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The Lutheran Educator

Dinosaurs, God's Creatures

*These huge land animals declare
the glory of God.*

Physical Education and Sports in the Lutheran Elementary School

*The physical education class should
emphasize developmental needs
rather than competitive goals.*

The Lutheran Educator

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

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HELPING AT-RISK STUDENTS

Yet another education reform report has arrived. Like a number of its predecessors, it encourages teachers to enlarge their concern for at-risk students. The at-risk student is one who is predictably in danger of leaving school without the skills to be a productive and self-reliant citizen.

In spite of much wholesome advice, the report shares some unhappy characteristics with other reports of the past decade: a grimly pessimistic view and an approach which skirts the obvious. Before Lutheran educators give up hope of ever helping at-risk students, we encourage you to consider these obvious facts. First, the fundamental needs of at-risk students are like those of all students. Second, the Christian teacher should be particularly equipped for helping the student at-risk. The latter is true because the Christian teacher is one

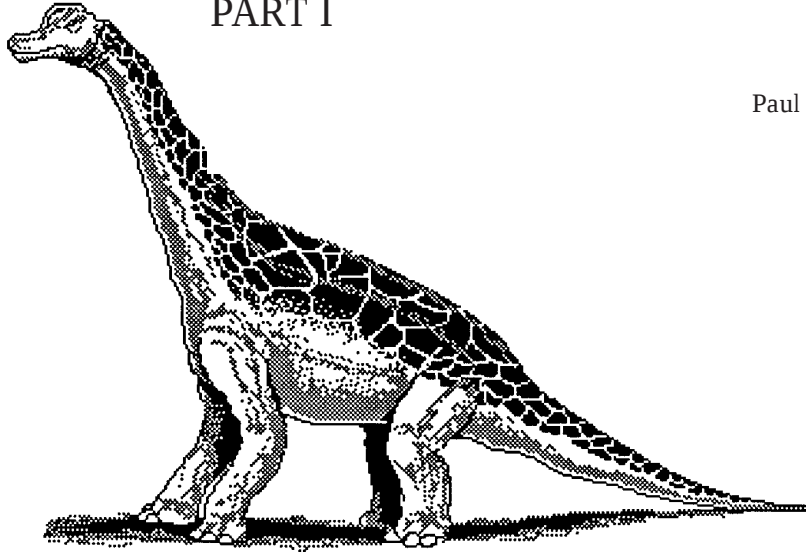
- whose faith-born love sees in each learner a person whom the Lord has placed into his life for the purpose of sharing that love.
- whose model for the Christian classroom is a community in which all who reside there are at one and the same time saints and sinners.
- whose understanding of law and gospel compels him to be certain that repentance, confession, forgiveness, freedom and joy play a vital role in the daily life of the classroom.
- whose caring and compassion actively struggle against prejudice toward the underprepared, persons of color, physical disabilities that diminish over-rated outward charm, and social values that mark a student as coming from "across the tracks."
- whose view of all human learning sees it as a gift from a loving heavenly Father "who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."
- whose principles of learning accept the necessity of building bridges between the student's world and the classroom world.
- whose awareness of his personal faith is a humble realization that by God's grace he also is in the process of becoming mature "attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."
- whose expectations are tempered by a clear distinction between the work which the Christian teacher is called to do and that which only the Holy Spirit can do.

In classrooms where these characteristics embrace the lives of teacher and students, the teacher has a jump start on the challenge of meeting the unique needs of at-risk students. In fact, where these characteristics are lacking, all students are likely to be "at-risk" in that part of life which Christians believe most important.

AJS

DINOSAURS, GOD'S CREATURES PART I

Paul R. Boehlke



How do we fit dinosaurs into a Christian view of history and science? We do not have all the answers. Scripture does not detail the issue; the Bible deals with the more important matters of faith and salvation. History has forgotten these ancient beasts, and science cannot claim the truth for this area of study. Yet there are things that can and should be said. Dinosaurs are valid subject matter for the Christian classroom. These huge land animals declare the glory of God. The subject can also serve to foster a better understanding of science and our world.

God made them and they were good. One source (Dixon 1988) calls the Brachiosaurus: "a masterpiece of engineering—a lightweight framework, made of immensely strong, yet flexible, vertebrae, each angled and articulated to provide maximum strength along the lines of stress."

But sadly, when mankind sinned, dinosaurs suffered along with all of the creation. Now what remains are fossilized bones, claws, footprints, dung, eggs, teeth, spikes, horns, bony plates, gizzard stones, rare imprints of skin and (very rarely) stomach contents.

Dinosaurs may be described in the Bible (Job 40:15-19). Of course, the Bible is not a science book; and such identification will have to remain uncertain. Yet the images of behemoth and leviathan are enticing. "Look at the behemoth, which I made along with you and which feeds on grass like an ox. What strength he has in his loins, what power in the muscles of his belly! His tail sways like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are close-knit. His bones are tubes of bronze, his limbs like rods of iron. He ranks first among the works of God...." Behemoth means kingly,

gigantic beast. In the following chapter, Scripture refers to a second formidable creature, perhaps a plesiosaur. Leviathan is detailed as a fearsome beast that cannot be tamed or captured. If he takes your bait, you cannot pull him out of the water. Consider that the first fossils of dinosaurs were found only in 1820. Hence Bible commentators suggested that behemoth was an elephant, a water ox or a hippopotamus and that leviathan might be a crocodile. These inferences have continued (cf. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible*, 1924, or Beck's *An American Translation*, 1976). One cannot fault the writers of these older commentaries, but the cedar-like tail of behemoth suggests an animal no longer on this earth. A hippopotamus does not have much of a tail. Furthermore, the strength and habits of a leviathan suggest much more than a crocodile or a whale. Captured crocodiles were known in the ancient world. Herodotus reports that the Egyptians *did* pull crocodiles from the water on a hook and tame them. The hippopotamus was apparently also captured, and its skin may have been used for weapons (de Selincort 1954). It seems not required, but reasonable, that God is referring to creatures far more difficult to manage.

