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FEBRUARY 2004

The
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 Educator

The WELS Education Journal

Your **WORD**
is a
LAMP
to my
feet
and a 
LIGHT
to my path.
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The Lutheran Educator

The education journal
of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
edited by the faculty of Martin Luther College

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FEBRUARY 2004

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Excellence in the Marketplace

In the American marketplace, excellence is the tonic that revitalizes tired (read “profitless”) operations. Late last century the slumping Ford Motor Company rallied around the slogan “Quality is Job 1.” Soon five of the top ten selling vehicles in the country bore Ford’s nameplate.

Check the mission and vision statements or core values of successful restaurants, hospitals, and retailers, and you often will find phrases such as “standards of excellence” and “striving for excellence.”

At some point, “excellence” will become yesterday’s buzz word if it is not already, but the whole idea of putting out a superior product will remain a recipe for success. And the reason is no mystery. Excellence attracts.

We should not be surprised that schools at all levels have discovered what businesses have known for some time. And today’s parents, arguably the most concerned of the last few generations about giving their children every advantage, are also in search of the excellent school.

How should WELS schools—in the world but not of it—respond to this cultural value? Does wanting to become excellent seem somehow too worldly a way to attract families? Does striving to present excellent instruction and program and then advertising the same seem somewhat manipulative?

How sad if we fail to be excellent out of fear we are doing so for the wrong reason. Let us not be distracted by a fruitless debate, but see clearly both cause and effect. Our schools should be excellent in every way. Our standards should be high—and visible, from the floors of our hallways to the thoroughness of our instruction.

Why?

Excellence in the market place is proof of worth and superiority, and profit inevitably follows. But what have we to prove to our God who matters far more than the market? He has already made us excellent (righteous) in his sight by accepting Christ’s perfect sacrifice on our behalf. Besides, what standard of excellence that we might set—no matter how gleaming—could ever meet our Lord’s standard of perfection?

Excellence is not our proof; it is our praise. The world’s view of excellence is shot through with pressure, and maintaining excellence, make no mistake, is hard work. But we who have nothing to prove to our God are free to be excellent. We see a marketplace where the currency is Christ’s blood and the commodity it buys is souls.

Our Lord is worthy of an excellent effort, and our reason to be excellent is far more compelling than an accountant’s bottom line. If the families attracted to our excellence do not initially understand why we are excellent, so be it. We have eternity to share.

PML

Two New Initiatives at MLC

John Isch

Martin Luther College is implementing two new programs, both of which affect teachers who have already graduated from (D)MLC. Persons have asked questions about these programs and what follows is an attempt to respond to those questions in the familiar catechetical format.

What is this “masters program”?

In the 1999 Synod Convention, the delegates resolved “that a masters degree program for teachers and staff ministers be designed, delivered, and governed by Martin Luther College according to its mission as the WELS college of ministry... that the Synodical Council provide funding for this program ... that MLC begin enrolling students and offering courses for this masters program in the summer of 2001 by offering a Masters of Education in Curriculum and Instruction.” (1999 WELS Proceedings)

The college developed on paper the program but because the Synodical Council did not fund it, it was not implemented. In 2002 MLC re-examined the program, particularly as to costs and methods of delivery. The Board for Ministerial Education also asked the college to conduct a needs assessment for this program. The college applied for and received a grant from Thrivent Lutheran to conduct a pilot program and to do a needs assessment.

The planned program has three

options: leadership, curriculum and instruction, and special education. When fully implemented there will be some 24 courses; some of which will be common to the three areas and some will be focused on a particular area. Two-thirds of the courses are being designed to be taught on-line. The other third will be in a traditional classroom setting on the MLC campus or in other locations.

Why do you put “masters program” in quotation marks?

The college can’t advertise or offer a masters program until the college obtains authorization from the accreditation agency of the college, The Higher Learning Commission of North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The college also needs approval from the State of Minnesota. The college anticipates submitting an application for the masters program and receiving an on-site visit in 2005. If things go according to plan and the college receives accreditation for a masters degree program, the college can then call the program a masters program and

advertise it as such, but not before. Meanwhile, the college has obtained permission from North Central to offer six graduate courses, the first six in this program.

What is the needs assessment?

The college conducted focus groups in connection with all eight district teachers conferences and it mailed a survey to a random sample of 300 elementary school teachers. The preliminary results are very positive for the program. The complete analysis will be presented to the Board for Ministerial Education in February 2004. You can also anticipate a summary of the results in *The Lutheran Educator*.

What happens then?

The BME will review the needs assessment results, the college will start accepting enrollment in the graduate courses in the spring, and the first courses will begin in the summer of 2004.

Where can I find more information?

You should have received or will receive a brochure on the program. More details can also be found on the MLC website (www.mlc-wels.edu), including an application form.

Can I get state licensing with this program?

No. While there are some colleges that provide a masters degree leading to state licensure, those programs are for persons who have an undergraduate degree in an area other than education. For example, if someone earned an

undergraduate degree in English literature and subsequently wanted to get licensed as a teacher, he or she could enroll in a masters program at some college that would provide the psychology and methods courses required for licensure. These courses would be similar to the courses taken as undergraduate courses by a person in a teacher education program. Such a masters program for licensure would not make sense at MLC because our teachers have already taken the undergraduate courses.

So, how do I get state licensure?

Good question.

If you graduated before 2002, when MLC received approval status for its teacher education program from Minnesota, you have a couple of options.

First, you might find a college in your area, probably a private college, which could provide you with the necessary course work and professional experiences and then recommend you for licensure in the state in which that college is located. The requirements that colleges have for this can vary greatly, all the way from re-doing all the professional education to something less than that.

Second, Wisconsin Lutheran College had a program which will be completed in June 2004, partially funded by Thrivent, which provided the necessary courses and experiences for many WELS teachers to become licensed. This program operated well and provided licensure for a substantial number of WELS teachers. WLC continues to have

a means for licensure in which they identify the “deficiencies” and provide credited coursework and other opportunities for teachers to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions according to the standards required in Wisconsin.

MLC has also begun a program designed for state licensure for (D)MLC graduates. That would be your third option. It is called the post-baccalaureate licensure program.

What is this post-baccalaureate licensure program?

When MLC received approval from the state of Minnesota for its teacher education program, it began to consider ways that it could provide licensure for persons who graduated before 2002. In the summer of 2002, it submitted a program to the Board of Teaching in Minnesota that would allow graduates of (D)MLC to obtain licensure. The Board of Teaching approved this program and MLC began operating in the summer of 2003.

What are the basic requirements for everyone?

All persons who enroll would need to take a course specifically designed for this program. This course, EDU9202 Teaching in Elementary and Middle School Classrooms, is offered each summer on the MLC campus. The specific content requirements for Minnesota license, directions for the required portfolio, and an overview of the professional experience requirements are included in this three-credit course.

Persons enrolled in this program are

also required to do a professional experience of no less than six weeks in a classroom supervised by a licensed teacher. This professional experience can be done in the person’s own classroom or in some other classroom. It can be done in a Lutheran school or in a public school. If it is done in a Lutheran school, the teacher must also do a three-week experience in a public school classroom under a licensed teacher.

