of fear and uncertainty, yet they moved forward in faith — they knew they were sent to serve God and His people in a way He had chosen for them. That same can be said for you, too, during the past year. You experienced something new, something scary, something that was out of your comfort zone. But, in a unique way, you have also been stretched to experience new things — new ways of personal and professional growth.

It is easy to look back at the past twelve months and think negatively about what has happened. There have been financial difficulties, health concerns and worries about how ministry and school could continue in uncharted waters.

As a ministry leader, it is so important to look toward the blessings you have been given too. God has blessed you, your ministry and your family. Write down a few examples of how God has shown His blessings; work toward writing down one or two items for each category. Researchers have determined that highlighting at least three things you are grateful for each day can lead to a changed mindset of gratitude. Gratitude is exactly what the world needs more of right now!

What was Noah grateful for? Perhaps he was grateful for wood for construction, for family to help build the ark and keep him company or for animals that provided some entertainment while on their journey.

What was Jonah grateful for? Perhaps he was grateful for a fish that didn't hurt him, for a sandy beach to "land" on or for the shady plant that God provided.

What was Mary grateful for? Perhaps she was grateful for the message shared by an angel, for the donkey she could ride rather than walk or for warm hay in the stable when Christ was born.



Yes, being grateful can be difficult, but God shares in 1 Thessalonians, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (5:16–18). As you pray, ask for the help of the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts. Ask for others to enter into your day to show you gratitude in new ways. Look for gifts that God has set before you. As an early childhood educator, look for the joy shared each day by your students!

As you reflect on the gifts and blessings you have received, remember to note emotions of gratitude as you ponder them. As you begin to see actually how blessed you are, make note of how you show gratitude toward others. What can you do — what simple gestures can you share — to show how grateful you are? What is an action you can do to model gratitude to others?

Gratitude can be contagious — in a good way!

Again, the past year has been unique, challenging and, hopefully, somewhat rewarding for you too. How have you grown personally or professionally? How has your school and your students been positively impacted by the situation at hand? How has your family, or other families, been able to be blessed and show gratitude because of the situation?

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding" (PROV. 3:5).

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (MATT. 6:33).

"But my eyes are toward you, O GOD, my Lord; in you I seek refuge; leave me not defenseless!" (PS. 141:8).

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Drew Gerdes Designer: Frank Kohn

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