When fossils of the "terrible lizards" were first found, Lutheran teachers apparently often rejected the reports and displays because of associations with evolutionary theory. In the 1940s (and even more recently) well-meaning Christian teachers taught that the bones of dinosaurs must have been put together incorrectly and that such huge animals

could not have fit on the ark. This was an unfortunate over-reaction. Interestingly, Alfred Rehwinkel's 1951 landmark book, *The Flood*, courageously acknowledged dinosaurs as real creatures. He claimed that changes in the post-flood world caused their eventual extinction.

Nevertheless, recently in *Christian News*, John Drickamer commented on a host of issues that bother him. He says, "Personally, I am sick and tired of seeing and hearing so much about dinosaurs. They are all over the place—especially for their commercial value. Children love something about dinosaurs. It is probably just that they can believe that monsters are real—but at a safe distance in time, being securely extinct by now. Dinosaurs also figure prominently in the 'science' education of younger children in public schools. *It is really just a ploy to get the children interested in and believing in the myth of evolution, which is directly contrary to the whole Christian faith*" [my emphasis] (1980, 21).

Nonsense. If we are to hide the dinosaurs from our children, Scripture should guide us to do that. If science and the Bible are in conflict, Scripture must be correct. We, of course, must be careful that we have understood and applied Scripture correctly. Lutherans do not make doctrines by inference; they search for things plainly taught. They teach what Scripture teaches. There is no reason in Scripture to reject dinosaurs. Our failure to recognize dinosaurs as possible extinct creatures is unnecessary and unwise. Furthermore, the real issue is not

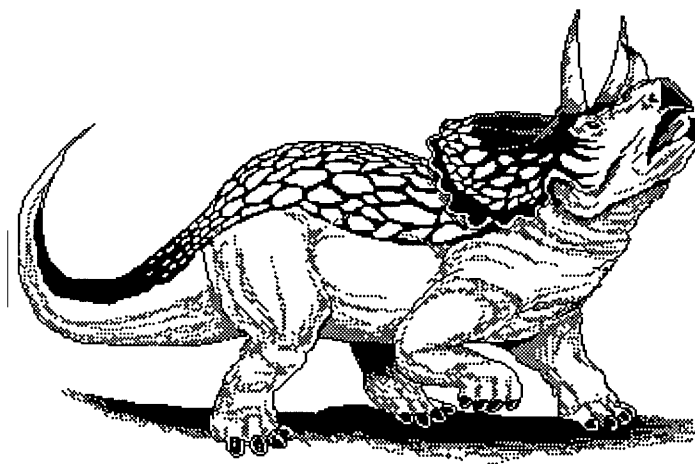
their existence. The issue was and still is an issue of *time*. To this Scripture speaks. As land animals they were made on the sixth day of Creation.

Christians can over-react against evolution. If species go extinct, that is evolution. If the frequency of genes in a population changes, that is evolution. Those things happen. The Bible says that creatures reproduce after their own kind. That makes sense but does not preclude all changes in the offspring and the gene pool. Genes do mutate, and selection can occur. We need to remind ourselves that the crux of the issue is that we are not here on this earth by such natural processes—even if it would happen that the processes are built into the creation. The real concern is our origin. Who made us? Scripture plainly teaches that in spite of what you see around you, God made mankind on the sixth day of Creation. The acknowledgement of the existence of many different types of creatures who are now extinct does not prove mega-evolution. It confirms the Scriptural

teaching that the whole creation is suffering.

Job may be the oldest book in the Bible. Interestingly, the awesome animals described there may be dinosaurs. They may have been still alive, and Job may have known of them. Of course, this is a guess. But even if this is a bad guess, the dinosaurs must have lived with humans—not before, as evolutionary theory supposes, for God made the animals and mankind on the same day. There were no *prehistoric* times or creatures in the sense that the term is usually used.

A warning is in place. One should not become so interested in the true identities of behemoth and leviathan that the thesis of the book of Job is forgotten. That would be an ironic and terrible price to pay. The message of Job is so important to those who want answers. It tells us that we should be humble; we do not know everything. There are many spiritual and physical things we will not understand while we are alive. We must trust God. Job admitted that he



questioned things beyond his understanding. We were not there when God created everything; there are many things we do not know and cannot figure out. God's message was that there were animals that Job could not control; there were also many other matters beyond his knowledge, especially in nature. Interestingly, even at the end of the story, Job is still not told why he suffered. Perhaps it is best that we are left to puzzle about the identities of the two wonderful beasts that God made.

The other side of the coin is that it is not wrong to inquire. So long as our motives are not to support God's Word with our reason and we acknowledge that we could be wrong, we may use our reason. As the Dr. Martin Luther College catalog states, "...we view the study of man and his culture, together with the pursuit of other knowledge, as not only beneficial but obligatory" (1990, 12). To be good stewards of the earth, we must try to understand as much as we can about the creation and its processes.

Children have always had a natural fascination with these strange beasts and may know more about them than the average adult. In addition, the work of a new generation of scientists is challenging some of the early ideas in this young science about old beasts. New displays, television programs and books are coming out.