There are also requirements for teaching at the middle-school level, for having a diversity experience, and for writing the required PRAXIS I and II tests. Finally, anyone enrolled in this program must complete and present a professional portfolio.

What are the other requirements?

The other requirements for a (D)MLC graduate depend on when he or she graduated from the college. This is because the undergraduate program of (D)MLC changed several times. The post-baccalaureate program begins with graduates of 1970 and, depending on the undergraduate program and the courses someone may have taken at other colleges, the (D)MLC graduate would have to take a human relations course and a course in exceptional education.

Will this program help me get licensure in some other state?

Good question. Yes, it should, but it is not automatic. Most states don’t have reciprocity with each other regarding licensure. (Don’t ask why.) If a student has graduated from a teacher education

program that is approved by the state in which that college is located, the graduate is eligible for licensure in that state. If the graduate wants licensure in some other state, that graduate must also meet the requirements of that state. Sometimes this is minor, such as demonstrating successful teaching for a year, taking one or two courses, or being in a mentoring program during the first year or two of teaching. Sometimes, it is major such as graduating from a college that has accreditation through NCATE (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education) or completing the PRAXIS III testing program. For example, Wisconsin requires, among other things, a semester-long student teaching

experience. Most persons coming with licensure from other states meet this requirement by successfully completing a year of experience as certified by the principal of the school. Usually the person transferring in from another state will get a provisional or initial license until he or she qualifies for a regular license.

I'm confused.

Welcome to the norm. But you can also contact the friendly folks at MLC (507 354 8221), check out the MLC website (www.mlc-wels.edu), or e-mail us for additional information. ♡

John Isch is the licensure officer and chair of the education division at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN.

A WELS Factoid

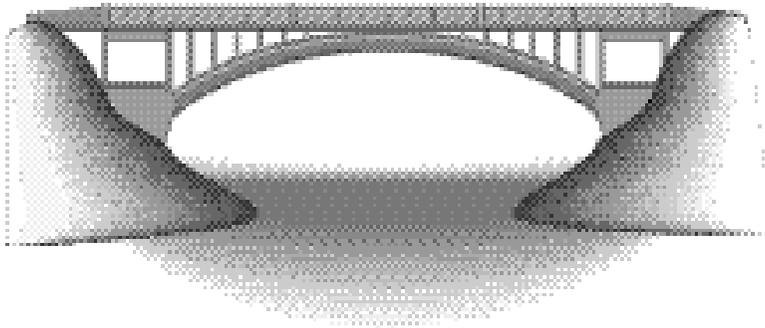
Professional Development Activities for Elementary and Secondary Teachers Over the Past 12 Months (Public and Private School Teachers) in Percentages

Church affiliation	teachers	type of professional development course/workshop		
		content	methods	discipline/management
Catholic	137,000	56%	66%	38%
Luth Chrch–Mo Synd	13,000	46%	61%	42%
Episcopal	8800	52%	66%	33%
Svth Day Adv	4300	39%	64%	38%
WELS	1900	45%	64%	38%
Friends	1500	46%	59%	26%
ELCA	1300	48%	59%	36%
Nonsectarian private	93,000	45%	59%	36%
Public school	2,727,000	73%	73%	41%

From: *Schools and Staffing Survey, 1999-2000*. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education

Build Bridges to Other Cultures

Frederick Wulff



IN TODAY'S SOCIETY we have more chances than ever to interact with others from different cultures. Our Lutheran schools and congregations have taken on a multicultural look that would have amazed our forefathers. God has brought more diversity into our communities and schools. We need to build bridges. Teachers are in a great position for this assignment and their influence will have a positive impact on the makeup of our future WELS membership. The classroom is an excellent construction site for this important project. No doubt many of our Lutheran schools are already at the task, but current situations provide even more opportunities to give attention to this vital project. Incorporate this mission into your classroom devotions, religion instruction, and social studies units. Teachers can be effective architects for this worthwhile undertaking of building

bridges.

Prepare for bridge building with the Word of God

To bridge cultural differences with others, the essential starting point for Christians is the Word of God. The construction material of the Word gives us a lasting and sure foundation. Our erosive sinful Adam has the tendency to look down upon those who have different skin color or those who have customs different from our own. The power of the Holy Spirit helps us overcome our human nature. All of us need to pray for hearts free from prejudice.

In the eyes of our Redeemer there are no hyphenated categories. St. Paul tells us, "Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so

that they may be saved” (1Co 10:32-33). God would have us treat others as we would have others treat us. Our love and concern for all people must have a priority in our lives. Good discipleship requires our best efforts to build bridges that span perceived differences. We should heed his words, “As far as it depends on you, live at peace with

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We do not need to reconstruct history or fabricate to teach cultural lessons, and neither should we cover up events we wish had never happened.

”

everyone” (Rom12:18). Fortified with God’s Word, we will have the heart, the strength and proper motivation for this undertaking of bridge building.

Develop bridge building skills by studying history

Our effort to understand and to appreciate people of other cultures is greatly enhanced by delving into history. A

study of history will shed light on the diversity of cultures and social institutions among the world’s races and nationalities. This background helps us understand the outlook and attitudes of others. To illustrate, while doing dissertation research on the Shawnee Native Americans, I developed a deep, lasting respect for them as a people. Reading original documents from the archives, or reprinted accounts, helps one to vicariously experience the plight of others by seeing the world through their eyes. Historical background is vital to understanding others, whether Native American, Hispanic, Mideastern, African, or Asian. Teachers would do well to assign readings from source documents that help students empathize with others. Students, fortified with a deeper knowledge of history, are then better equipped to bridge differences of other cultures.

Any study of history should be an honest quest for truth, including both positive and negative factors, allowing history to speak for itself without embellishment. We do not need to reconstruct history or fabricate to teach cultural lessons, and neither should we cover up events we wish had never happened. John Quincy Adams once wisely said that if we do not also face the unpleasant facts of history, we do not learn from our errors. The Christian community should be especially concerned about the lessons that can be learned from frank history for meaningful dialogue, so that we relate better to others and witness our faith.

Find models of bridge builders in history

While preparing classroom units of history, teachers should look to past rare individuals of vision who deserve to be singled out for being noble at a time when it was not always expedient to do so. Praise those courageous people who spoke for the victims of injustice. Many of them still have a message for today, and could well serve as persons to be emulated. Among the following historical figures are many individuals worth assigning to students for research projects, and many who could also be incorporated into role-playing activities.

There are Native Americans, like Chief Joseph, Powhatan, and Blackhawk, whose eloquent speeches are so moving that they should be read aloud to be fully appreciated. The same could be said of the bridge builder Martin Luther King with his "I Have A Dream" speech delivered in the nation's capital. King wisely sought to bring all Americans together as a people, to be judged by their character and not by the color of their skin.