Recent discoveries in the Gobi Desert indicate that many North American dinosaurs had close relatives in Asia. Now-submerged northern land bridges may have allowed gene flow (Lessem 1989). A small

dinosaur found in Antarctica indicates that South America may have been linked to the smallest continent. Some species, however, remain unique. So far, no horned dinosaurs have been found in the Gobi but they are numerous in North America. Triceratops once roamed the western plains like the buffalo (but not 65 million years ago according to evolutionary theory). Other discoveries are more revolutionary, challenging the ways in which scientists and others think of dinosaurs. A new understanding is that not all dinosaurs were massive beasts. The sizes of the dinosaurs varied; some were only as big as chickens.

There are thousands of names for dinosaurs. For several reasons it is still not clear how many different dinosaurs there really were. Skulls have been found for only 250 dinosaur species. "Brontosaurus" apparently was given the wrong head when the discovered specimen was named as a new dinosaur. (The head was faked by an over-competitive scientist who wanted to be the first to find many new species. Scientists do not condone such unprofessional behavior.) Later, other scientists decided that the head must be wrong; and the body of brontosaurus was actually the previously discovered, apatosaurus. A U.S. postage stamp was released in 1989 with a picture of an apatosaurus using the name "brontosaurus," and many are upset that the postal service is supporting the error. Children might enjoy finding a picture of "brontosaurus" with the wrong head in a museum (cf. Bakker 1980, 290; Rehwinkel 1951, 227).

Then again, sometimes juveniles and adults of one species have been confused and named as different species, says John Horner (1988), curator of paleontology at the Museum of the Rockies at Bozeman, Montana. Reptiles are born looking like miniature adults, but small dinosaurs had exaggerated features which cause "cuteness." Generally this included big eyes, short snouts and big feet. Scientists call this cuteness *neoteny*. We sense neoteny when a picture of a baby deer is shown, and the audience reacts to it with a sigh of pity and concern. Stephen Jay Gould (1982) and Konrad Lorenz claimed that neoteny is a mechanism for releasing parental nurturing behavior. But the somewhat different appearance of the young led to confusion. Scientists can make mistakes because of what they expect to find. In this situation, Christian teachers will always want to be very careful not to ridicule the best efforts of men and women which turn out to be wrong. Christian educators should not become proud and start to play the role of having a superior knowledge about all such things (the error of Job's friends). St. Paul said, "For I resolved not to know anything while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified...your faith might not rest on men's wisdom but on God's power" (1 Co 2: 2 and 5).

The fossils hardly speak for themselves. Phillip Currie has studied concentrations of fossils of centrosaurus in Alberta, Canada. He has found over a hundred in one location. From this he concluded that a herd must have crossed a river. As happens with present day herds (like the wilde-

beest) crossing rivers, some were trampled and many drowned. Tooth marks on the centrosaur bones indicate that the bodies were eaten by scavengers and then were fossilized. Currie is convinced that large herds of dinosaurs migrated across the land and that the sight would have been awesome.

Another very interesting discovery indicates that some species had rookeries. John Horner is the only person to find extensive dinosaur nesting grounds with fossilized skeletons of baby dinosaurs still in their nests. Baby dinosaur fossils are rare. In his search for duckbilled dinosaur fossils in Montana he discovered that the nests were located in drier areas where fossilization was less likely to happen. Horner found extensive dinosaur nesting grounds with fossilized skeletons of baby dinosaurs in the nests. He found thousands of baby dinosaurs at various ages and more than 300 eggs, some broken, some intact. The rookeries imply the existence of complex social behaviors to allow such groupings and perhaps an annual return to nesting grounds.

Horner's remarkable nest discoveries indicate that some dinosaurs cared for their young. He found that the bones of the young maiasaura in the nests were not smooth on the ends (just like our young nest-bound birds). They would not have been able to move about until the bones matured. The babies of the species stayed in the nest while the parents fed and protected them for several months. He named these duck-billed dinosaurs, maiasaura (MI-ah-saur-ah) for "good mother lizard" (Gorman 1989).

Martin Sponholz of Dr. Martin Luther College shared an interesting reaction to the fact that Horner's maiasaura rookeries were found in dry areas. Horner humorously supposes that the smell of dinosaur rookeries would have been terrible. Sponholz, who has visited penguin rookeries in Antarctica, offered that the drier locations would cut down on odor and possible infection just as the freezing and drying of penguin guano helps that situation (personal interview, September 29, 1989).

Another major new idea is that dinosaurs must have been warm-blooded, fast and alert-like birds. Scientists are now claiming that birds are their surviving relatives. The spacing of dinosaur tracks indicates relatively fast movement for the larger animals (four miles per hour) which would require high metabolism. Tail tracks are missing when footprints are found indicating that the tails were held high for balance. Bone structure and growth patterns remind scientists of birds. Philip Currie found a braincase from an animal known as *Troodon* (Tro-a-don). Its large middle ear air ducts showed that it was very birdlike. With every breath it cooled its head. The old image of stupid, slow-moving lizard-like creatures has been replaced by one of fast-moving, curious, bird-like animals with a high metabolic rate. No longer are these creatures thought of as crawling reptiles subject to the temperature of the environment. Science changes; new ideas replace the old. Science does not generate truth, but rather, useful explanations. Our students need to know about how science works.

Dinosaur science is typical science which shows how mankind creates explanations and picks and organizes facts to fit the current scheme.