There also are noteworthy models of bridge builders among the Caucasians, such as the New England minister John Elliot, the "Apostle to they Indians." His compassion for Native Americans and his love for the gospel compelled him to speak against the larger Puritan society that apparently had wandered from its moral footings. Another voice that should still be heard is that of Episcopal Bishop Whipple of Minnesota. In 1862, while ministering to Native Americans, he sternly warned the government of

Abraham Lincoln that the mistreatment of the Dakota was creating an explosive atmosphere. When hostilities broke out, General John Pope asked that the natives be treated as "maniacs or wild beasts." Standing out against this rush to judgment, Bishop Whipple interceded with President Lincoln. He was successful in earning a reprieve for all but 38 of the more than 300 captive natives who had been sentenced to death. Lincoln, too, stands out as a profile in courage for acting on behalf of helpless natives in the shadow of the hangman's noose. Lincoln was a compassionate soul in an age when the issue of race threatened the nation itself. Teachers might also identify more recent figures, like Hubert Humphrey, who in 1948 helped lead his party from bigotry into the fresh air of civil rights. There is no shortage of worthy examples that could be drawn upon.

Sometimes the heroes were not as well known as those mentioned above. The common frontier soldiers, who witnessed the slaughter of innocent Cheyenne men, women, and children at the 1862 Sand Creek Massacre, had the courage to speak out against their commander Col. Chivington. This was hardly a popular stance on the Colorado frontier. The subsequent government hearings on the atrocity brought forth the detailed testimony of these soldiers, so that now this horrendous event may be a lesson of history. These bygone voices can also give courage to everyone to speak out against racism and injustice. There are numerous source books, as well edited accounts, in any local

library.

Enhance bridge building by personal travel

Travel study tours for teachers and college students, or sometimes just planned travel, can make history come alive and promote a better understanding of minorities and those of different traditions. College study tours within the United States were conducted by (Dr.) Martin Luther College for many years. One of the objectives of those tours was to give students exposure to other cultures outside their own circles. For example, tours included African-American civil rights sites in Memphis, Montgomery, Birmingham, Selma, and Atlanta; Asian-American sites in the Chinatowns of San Francisco and New York City as well as Japanese-American relocation camps like Topaz in Utah; Hispanic sites in El Pueblo de Los Angeles and the famous California Mission Trail; and Native American sites at Pipestone, Wounded Knee, the Cherokee Trail of Tears, and Apache Land in Arizona.

Through world travel, teachers can visit cultural settings that broaden outlooks on other cultural ways of life. At the same time, one becomes aware of the great gulf between the “haves” and “have-nots” in Third World nations. Teachers do well to place themselves in the not so accustomed position of being a minority in another culture. With an open mind, one can learn very much about others and see beauty and value in the unfamiliar. The more recent

world travel experiences of Martin Luther College students in Europe, Turkey, Latin America, and Africa have been invaluable in broadening their perspectives. When the college offered a study tour/safari in Kenya and Tanzania, the participants stepped into a world unlike anything they had known. At an African school in Arusha, they were invited to observe classroom instruction by dedicated teachers who had facilities quite unlike those in the United States. Afterwards the local teachers and students graciously treated the MLC students to traditional African songs and dances. The veteran teachers and future church workers on the tour gained immeasurably from this experience of bridge building. Opportunities for world travel continue to be available at MLC, sometimes in conjunction with Bethany Lutheran College and Wisconsin Lutheran College. Teachers may check the MLC web site (www.mlc-wels.edu) under Special Services for current offerings.

Use bridge building class assignments

There are a number of interactive projects that could be devised for the benefit of students. The following example is only one suggestion for upper elementary grades or high school students. Divide the class into five or more groups and assign each group a regional U.S. area. Stress that students are to find information that relates to any ethnic or racial groups in their respective region. Have them search for museums, information centers, WELS missions, cultural

and historical sites pertaining to minorities. Instruct each regional group to subdivide themselves into states within their region. Individual students are then to use computers to locate free historic site information on their states, to use travel guides from the public library (or inter-library loan), to seek information from their parents and relatives, to phone or write their elected government official (who have staff and access to government publications), and to write to state historical societies for brochures. Possibly the teacher could send out a memo to the parents asking to lend personal copies of guidebooks like Frommers, AAA, and Mobil Travel Guides. If you have history buffs in your congregation, you may even find Macmillan's *Monuments and Historic Places* or National Geographic *America's Historical Places*. These books could be placed on a temporary reserve desk in the classroom for student use.

After a given time, perhaps six weeks, with the teacher having made periodic progress checks, the students can meet with their regional group to pool their information. Then direct each group to construct a regional map with significant site locations penciled in. Ask them to connect the sites with a line as if planning a trip. Then they may determine how many miles between the sites and how much time it would take between sites if they traveled a given rate of speed. If you wish to add a little more practical math, they could also determine the cost of gasoline required. For another activity, students could figure the number of days required for their

hypothetical trip and the most economical cost of overnight lodging by using the Expedia or Travelocity web sites.

A music teacher might teach each regional group an ethnic folk song suggested by their particular findings. Schedule a culminating activity with a parent-teacher meeting or open house, in which students explain their itineraries on posted regional maps and relate what might be learned from their virtual-reality trip. Students might also draw up travel posters, possibly as an art project, to entice "visitors" to explore their regions. This assignment incorporates computer and library skills, cooperative learning, and cross curriculum work. If two classrooms are combined for the assignment, team teaching is also involved. Most importantly, the end result is learning about cultural diversity.

Build bridges in your neighborhood

Teachers should find ways to make their students aware of the richness in cultural diversity within their own neighborhood. Help them locate members of their congregation or people in the community who are familiar with a foreign country and invite them to share their insights. A Lutheran school in Fort Worth, Texas, had a woman from Japan plan and prepare a traditional Japanese meal, complete with chopsticks, for their noon meal. Such an activity could be timed with an origami art project or the planting of a Japanese garden.

Express a willingness to reach out in the neighborhood by enjoying festivals

and holidays with those around you. Welcome the Chinese New Year. Have students celebrate Martin Luther King's Birthday and Black History Month in January. Wear green and walk in the St. Patrick's Day parade with Irish-Americans in March. Think plaid on April 6th, National Tartan Day. Have a Mexican menu in your lunch program for Cinco de Mayo in May. Locate and attend a Pow Wow during Native American Heritage Month in November. Go out of your way to interact and extend the hand of friendship to people of other cultures wherever possible. Chances are the neighborhood will reciprocate. In all areas of WELS we are coming in contact with Hispanics and the rich flavor of the Spanish language. Many of our Lutheran schools are now teaching Spanish, a great tool for building bridges. While we continue to cherish our own particular heritage, let us share it with others in this cultural exchange and appreciate whatever cultural diversity is present in our daily life experiences. When communication channels have been opened, we can better share our Christian faith, the ultimate act of kindness to our neighbors.