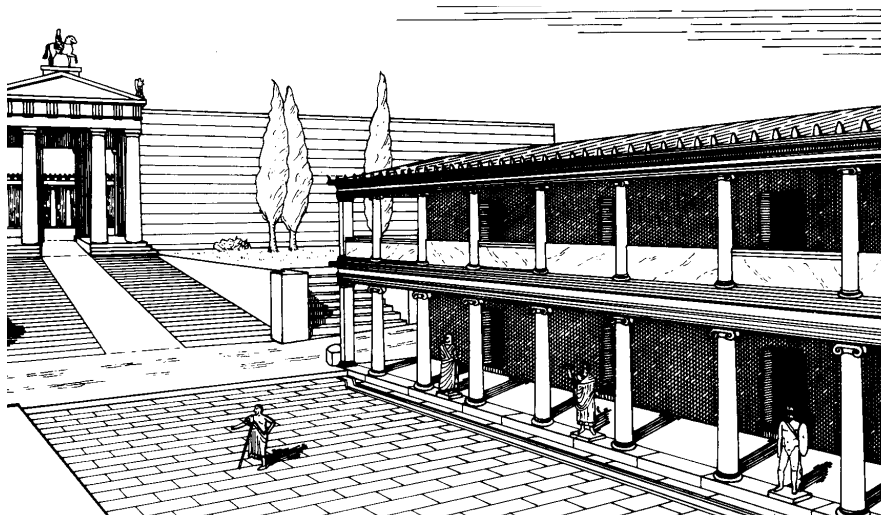
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SHOPPING IN THE WORLD'S MARKETPLACE

John Isch



Cautionary tales are stories told usually to children to teach a lesson or point a moral. Consider these two contemporary cautionary tales:

A Lutheran elementary school decides its reading curriculum should be studied. After an appropriate curriculum review, the faculty selects a series of basal readers and the school purchases them. The school year begins and months pass. One day a parent comes to one of the teachers and shows her a newsclipping in which a well-known Christian author condemns the basal textbooks purchased by the school. It appears that one of the books contains a story that seems to condone Satanism. The parent and teacher examine the textbook and the

teacher realizes she will have to make a particular Christian emphasis for that lesson. The parent leaves satisfied.

A Lutheran elementary school agrees to participate in D.A.R.E., a drug education program sponsored by the local police department. A layperson becomes concerned, however, when he reads the material describing the program. He believes the resistance approach of the program promotes humanism. He shares his concerns with others and the school finally withdraws from the program. Yet, adverse publicity and some ruffled feelings result.

There are two lessons in our cautionary tales, one negative and one positive.

Caveat emptor

"Let the purchaser beware" is useful advice to anyone who enters a marketplace. Junk bonds and used cars need careful scrutiny before we purchase. We need also to be aware in the marketplace of the world's ideas.

Ever since the Fall there has been strife and tension between things temporal and things spiritual, between the world and the church, or, as Tertullian put it, between Athens and Jerusalem. One solution for this tension is to turn away from the world and live as ascetics in a monastery. But this would be wrong. The world is in us and we cannot escape it. Nor do we believe children should be raised in such a sheltered manner. The next generation must be willing and able to go into the world to testify to the truth.

Our homes and schools must be places where the ideas of the world can be found, taught, examined and evaluated. Those in charge of children, those who "watch for their souls," have a particular responsibility for wisely selecting and using the ideas of the world in the education of children.

In their shopping in the marketplace of ideas these caretakers must understand the beliefs and ideas that are basic to the particular program, material or procedure that they are planning to use with children. Most ideas about how and what should be taught have implied assumptions about the nature of the learner, what knowledge is and how it we acquire it, what goals and purpose life has, and what the relationship should be between adults and children. The "isms" of these assumptions and

beliefs are limited only by the ingenuity of human wisdom: humanism, determinism, empiricism, materialism, existentialism, utilitarianism, pragmatism, positivism to name a few of the current ones. Thus assertive discipline, outcome-based education, mastery learning, whole language, writing across the curriculum, and management by objectives have assumptions, values and beliefs inherent in them.

Granted, studying philosophy and trying to understand these philosophical issues is not particularly exciting to most people and it often results in a headache and a feeling of confusion. In addition, many assumptions and beliefs are benign, they neither oppose nor support Christian beliefs, nor are they so pervasive in the materials or methods as to make them unusable.

Yet one cannot escape the conclusion that a major task of anyone who has the responsibility for the nurture and care of others is to be a "watchman for the house of Israel." Parents shop thoughtfully for the food they serve to their children, they carefully read labels and prescription directions and they purchase toys that are safe and well-designed. We build school buildings with proper exits and fire alarms and we examine playground equipment with an eye toward safety. In dealing with the minds and souls of children, we certainly ought to be at least as careful to understand the basis of the things we wish to use.

When we understand what the world is selling, we can make some informed decisions about buying and using what we buy. We may decide

that the social studies series, the instructional approach in reading, the piece of literature, or the classroom management system is unacceptable in a Christian classroom. Censorship may be in disfavor in contemporary society, but it can be an appropriate decision by any Christian parent or teacher. There are many methods and materials which must simply be rejected for Christian education. We don't, for example, need Kohlberg's "Just Communities" to teach moral behavior.

However, we may find something in the marketplace which appears important in the education of children in school or home. How can we then best use it?

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The first principle is that the greater the control a parent or teacher has over the presentation or use of the material, the easier it is to adapt and modify it for Christian education.

A teacher has greater control over the material when he is the presenter rather than when someone else is invited into the classroom to make the presentation. A literature-based reading program may provide a teacher greater control over what the class reads than would a basal reader. A television program that parents and children watch together gives the parents an opportunity to discuss what they see and thus they can guide their children. On the other hand, parents have less control over what the children learn from a program when the children watch it alone.

A teacher or a parent also will consider the maturity of the child (which may or may not be related to chronological age) in a decision to use or adapt procedures or material found in the world's marketplace. We recognize and understand sanctification as a process of growth, a time for milk and a time for solid food. Some kinds of literature are more suitable, some topics more appropriate, some depth or breadth of coverage more useful for older than for younger children. Perhaps the media will eventually make everyone from the toddler to the grandparent equally worldly-wise, but the principle is still valid: select and adapt what you find in the world's marketplace by considering the maturity of those who will be taught those ideas.