Some of us may not have a culturally diverse neighborhood or school. In that case, teachers should bring in resource people on a regular basis. Our congregations and schools could invite knowledgeable speakers to express their outlook and experiences and to share traditional artifacts. Within our WELS we have college and seminary professors who have personally served in the mission fields. Missionaries on furlough

usually make themselves available to tell others about their experiences. WELS teachers who have served in the Friends of China program in Beijing have fascinating experiences to share. Lutheran principals and teachers from schools in minority neighborhoods are often quite willing to visit other schools or church groups to build bridges. If possible include those who actually are of other cultures for an opportunity to personally interact with another race or culture. For a particularly edifying experience, teachers or congregations might invite the Voices of Praise Gospel Choir based at St. Marcus in Milwaukee to sing at their church or fellowship hall. Another inspiring WELS Christian music group, replete with Latin American steel drum music, is located at Hope Lutheran Church in Toronto, Canada. For information on Hmong culture or Friends of China, contact Mt. Olive Lutheran Chinese Church in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Build bridges through good citizenship

As teachers and individual citizens, we can help promote a sense of fairness among minorities, government officials, and ourselves. The quilt-like pattern of our nation makes up a single fabric called American. Differences of cultures have not weakened our nation; they have strengthened it. One of the factors which unites us is that we live in a nation under laws, which should respect and address the needs of all citizens. Because it is important that all citizens be served with wisdom and compassion, we need to encourage prayer for our

nation and its government.

God clearly says in his Word that we should have respect for government, an ordinance of God, so that we can live together in harmony and tranquility. Our form of government may not be the only formula for government, but the United States Constitution is a time-proven document that serves well as a foundation for varying people to live together. The Founding Fathers took the best of British traditions, the wisdom of the French philosophers, and the experience of colonial self government to forge this document. Then it took great skill and leadership of statesmen, like John Dickinson, to build bridges among thirteen sovereign and independent states to ratify this document. To appreciate these accomplishments, one has to understand the historical context of this difficult bridge building. The Constitution served as a bridge among factions, and as Jefferson had hoped, with amendments it improved with time. The first ten amendments provided for individual rights and following amendments expanded those rights to others. Eventually civil rights legislation of the 1960s filled in more of the gaps. Teachers can emphasize to their students that citizens and voters have an obligation to influence their government in a positive way to better serve all segments of its citizenry.

Acknowledge the ultimate bridge builder

Since God made all people of one

blood, we really are, in a sense, all brothers and sisters in the human family. Christ died for all of us, all races and ethnic backgrounds. Every one of us is a sinner that has been redeemed by the Sacrifice on the cross. Our Lord is the ultimate Bridge Builder, not only in this world but also leading to the next. May we, as sanctified Christians, fully appreciate all people of all cultures. Pray for tolerance and understanding in our regular classroom witnessing, that we may all sit together at the Heavenly Feast God has prepared for us.

Lord of all nations, grant me grace
To love all people, every race,
And in each person help me view
My kindred, loved, redeemed by you.
Break down the wall that would divide
Your children, Lord, on every side.
My neighbors' good let me pursue;
Bind them to me and all to you.
CW 521:1-2

Share your bridge building ideas with others

Other teachers might be interested in what you are doing, or have done, in your school and congregations to effectively handle cultural diversity. If you wish to share your own experiences or ideas, please e-mail your responses to the undersigned. ✪

Fred Wulff (wulff@newulmtel.net) taught in the history department at (Dr.) Martin Luther College. Currently he is retired and living in New Ulm, Minnesota.

Why Write?

Paul L. Willems

OCCASIONALLY I AM asked why I write. Even people at writing workshops I have attended have asked me this question. These people are curious about the writing process. Perhaps a better way to word the question should be, "Why should I write and why should my students write?" This may quickly become a topic for debate among teachers or it may be a topic some may wish to avoid. Yet college English teachers continue to complain, "My students can't write." Why is writing so important?

One of the reasons I write is to clarify my thoughts. I often take notes during a workshop or while I participate in group discussions. I am trying to understand what is being said, and by writing thoughts down, I am trying to tie those statements to what I already know about the topic. I may have to teach what is under discussion to my students next fall. I must understand the concept myself before I can instruct others about it. After the workshop, when I sit down to read and reflect on my notes, I can best understand them by reorganizing and rewriting them. I have found if I can't write my thoughts down, I really haven't learned enough about the subject. Perhaps that is why the essay test was so popular among professors when I was a college student. As I write, my

thoughts come together and become more precise.

Most humans have a need to express themselves creatively. Humans struggle to find a balance between reason and imagination. The skills needed to solve daily problems are those which couple fact and structure with the intuitive skills of invention. This practice of creativity can find its expression in painting and sculpture, but also in writing. What do you do to feel imaginative? Do you construct craft projects? Do you collect things? We all have a need to express ourselves creatively in some way. I write. Writing allows for self-expression that is rewarding to me.

As educators we all must write to communicate. We write notes to parents. We write lesson outlines and worksheets for our students. We write memos to our colleagues. We may be asked to give a paper at a teachers' conference and so we sit down to write what we will say. We write reports to the school board, principal, or when serving on faculty committees. We send e-mail to friends and relatives. As we communicate, we try to express ourselves in as clear and as creative a manner as possible. We know that our writing reveals something of ourselves to our readers. We can't hide it. Our writing is a representation of who we are.

When we write instead of speak, we

have time to research and to review what we want to express. We can become more thoughtful in writing than we can in speaking. When we write, we have a second chance to express ourselves. We can amend our words. We can stop before we make fools of ourselves by saying something in haste. We can even appear more intelligent in our writing than in our speaking because we can take the time to study our subject. We also have the opportunity to remove ourselves from the chaos of everyday interruptions and distractions when we write. By writing, we give ourselves time for contemplative expression.

Writing requires planning and time management, skills needed by every teacher. A good written document requires revision until excellence is achieved in the final draft. Writing doesn't just happen. It takes concentration and effort to compose and to find the right words to express thoughts in a clear and concise manner. Making an outline is one way to gather and begin to organize our thoughts. Another method is to compose a brief abstract or a condensed and factual summary of the final draft. After writing a first draft, set it aside for a while. Allow your mind to remove itself from the writing process and go about other tasks for a few days. Then return and try to read what has been written from the reader's perspective. Enjoy the freedom of expression and the creativity of writing the first draft as a type of brain-storming activity. Learn to accept the imperfections of the initial sketch. Then refine the work.

Rethink and redo what has been written. Perhaps a colleague or associate can be asked to read and comment on the article. An editor may request revisions or a rewrite if you are writing for publication. The first draft is seldom the final draft. It usually takes more than one try to get things right. The deadlines and the routines of writing make writing a task that sharpens planning and management skills.

Writing is seen as important in the business world and in academic centers. Writing is important because communicating is important. A written document should grab and hold the reader's attention. The written word should flow smoothly without abrupt changes of thought. The procession of written concepts should be logical and contain no inconsistencies. Writing should not be ambiguous, but clear, so its meaning is certain. This task of writing can be enjoyable or irksome, but what is written must communicate ideas without clouding the issues at hand. Writing is an aid to effective communication.