Some topics and worldly ideas have an almost irresistible attraction for certain people. The sainted Siegbert Becker, once professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, warned against a curiosity for the occult. Young teenagers are often enthralled with

stories or activities that show disobedience and rebellion against authority. Two-year olds probably don't need many stories about how to say "no." Teachers and parents will use special caution and exercise more control with material that is particularly tempting for certain persons.

Finally, in these considerations of dealing with the marketplace of worldly ideas, there is the love we bear for others and the concern we have for their faith. The choices we make as teachers or parents are choices that affect more than the children for whom we are responsible. By our choices we can give offense to persons within the community of believers. The concerns for taking and giving offense often make decisions difficult for a Christian. In these cases we need to practice love, patience and forbearance. We need to put our personal considerations behind our responsibilities for the nurture of those who are in our care, and we need to consider the wider implications of our decisions.

In our marketplace shopping, therefore, we need to understand the product and what went into its manufacture, we need to measure the control we have for its use, we need to understand the maturity and the characteristics of those for whom we will use the product, and we need to think about the potential effect of our choice on others. This is no trifling task. It requires wisdom and understanding, both of which have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Even when we have done all this, we may find ourselves coming to different conclusions. The Simpsons could be a useful model of family life,

assertive discipline may have a Christian adaptation, the D.A.R.E. program could be incorporated with a proper Christian motivation, a unit on witchcraft may be beneficial in a high school religion class, that religion curriculum from outside our Synod could prove beneficial. And maybe not. There are surely areas where we would have consensus, but there are also many middle-ground things where decisions of thoughtful and caring Christians diverge. That is not necessarily bad. The cautious restrain the bold, the bold incite the cautious, both are guided by Scripture and both are primarily concerned with the proper Christian nurture of children. Then our disagreements can be wholesome discussions about the *real* things of Christian education.

Proactive

The second moral from our cautionary tales is admittedly a bit of fantasizing. Imagine, if you will, a drug abuse program with a distinctive Christian motivation and emphasis

***We just need
to be careful
with what
we buy
in the
agora.***

that was developed and in place in our schools before William Bennett and before the D.A.R.E. program. Imagine the Lutheran Pioneers predating the Boy and Girl Scouts. Imagine a Christian literature based whole language approach developed by a Lutheran elementary school teacher in a one-room school in the 60s. Imagine an MBO (Management by Objectives) program developed with distinctive Christian principles by a small Lutheran synod back in the 50s.

Admittedly, the last one may be a bit difficult even for the most fanciful dreamer, but you get the point. In the marketplace of the world's ideas we often are frantic, last-minute, catch-up buyers. We have a problem and we buy the first off-the-shelf solution we can find. We react to existing problems rather than trying to foresee and plan for emerging challenges in Christian education.

Yes, the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are we children of light. They can devise programs, materials and procedures more creatively and readily than we can. Nor do we children of light have to reinvent wheels. But there are areas, moral education for example, where we are the best in the world. We have the means for motivating children and for teaching and inspiring proper conduct that are better, in the short-run and in the long-term, of anything we could find in the world's marketplace. We can and should work to these strengths.

We probably will never best the world in creating new and exciting ways of teaching, or in developing a

writing program that inspires the creativity of children, or initiating a reading program that makes literacy more than a slogan. That's all right. We can let the world do that work. But occasionally (and frequently in the areas of our strengths) we ought to create a program that is unique to our philosophy, not as a reaction to something the world has, but because we believe we need it. This is what dreams are made of.

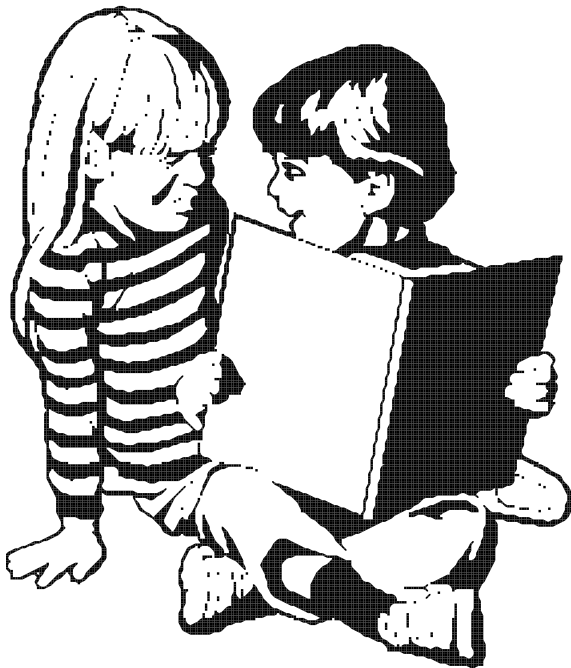
Our cautionary tales have taught us some shopping lessons. These lessons, you should note, are not just for the school. They are lessons for Christian homes, Christian day care centers, congregations, colleges, Synod, Christian summer camps, nursing homes, or wherever Christian nurture is an activity. They are lessons for anyone who has such a noble responsibility. Nor should these lessons make us timid and frightened of the decisions we have to make each day. Our work of nurture can make us bold because we have a Word that guarantees success. The choices we make in the marketplace are made in the comforting assurance that he who guides us in all things also will bless our decisions.

The world is very much with us and we would have it no other way. The world, after all, is the harvest field of the Christian. We need to preach in Athens as well as in Jerusalem. We just need to be careful with what we buy in the agora.

Professor John Isch teaches in the education division of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE PRESCHOOL

Elizabeth Hawkes



If we built our school enrollment from the bottom up, our other grades would have more students. The trend for preschools seems to be the thing of this generation. Call it “keeping up with the Joneses” or meeting trends of society today, preschools are something to consider.