These are some of the reasons I write. It is why I require my students to write. I teach writing skills in my classroom. I write to experience the joys and challenges my students deal with on a daily basis as they struggle with their writing assignments. I also write to let my students know I am as vulnerable as they when I put my thoughts down on paper for others to read and to critique. Why do you write? Why don't you write? ☺

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Play is Learning

Melodie Ohm

PLAY IS A NEED of every child ... play is an important childhood activity that helps children master all developmental needs (Hull, Goldhaber, Capone, 2002, 179). The purpose of play can be described as simply as that. However, the concepts of why children need to play may not be so easily understood. Years ago, it was customary for children to be “seen and not heard.” This is not the case anymore. Today there are countless opportunities for children to develop literacy skills, positive attitudes towards events, and social skills that will be used throughout their lifetime. Play is young children’s natural learning mechanism (Wilford, 2003, 10). However, playing is not just for children anymore, nor is it just a way for children to entertain themselves while the adults are busy attending to other business. Children need the guidance of adults, both parents and teachers, in order to experience the world in which they are living. Consider the following phrase to emphasize the importance of play in a young child’s life: *Play is learning.*



Provide

A facilitator can “provide the child with the opportunity to explore many different aspects of himself through experiences with the materials and through socialization in a safe and stimulating environment” (Ford, 1993, 69). This is to be a top priority among teachers and caregivers. Each child is different, whether it is physical, mental, or developmental, and, in order to create the most stimulating environment for all children involved, we need to know each child. By recognizing these differences we will be able to provide activities and materials that are developmentally appropriate for each child, and those that challenge various skill levels.

Play begins with providing. Imagine a classroom with four white walls, bare bookshelves, empty drawers, blank bulletin boards, and traditional curriculum. It would be difficult, but not impossible, to provide learning opportunities for children with very limited resources. However, this is not conducive to a stimulating, learning envi-

ronment. Children are extremely active, both physically and mentally, and it is our challenge to find the best ways for them to expend that energy into meaningful, learning experiences throughout the learning environment we will provide for them. One example of these learning experiences is open-ended experiences. This means that the play “script” is not written for children. They need the time, materials, and opportunities to create it for themselves (Oliver, Klugman, 2003, 63). Children also need early exposure to both visual and auditory stimuli. The experiences with materials provided for these exposures stimulate vocabulary and concept building (Isenberg, Quisenberry, 2002, 36).

Limits

Everyone and every environment needs rules; no rules equals little or no structure. On the other hand, there should not be so many rules that one forgets the purpose of the game, the environment, or specific experience. It is not our job as teachers, parents, or caregivers to control the child, but rather strive to control absolutely the child’s environment. It is also important to remember to keep our rules and limits consistent, as well as our consequences for behaviors. If consistency is lacking, children will not feel secure within their own environment (Ford, 1993, 66,67). The role of the facilitator is not to limit and restrict, but rather to extend and enrich (Ford, 1993, 69).

Anywhere, Anytime

Play can happen anywhere and at anytime. One common thought about “play” is that a child needs to be sitting in one spot, focused on a particular toy. Play can happen while sitting in the car on the way to the zoo and looking at various signs for letters, shapes, or other concepts. Play can happen while sitting in a circle and participating in a silly song. Play is a “parallel universe of fantasy and imagination that children enter at will” (Cohen, 2001, 4). Other experts describe play as a place—of magic and imagination, a place where a child can be fully one’s self (Cohen, 2001, 4).

You

It is of no surprise to anyone that children need adults. This becomes very evident in the area of play. It was mentioned earlier about providing an environment full of materials and various learning opportunities for children. However, it is not our job to show children exactly how things are to be played with, put together, or taken apart. Children have their own ideas about how they would like to explore these new situations (Ford, 1993, 69). The more we let the children take the lead, the more they have room to try new things (Cohen, 2001, 159). As facilitators of learning, we need to follow the lead of the child—children need us to be “hugely enthusiastic, to say yes in a booming voice instead of the constant parade of no. We feel compelled to



jump in and say no when they are doing something or suggesting something that we know is a bad idea. Unfortunately, jumping in does not help them develop their own good judgment. They simply have to discover certain things for themselves, and the best way for them to do this is with our encouragement and support” (Cohen, 2001, 154). We are in no way suggesting that children are free to do as they please and, therefore, create an unsafe environment; we still need to intervene order to maintain a safe classroom.

Interest

Professor Lillian Katz of the University of Illinois suggests that we start with the thought that all children have lively minds (Oliver, Klugman, 2003, 63). Children can surprise you with comments about certain situations or the process they think through in order to accomplish a given task. As caregivers, for these children, we should supply props for themes of interest to each developmental level and then let children choose their activity. Their choices may vary from day-to-day but the children still need to have the most beneficial environment that is able to assist them in their decision about what they will do.

It is also important to know each of your children’s interests so that you will be able to easily organize the working areas. No one will be able to make every child completely satisfied every day, but we should rather strive to encourage the child to work with various objects in

order to build background and provide new experiences.

Support

“There is no magic formula to fostering and learning from children’s creative play. With the support of an inviting environment and understanding adults, children usually know just what to do” (Oliver, Klugman, 2003, 65). As well as providing for the academic needs of children with materials and experiences, we need to give them the attention they are craving. When an undesired behavior occurs, we should recognize the opportunity to teach the child about what should be done instead of solely focusing on what shouldn’t happen. This process begins by kneeling down next to the child, not shouting across the room. As we do this, we need to be aware of our choice of words, sound of our voice, look in our eyes, muscle tone, and body language, as these may tend to speak louder than our own words (Ford, 1993,67). Children do not always have the knowledge of what is right and wrong because they are so young and “inexperienced” at life. They need for us to teach them what to do, to “physically take them through the motions of a task before they are able to put the words of the directions together with appropriate actions” (Ford, 1993, 67).

Love

As Christians, we understand the miracle of life. The love for a child comes

long before the child is even born, and our love becomes even more evident as the baby arrives into the world. No matter how small the child is, it isn't too early to begin to play, even having something as simple as some "tummy time." Pediatricians are seeing an increasing number of babies who don't lift their head or turn over as early as they used to. Some babies now bypass crawling altogether and go straight from sitting to toddling. Arlene Spooner, a physical therapist with the REACH early-intervention program in western Massachusetts's Hampshire and Franklin counties, states, "When your baby lies on her stomach, she's developing strength and muscle coordination that will enhance her motor development.... If babies have insufficient tummy time, these muscles will remain underdeveloped, and will create an imbalance that will not automatically correct itself. As they get older, these children may be able to run well, which involves many lower-body muscles, but may have a hard time with tasks that involve upperbody strength and coordination, such as using monkey bars" (McGovern, 2001, 120). Love for children is exhibited through patience and taking the time out of our busy lives to nurture the children in order to give them the opportunity to develop into successful adolescents and adults.

Environment

The environment we provide for children stems from the love we have inside which yearns for them to become

autonomous. As teachers, we strive for environments that promote constructive play. One philosophy of learning which the organization *Playing for Keeps* recognizes is that "children who learn through constructive play are absorbing new concepts and building skills at a pace that fits their developmental level." It also "inspires creativity, stirs the imagination, and presents opportunities for meaningful problem solving" (Oliver, Klugman, 2003, 63).

Allow

"No! You need to do it this way or not at all!" This statement should never be spoken or heard within an early childhood setting. We need to allow children the chance to make their own decisions, such as what to do next, with what, and with whom (Oliver, Klugman, 2003, 63). We are not giving up all of our control as facilitators, but rather finding the middle ground where children can feel confident enough to make decisions for themselves, while staying within the predetermined "limits" we have established. A common example of allowing children to make their own decision is to have them choose between two things: "Would you like to put a puzzle together or build with the blocks?" The child is still able to choose yet the teacher still maintains control of the environment.

Routine

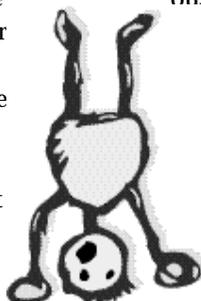
As teachers, we must provide a carefully planned curriculum for our students. Children can learn concepts by

way of play activities. In order for this to take place, teachers and administrators must ensure a balance among the cognitive, physical and affective areas of the curriculum (Isenberg, Quisenberry, 2002, 37). Play is one of the most “powerful and effective” means of reducing stress in children. Piaget and Vygotsky suggest that play is the “medium children use in learning about the world and that it is central to the development of a child’s ability to use symbols, leading to literacy” (Jessee, Wilson, Morgan, 2000, 216). Not only is it vital to provide children with the opportunities to play, but it is important to structure the day’s events so that there is an established routine. If a child is confused about the environment around him, he will be more likely to shy away from activities that involve decisions, as he is feeling unsure. A consistent, disciplined routine will lead the way to a healthful, playful environment.

Negative

Imagine that something scary or confusing or overwhelming happens to you and you weren’t allowed to talk about it, or even have time to think about it. The same is true for an event that was very new and exciting to you. This is similar to how children may feel if they are not able to play the way they want to play. Play is their way of talking, thinking, and communicating with those around them (Cohen, 2001, 159).

Speaking negatively is not effective in disciplining children in the classroom.



Children who hear negative words all the time tend not to take the words seriously because the negative directions are not followed by a consequence (Ford, 1993, 67). Instead of saying, “Don’t stand on the chair!” use the “I” statement: “I would like to see you sitting on the floor where they are able to walk safely.” Focusing on the positive and encouraging children to actually “do” something, instead of “not doing” something, will help them to become more self-sufficient. Consistency in discipline is also key, as some children have different rules while they are at home.

Imitation

Children form behaviors partly by imitating the behaviors of others who are important to them (Ford, 1993, 68). This is primarily true in younger children who look up to and admire their older siblings. We need to be aware that children are constantly watching everything that we do and listening to everything that we say. Imitative play is important to children’s development. Children need opportunities to act and dress up like people they know. Freedom to use various paints, clay, water, and other art materials encourages imitation as well as conversation and creative expression of ideas and understandings (Isenberg, Quisenberry, 2002, 36).

Children have the potential to be good (Ford, 1993, 67). Christian educators have to interpret this assertion in the light of the Law and gospel. By

themselves and with their own effort, children cannot be good. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, however, they can lead lives in harmony with God's will. Then children need to be given opportunities to interact with their environment. They need to be physically taken through the motions of a task before they are able to put the words of the direction together with the appropriate actions (Ford, 1993, 67). It is difficult for a child to visualize a command or situation if he or she has never experienced it. To build a background for children's expression through play, educators should provide access to information and ideas that go beyond children's immediate environment. A good collection of children's books is essential. Field trips and media also provide play experiences that are unavailable in the immediate environment (Isenberg, Quisenberry, 2002, 36).

Needs

Children need many things throughout their lives. As teachers, parents, and caregivers, God has given us the responsibility to see to it that these needs are met, and that the child is taken care of in the best way possible.

Physical play is one kind of play that is very important to all children. Not all physical play involves roughhousing or wrestling. Some of it is just climbing, swinging, and running around. All children need this kind of play, and most need as much as they can get (Cohen, 2001, 107). Physical play is extremely important to a child's development.

"When the body moves, the brain remembers" is a phrase I wrote down during my beginning years of early childhood classes. Children learn by using their bodies, and they do so in a variety of ways. Active, physical play is self-soothing. Children do not learn how to calm themselves by being left on their own to "cry it out" or by being sent to time-out. They learn from being soothed by someone who cares about them. Over time they will take that comfort inside and be able to soothe themselves (Cohen, 2001, 108). We can help these children in the classroom by providing an area with dolls so that they can pretend to play with them. By comforting and soothing the dolls with cuddling and "rocking it to sleep" when the dolls get upset, children will become more likely to be able to comfort themselves when they sense that need.

Physical play can also aid children's attention. Instead of rushing to the medicine cabinet or family pediatrician for an ADHD diagnosis, Dr. Stanley Greenspan recommends setting aside several periods a day for self-regulation. This type of play will keep the child active but in a controlled, focused manner. He suggests that the child jump, run, swing, dance, do jumping jacks, or engage in any repeated rhythmic movement and with the adult calling out frequent, rapid changes such as "jump as fast as you can... now faster... even faster ... now slower ... and slower." This can be done with activities like building blocks, singing, screaming, coloring, and others (Cohen, 2001, 109).

Gift

"Play is a powerful, natural behavior contributing to children's learning and development and that no program of adult instruction can substitute for children's own observations, activities and direct knowledge" (Isenberg, Quisenberry, 2002, 35). Play is a gift that we are able to give our children every day. Not only are the children "having fun," but they are also learning academic skills in the areas of math, language, and science. As facilitators of this wonderful avenue of learning possibilities, we would do well to do all we can to provide children with meaningful and varied experiences so they are able to begin building knowledge of the world around them. ✪

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Play: A Child's Best Teacher

Melissa Festerling

In recent years, continual research has been carried out in an attempt to develop guidelines for best practice in early childhood programs. As the results of such research come in, educators and researchers alike are quickly struck by the notion that contrary to earlier educational beliefs, best practice for early childhood programs means centering a curriculum around play and emphasizing children's active learning and constructing knowledge through that play. The results of this research have carried far and wide in educational systems throughout America; consequently, new curricula have been developed, and programs have been drastically changed. As I began my research into this topic, I found countless articles, even some from periodicals not directly related to education, that were encouraging or even demanding that play be an integral part of a young child's life and that detailed for the reader the many things a child will learn through play. Following are only a few of such examples that I found as I researched:

- From USA Today: "The playing kids do before they reach school age teaches them facts that adults have taken for granted such as cause and effect,...how their bodies operate,... cooperation,... and problem solving" (1993, no author given)
- From *Scholastic Early Childhood Today*: "Play builds physical skills (such as balance, agility, strength, and coordination), cognitive skills (including language, problem solving, strategizing and concept development), social skills (sharing, turn-taking, cooperation, and leadership), and the components for emotional well-being (joy, creativity, self-confidence, and so on). It is the fundamental process underlying most of the learning children do before they come to school" (Strickland, 2000, 37).
- From *Young Children*: "Symbolic play is a significant causal force in the development of a diverse set of abilities, including creativity, sequential memory, group cooperation, receptive vocabulary, conceptions of kinship relationships, impulse control, spatial perspective-taking skill, affective perspective-taking skill, and cognitive perspective-taking skill" (Gowen, 1995, 75).
- From *Childcare Information Exchange*: Benefits of play include "development of motor skills, sharpening of senses, development of empathy and the ability to express emotions, understanding and practice of sharing, turn-taking, and other peer

cooperation skills, increasing control of compulsive actions and learning to accept delayed gratification, building ordering and sequencing skills, increasing the size of the vocabulary and the ability to comprehend language, increasing concentration skills, learning to navigate assigned roles, development of capacity to be flexible, expansion of imagination, creativity, curiosity, and reducing aggression” (Oliver, 2002, 68).