The need for a preschool

Our school faced low enrollment a number of years ago. Looking around the valley, we saw that other schools with preschools had a good enroll-

ment. We (the faculty and school board) found our members were going to non-WELS, church operated preschools. About the same time, our kindergarten program switched to all day schedule of Monday, Wednesday and Friday. To make a somewhat full-time position, the kindergarten teacher also became the preschool teacher. Our preschool was scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday and followed our school calendar. We had a small room for the preschool and kindergarten so the enrollment was limited. This worked well for a couple of years during which our church membership grew. Families with young children became a larger percentage of our congregation. This forced

the school board and faculty to look at our present structure. If we didn't do something during the summer, we wouldn't have enough room to teach our own members' children. Our plans and needs were discussed and a larger room was formed through a school remodeling project. Our classroom was bigger now so we could accept more children into our program. Thus, we met our members' needs for preschool education.

After we had determined to have a preschool, we had to review curricu-

lums. By contacting publishers of preschool material, we could obtain samples, usually free of charge. At that time, four curriculums were available. We reviewed the materials and recommended *Crossties* from The Economy Company. We are using this program today and find it very practical. Since our preschool was to be a "feeder" for our kindergarten, the curriculum would provide for readiness and basic skills. The religion lessons were from the fourth quarter Sunday school lessons (NPH) since we didn't hold summer Sunday school. The Bible story book, *A Child's Garden of Bible Stories*, supplemented the Sunday school lessons. The teacher also planned extra activities.

In the fall of 1987 our preschool enrollment swelled to 24. There were several reasons for this. The remodeling of the school left us with a larger classroom and as the congregation grew, it included more families with young children. Also, more three-year-old children came to preschool.

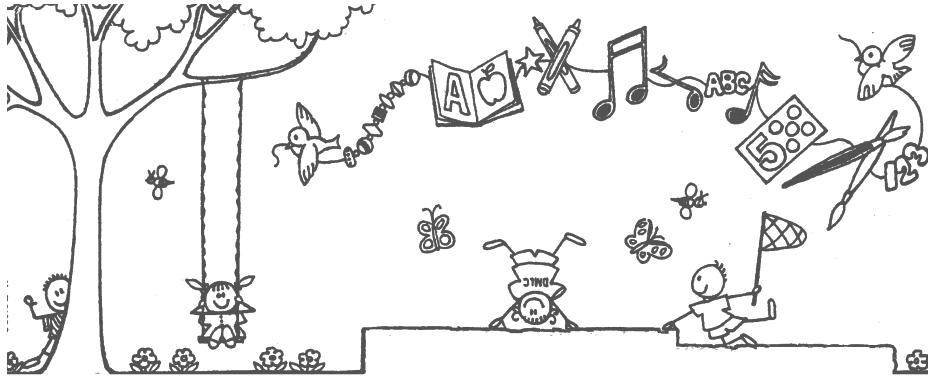
A parent cooperative program was set up which was quite successful. The program also turned out to be the highlight for the students: "My Mom is the helper today." "My Dad will come in next time and help." Some children found it difficult to share their parent with their classmates, but the parents enjoyed being a part of their child's preschool experience.

At times it was easier to have the three-year-old children doing one activity and the four-year-old children doing another. This led to dividing preschool into three-year-olds and four-year-olds for the 1988-89 school year. It has been much easier to deal with same-age groups.

The children in preschool

The three-year-old child seems to have a short attention span and requires more help from the teacher. The interest level of this age is more toward social and play activities. The personal needs of the children require teacher help, particularly at the beginning of the year. The three-year-old's academic skills depend on how much experience he has had before coming to preschool. Parents often tell me that they merely want their child to learn to socialize with other children. I do, however, expose the class to colors, shapes, numbers and letters; but I don't expect retention of the knowledge. My main objective is to have the class know these things exist. Some children learn these concepts while other children already know them. Children are different but they are all "fearfully and wonderfully" made by our Lord. The *Crossties* program of Big Books for each month gives me an excellent springboard for discussions. Painting is also a popular project for three-year-olds, and it doesn't matter if I give them a pre-printed page to paint or a blank sheet.

The four-year-old group is far more structured than the three-year-old class. We use features of the *Crossties* program. Among the many concepts and ideas presented, I teach and reinforce colors, shapes, numbers and the alphabet. This group is geared more to readiness for kindergarten, but I also have social and discussion times. Both groups have four field trip experiences each year. The visits are in-town outings which the children enjoy.



The Christian preschool

It is amazing how many people operating preschools feel that because they meet at a church, they are Christian. Even secular psychologists acknowledge that knowing about God offers a great amount of security to very young children. Pilgrim's preschool is Christian based. We use the "Jesus Loves Me" series from Concordia Publishing House. This is an excellent program which suggests the use of a variety of materials, such as puppets, vinyl graph, filmstrips and songs. There are also colored pictures for each of the 36 Bible lessons. It is important for young children to have a picture to handle because this helps to reinforce the Bible lesson concepts. The take-home sheets also summarize the story for the parents and offer some parenting tips. There are separate sets for three-year-old children and for the four-year-old children.

Religion instruction doesn't end with our class period, "God's Time." I attempt to integrate God's Word as often as possible. God's Word is a great resource for answering the

many questions of little children.

Christian attitudes are also fostered in our preschool. I try to integrate these Christian attitudes into lessons, discipline and play. The children have opportunities to express these Christian attitudes in all they think, say and do. Sometimes this is easier said than done. Every child is unique in his personality and upbringing, but Christ can still be the focus.