However, though these articles provide extensive lists of the many benefits children receive and of the many concepts children will learn and develop through play, they often fail to explain to the reader, and especially to parents, just how such development and benefits actually take place and are gained as the child is actively engaged with various materials in the classroom. How this learning actually takes place is better and more easily grasped upon examining both research and children’s actual play in the various areas of a classroom environment. In researching more carefully what actually happens in the block area, housekeeping area, sand/water table, and art area, and in observing children’s actual play in these same areas, one can more easily see just how the child benefits from play and how play in different areas promotes the development of various skills.

The Block Area

Much research can be found concerning the different concepts children

learn from using and building with simple unit blocks. Ellen Booth Church makes the point in her article, “Seeing Science Everywhere,” that in playing with blocks, children develop math knowledge and problem solving because, “[blocks] allow children to explore a world where objects have predictable similarities and relationships and inspire children to create forms and structures that are based on math relationships” (1998, 38). On page forty-two of the same article, Church goes on to explain what children may be thinking as they construct a block structure.



As they build, they may be thinking as, “What happens if I add block to this side but not the other?” or “How many ways could I build this bridge?” In both of these quotations one can quickly see how block building encourages children to use the minds God has given them to solve the problems that their play presents. As I student-taught, I saw numerous examples of the benefits of block play. As Carter, Cooper, and Trey constructed a boat under the loft together, they had to both problem solve and use social skills in order to ensure that their boat turned out the way they had planned. George also used his problem solving skills one day as he extended the block play of building a boat by figuring out a way to make an anchor in the art area. In the block area children can learn social skills as they work together on a larger project, they learn math concepts as they discover that when they run out of large blocks they may substitute two

smaller ones, and they learn to problem solve as they discover that certain blocks may need to be balanced with others or as they extend their play by implementing materials from other areas.

The Housekeeping Area (Dramatic Play)

As in the block area, the housekeeping or dramatic play area also easily lends itself to concept development. As children set tables and care for babies, they learn how to interact with others and also learn valuable caretaking skills. As children zoom with cars and trucks, they show that they are able to form mental images in their own minds of what cars and trucks do, and that they can then carry that action out in their play. Literacy can also be easily integrated into this area as children make grocery lists, read recipes, look through telephone books, and take orders (Dyson, 1990, 53). As I student taught, I witnessed many examples of learning occurring in the housekeeping/dramatic play area. As Hannah pretended to be a cat in the back room, I could easily observe that she knew about cats, was able to keep that mental picture in her mind, and then carry out similar actions. As Anna and Emily took orders at the restaurant, I could observe that they understood that print had meaning, and that they also were learning that words were made up of letters. Math concepts were witnessed as children “counted” back change after my



order, and problem solving was evidenced with the addition of the camping prop box as the children had to find creative ways to both make fish and attach them to their poles. The housekeeping area especially fosters children’s social skills as it provides materials that encourage children to work together, it fosters cognitive development as children reenact scenes from their everyday life and problem-solve within their play scenarios, and it gives opportunities for literacy and math-skill development as children act out various scripts.

The Sand/Water Table

Though literacy development and math skills may not be as easily noticed in this area, in observing children’s play, one can see that learning does still take place. First, children learn to use their senses to explore the properties of substances that may be relatively unfamiliar to them. Later, as they explore, they learn to make more discoveries such as which containers hold the most or least sand or water (Church, 1998, 42), and they learn to compare and contrast, to think about cause and effect, and to problem-solve (Planje, 1997, 33). Children also develop better eye-hand coordination as they pour from one container to another, and they learn social skills as they interact with teachers and peers during their play. Sand and water play was a favorite choice for many of the children in my group and so I found myself observing children in

these areas as I student-taught quite often. Some examples of the learning I witnessed were Emily and Lynsey discovering properties of water and air pressure as they learned that when they tipped a full container all the way upside-down and did not pour at an angle, the water glogged as it came out instead of making a nice steady stream. Another example of learning taking place was seeing Ryan stick Popsicle sticks into a narrow-mouthed container and then figuring out a way to pour them back out.

The Art Area

With its numerous and unique materials, the art area becomes a seedbed for learning in a variety of areas. As the children use the materials in the art area they learn about the different materials we use in art such as crayons, paper, wax paper, paint, and clay or playdough (Dyson, 1990, 51).

Through the exploration of these various materials, children gain confidence and self-esteem in their ability to use different materials, and they hone their sensorimotor skills (Rinker, 2000, 72). Fine motor skills also develop as children hold markers, crayons, and pencils and learn to control their movements to make meaningful marks on a page. In addition, materials in the art area allow children to practice their skills of representing objects in a variety of ways. For example, a child might use clay and toothpicks to represent his sister (Dyson, 1990, 52), or a child might use

markers and paper to draw a picture of his family playing with his new dog. Finally, the art area also encourages literacy as children are given paper and writing utensils and have opportunity to make maps, to write letters, to make cards, and to sign their names on their imaginative creations. As I student-taught, I saw numerous examples of learning taking place as I played with and observed children in the art area. I observed George using playdough to represent and reenact all the parts of "The Very Hungry Caterpillar." Lynsey demonstrated she knew about print when she asked me to write on her magic tape creation, "This is a waxy boxy!" and Emily showed she could form a mental image in her mind as she drew a rainbow she had earlier seen and then signed her name to her picture.



All of these examples, and many more not listed, are various ways in which children learn through their play in different areas of the classroom environment.

Though it is important to understand the simple idea that children learn through play and to identify and take note of the various skills shown in research to be developed through play, teachers, and especially parents who may have been educated far differently, need to realize how this development actually takes place as their child works in the block area and sand table one day, and the dramatic play area the next. By observing children and taking notes of our observations, we teachers

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can help parents to see that though play is a fun part of being three, four, or five, it is also the vehicle through which children learn and gain the skills necessary for their later more formal schooling. Parents should have easy access to these observation records so that they can readily see the benefits of the play in which their child engages and so that they can facilitate similar experiences and encourage learning through play at home as well.

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The Teacher

Lord, who am I to teach the way
To little children day by day,
So prone myself to go astray?

I teach them knowledge, but I know
How faint they flicker and how low
The candles of my knowledge grow.

I teach them power to will and do,
But only now to learn anew
My own great weakness through and through

I teach them love for all mankind
And all God's creatures, but I find
My love comes lagging far behind.

Lord, if their guide I still must be,
Oh, let the little children see
The teacher leaning hard on Thee

LESLIE PINCKNEY HILL

REVIEWS

REVIEWS

Nesting, James A. *Martin Luther: A Life*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2003.

The writing of biographies (or the making of movies) about Luther never seems to end. Nesting's biography does, in fact, coincide with the release of the new movie *Luther*. The connection is evident because the book contains full-color stills from the movie.

But Nesting's book is more than a promo for the movie and it differs in some ways from many of the other biographies of Luther. First, it is briefer than many: 111 pages cover Luther's life from birth to death. Second, it is written in an interesting and engaging style. The author tells the story of Luther as a story, with details and insights that make Luther appear real. Third, Nesting, while including scholarly research, has the ability to make complicated issues intelligible for the ordinary reader.