Our school has a garden project with help from the University of Arizona Agriculture Department. Preschool students, like the other students, are involved with planting, weeding, watering and harvesting. This is an excellent opportunity to teach about caring for God's world. Also, our curriculum has lessons on ecology which present additional opportunities for the students to learn about caring for God's world.

Art periods are also easy places to integrate God's Word. For example, students are taught to use their talents or in some cases to develop skills to express concepts and ideas in art. Religious art projects are especially

wonderful expressions of faith. The “Jesus Loves Me” series didn’t have project sheets to reinforce the Bible stories. After a few weeks of preschool one little girl asked when the class would have God’s Time art projects? I gathered my resources together and organized a folder which included a project per story for the entire series. I prepared a collection for the three-year-old preschool and the four-year-old preschool. These two collections offer activities at the child’s level and new projects for the four-year-olds who had been in our preschool the previous year. I also have a hall bulletin board that I change frequently to display the children’s work.

Music is a vital part to the young child’s curriculum. Using religious songs to coordinate lessons or seasons adds meaning for the young learner and is another place where God’s Word can be integrated. Our preschool children combine with our kindergarten class to sing in church. There children are included in the school’s Sunday singing schedule and they sing about every six weeks. I believe singing in worship services is one important way to keep the preschool visible to the congregation.

At Christmas time our preschool classes and kindergarten present a Christmas service. This includes three songs (one stanza each) and two short recitations which are coordinated with our kindergarten-through-grade-eight Christmas service.

In the past, Mission Festival has been a special day at Pilgrim Lutheran. The preschool and kindergarten children again combine forces to make a presentation. This may be

a finger play, a dramatization of a story that is read or a song.

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Teaching in a preschool

My first advice is “be flexible.” The younger the child, the more flexible a teacher needs to be. I find that the three-year-old class wants to choose more of their activities. Sometimes I ask the three-year-olds to complete an activity I have chosen and then promise that we’ll do something they choose. The three-year-old classes tend to think that they should paint often! On the other hand, the four-year-old class complies a little easier with the activities that I have selected.

Short attention spans are commonplace with young children. Varying the activities frequently keeps the class interested and ready to learn. Keeping the class interested also keeps the discipline problems to a

minimum.

Visual stimulation is a key ingredient for the curriculum as well. Using the sense of sight to attract attention will involve the other senses in the activity. For example, the child can see the flower, touch the flower, smell the flower, draw the flower and paint the flower.

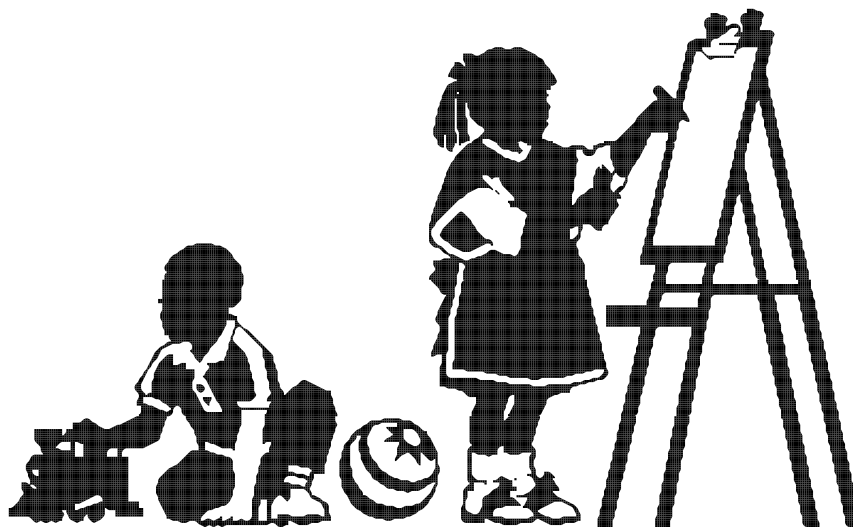
Hands-on learning aids are good for expanding concepts, building themes and offering challenges. These special activities tend to reinforce the lessons and thus students will remember more. Some of the extra learning aids that we have available include our Apple IIc Computer system with software especially designed for preschool, a balance scale, a large horseshoe magnet, a large bag of assorted blocks, a box full of pictures of animal families (mammals, reptiles, birds, fish), a Fisher Price microscope, magnifying lenses, a shoebox of seashells, an assortment of colored plastic covers and objects (sorted by color or sorted

by shapes), and the flannel board (numbers and letters). I also use some purchased games, such as Color Bingo, Alphabet Puzzle, What's That Sound?, Early Discoveries, Candyland Bingo, Play Dough and cutters, and other familiar toys.

A preschool program can be a real blessing to your congregation and to those who are privileged to teach them. Teaching young children that Jesus is their Savior is one of the greatest joys on earth. Sharing in a youngster's excitement over a bird's nest or the accomplishment of a task makes a teacher feel very special. Seeing the joy of learning on a child's face can't help but put a smile on the face of those who witness that joy. Keep these blessings in mind when you are considering a preschool.

[Picture credit, p. 65, Karen Brisso]

Elizabeth Hawkes serves as preschool and kindergarten teacher at Pilgrim Lutheran School, Mesa, Arizona.



PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS IN THE LUTHERAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Robert Klindworth

Wait now. Please try this article; you may just like it. I'm not trying to appear immodest. However, physical education and sports are especially important in our schools. I also realize that the mention of the subject conjures up strong emotions in educators as well as students. They either enjoy PE and sports or they hate them. Those on middle ground are somewhat difficult to come by. This article is one in which I hope to share some thoughts that do justice to this important subject.

Basic purpose

Initially, it is essential to reemphasize our purpose as educators and the goals of our schools. We are *Christian* educators in *Christian* schools. The center of our lives and that of our students is Christ. The purpose of the schools in which we serve is to provide a thorough *Christian* education. With Christ as our focal point we teach all subjects in light of the gospel lest we become private schools in which religion is taught.