For example, at the time when the Augsburg Confession was written, different groups had different definitions of what the church was. Nesting describes the differences in this way: "For the papacy, the church was a hierarchy of power extending from Jesus Christ to the papacy to the bishops.... For Charles V and the politicians, what made the church was the liturgy, the common practice of the sacraments, and universal rules and regulations for the activities of the clergy. For the southwest Germans and the Swiss, the marks of the church were the faith and

obedience of the people. ... as Luther and his company saw it, what makes the church [is] the word of God preached and embodied in the sacraments. The church comes into being when it confesses—when it speaks the word by which God creates, redeems, and produces faith in those who hear it" (p. 83-84). Thus the reader has a better understanding of the significance of the Augsburg Confession for the reformers.

Sometimes Nesting takes a Luther quote and nicely turns it into an explanation of a key point in the Reformation. "The world is like a drunken peasant trying to mount a horse," Luther once said. "If he gets up one side, he falls off the other." There rose a debate among the reformers in Wittenberg in 1528 over what to do with the results of the Saxony visitation, which revealed abuses and ignorance in the parish churches. Master Philip (Melancthon) called for the law in the early versions of the Instructions for Parish Visitors while Johann Agricola saw the "solution to the moral problem rest[ing] in setting out the Gospel 'in all its sweetness,' so the people will be moved by Christ's self-sacrifice to rethink their own behavior" (p. 73). Both had fallen off their respective side of the horse. Luther understood the paradox of saint and sinner and the distinction between public and personal faith and he knew that both Moses and Christ have a place in the church. Some

theologians today are still falling off the same horse.

Katie comes through well in this biography. The author includes the charming picture of Katie and the children dressing up in black to rouse Luther with “God must be dead” during one of his times of depression (*Anfechtung*). The author also gives a concrete example of Katie’s industry when he notes that the Luther nest-egg at the time of his death was valued at more than a half-million dollars in today’s currency (that is good beer brewing). Katie lost it all shortly after Luther’s death when Charles V finally made good on the Edict of Worms. His troops went through the farm and Wittenberg. But when she died in 1551, her last words were, “I will stick to Christ like a burr to a topcoat.”

The author deals with the complicated relationship between Luther and Melanchthon. This relationship was shaped by Luther’s personal affection for Melanchthon, by the political realities that there could be no public disagreement among the Wittenberg reformers, and by the real differences in style and thinking between the two men. They were truly complementary and when Luther died, that balance was lost.

Finally, Nestingen handles the difficult issues in Luther’s life without flinching or becoming defensive: “Luther’s angel and his demon had long contended within him; now [1540s], more than occasionally, the angel lost, and the Reformer’s power with language became horribly destruc-

tive, particularly by our standards” (p. 101). But the author also points out in the discussion of Luther and the Jews, that for Luther the issue was always religion, not race. By the standards of his time, Luther was not anti-Semitic; he was fiercely defending Christ from attacks of the unbelievers. Given that point, Luther in some of his writings, particularly at the end, troubled by attacks and reverses, failing in health, wrote in ways that are uncomfortable and at times offensive to the modern reader. But for Nestingen and most readers that makes Luther human. Perhaps Luther’s analogy about drunken Germans and the horse applies to ideas about Luther: Some fall off one side of the horse and dismiss Luther as damaged and irrelevant to today; some would revere him as a saint and reject any criticism. Luther found the saddle when he said in his last written words: “We are all beggars. This is the truth.”

JRI



WEB SITES FOR HOME EDUCATORS

One of the benefits of doing written assessments and consultations for home schoolers is that I am able to glean new information every year. One of the resources that continues to amaze me in its versatility and scope is the Internet. Each year new sites pop up and old sites get better. Here are some sites (up and running at the time of writing) that have much to offer.

Homeschool World ([94 THE LUTHERAN EDUCATOR](http://www.home-</p>
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school.com)

This web site is operated largely by Mary Pride who produces the magazine "Practical Homeschooling." True to form, this website is practical and streamlined. Some of the sections in this website include the following:

The *Resources* covers events, curriculum, software, books and magazines, online education, family products, and college opportunities (options, adventure vacations, business opportunities).

There are *Articles* about how to get started, news about home schooling around the world, and international home school news.

The *Catalog* includes science kits, art activities, puzzles, games, gear kits, and books.

The *Experts* link you to professionals in each field of study and each philosophy of curriculum, regular columnists, curriculum reviews, methods, time management, art and music, drama, and effective unit studies.

The *Events* link to outside-the-home learning activities in your area.

The *Forum* presents discussions in special needs, high school, military home school, homeschooling overseas, and links you to a free e-mail newsletter.

Organizations are listed state by state and include a large list of local support groups.

The *Links* option takes you to publishers such as Alpha Omega, Key Stone High School, Mentura, Gateway Prep, and the Home School Legal Defense Association.

Contests are listed state by state, show how many days are left to enter, and the

areas in the contest (art, science, essay, inventions).

A to Z Home's Cool

<http://www.gomilpitas.com/homeschooling/index.htm>)

This site contains new books on homeschooling, lesson planners, and organizers. There are lots of articles about Kindergarten, reading assessments, internet games, handwriting, free materials, curriculum reviews, record keeping, Montessori, correspondence schools, umbrella schools, portfolios, transcripts, and finding the right college.

Cool Kid pages are on all subject areas plus animals, bugs, astronomy, chemistry, drama, ice cream, piano lessons, and offer tons of website helps and printable worksheets.

There is also a chat room and links to holidays, DVD rentals, legal resources, unschooling, religion and culture, field trips, support group resources, and homeschool jokes.

AOL SCHOOL www.aolatschool.com

This is by far the largest web site I have found. As many times as I have been here for personal use, I have not reached its limits. Much of this site is for traditional student and teacher use. Most of it can also be used effectively in the home setting. There are hundreds of links, so I will cover only a few.

Education World includes lesson plans, articles on school issues, newsletters, teacher templates (my favorite – bingo, awards, certificates, posters, letters, scrapbook), tech help (make you own crossword puzzles, online archaeology project, home work help), professional

development (open house ideas, math competition), printable calendars and lesson planning, contests and competitions, Writing Bug, 5-Minute Fillers, finding grants, parental involvement, and tons more.

A Plus Math has worksheets you can create and print yourself, flash cards, homework helper, interactive worksheets and flash cards (the interaction is fast paced), and game room.

Dosity.com contains help with time, money, measures, number sense, math challenges, helps for teachers, parents and students, phonics, and language arts.

Kid's Edge includes interactive games, language arts, math, and social studies. Be prepared for down load time.

Suessville offers games and activities featuring Dr. Suess characters.

Test U has helps in studying for tests including SAT Crunch Course.

Teachers leads you to make your own bingo cards, humor, news, professional developments, research and reference, special needs and counseling, lesson plans, and subjects and standards.

Learning page.com includes hundreds of printable worksheets, theme sheets, clip art, and books.

If you get to a slump in the road, and you need something new, get on the Internet and check out some home-school web sites for a fresh look at educational ideas.

Rachel Mendell