The gravity of that distinction is tremendous. This distinction directs us to God's Word. For example, God speaks to us through the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. He says, "Don't you know that you your-



selves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple." Again in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 we read, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." These words remind us that God considers our physical bodies to be of vital importance. Our body provides the sanctuary for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The most precious

gift, apart from our salvation, we receive from God is our life, our body. God's Son and what He has done for us becomes our own when the Holy Spirit enters our hearts, sanctifies our lives and sustains our faith. Any form of desecration or neglect of our bodies is plainly a sin. Hence, *physical* education and sports are to be viewed as very important components of a well-rounded and truly Christian education.

Physical education

I have chosen to consider physical education first because it is a curricular subject and therefore has more universal application. Most, if not all, states require specific blocks of time in our schedules to be devoted to PE. The individual schools and teachers can exercise a great deal of flexibility at this point. The type of facility with which we are blessed can greatly affect the program of physical education we pursue. Other variables include individual gifts and abilities of teachers and the location of the school. These variables affect the how and what of a school's physical education program and they should contribute to its effectiveness in promoting a positive and God-pleasing attitude among the students regarding physical fitness.

Theoretical considerations

The physical education period should be placed strategically into the schedule. It can and should provide an appropriate and meaningful break in the day and an outlet for the children as well. There are four purposes to a PE program: First, it helps devel-

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op a child's basic movement skills. Second, it provides a structure for acquiring sports' skills. Third, it should promote good health and well-being or physical fitness. Finally, PE should be fun and provide the children with the opportunity to "play." These four purposes can all be incorporated into a single class period or they can be individually emphasized during separate class periods. This can vary from class period to class period. The specifics of accomplishing the purposes of PE should be determined by the Christian educator, and adapted to meet his individual needs. Most state-sponsored curriculum guides suggest that PE should be taught on a daily basis for about thirty minutes. "Hold on here!" you might say. "There is no way I can have a half-hour PE period every day." Remember, this is the theory section. I will attempt to indicate some practical suggestions for scheduling later.

From a Christian perspective, physical education provides us with an opportunity to integrate certain

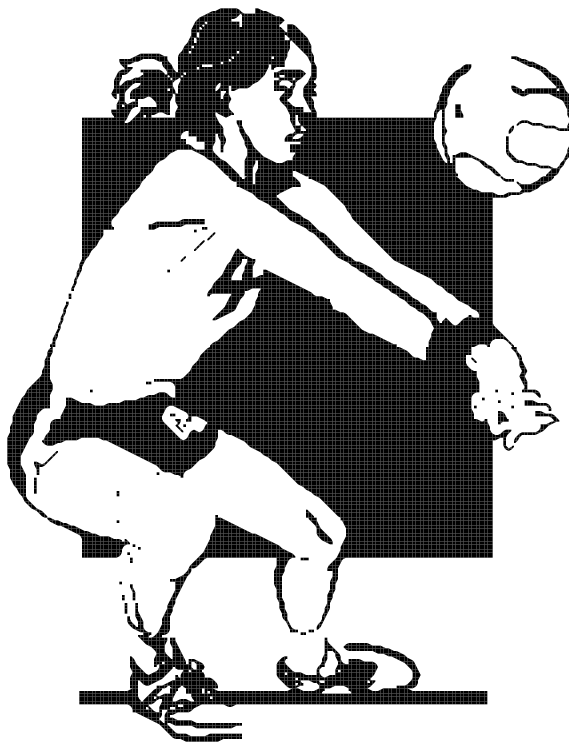
truths of Scripture. A teacher can convey to children that they can practice stewardship of a marvelous gift of God in the way they treat their bodies. The team concept and cooperation to achieve goals is a lesson on life that can be learned in PE. Along with that, children can learn to appreciate the fellowship of friends and the honest efforts of others. Good sportsmanship is an attitude that should be promoted. Children can demonstrate this attitude by being gracious in victory and understanding in defeat. Christian love is shown in all facets of our lives: "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). That same Christian principle can be learned and reinforced in PE class too. Let us not neglect to use PE class to reach the whole child—body, mind, and spirit—in our Christian schools.

Practical implementation

Let's get practical. First, devote a portion of your schedule to the physical education class. You need to be comfortable with the amount of time you have set aside and not afraid to use some obvious portions of your daily schedule under somewhat unconventional nomenclature. Could a recess period or some other break time fit the bill? The point is to provide a time that is practical and workable in your setting; then, stick to it. We all appreciate dependability, and students are no differ-

ent. You ought not skip over PE if the schedule gets tight. Adhering to the schedule gives the child the clear message that this class is important. Let children see that the teacher regards PE as a regular subject and one that merits being taught regularly.

I will attempt to give general suggestions that may provide something of value for you and your classroom situation. The program in our school starts with the lower grade children beginning to exercise their large muscle groups. In grades k-2, children are only beginning to develop their coordination. The physical education class should emphasize developmen-



tal needs rather than competitive goals. The teacher should emphasize flexibility exercises and movement activities that provide the student with exercises that stimulate the cardiovascular system (skill, drills, circuit training, calisthenics, jogging and aerobics). These are good for children physically, and, if properly planned and administered, everyone is a winner. Competition can have an appropriate role; various games and relays can be played to reinforce individual skills emphasized during the unit.

The middle and upper grade students are beginning to show more diversity in physical development and ability. The movement and flexibility exercises that are used to prepare the students for the actual class and the lesson for the day are naturally more challenging than those for younger children. As the students grow older their muscle mass increases with maturity; consequently, the initial phase of the class takes on greater importance. More time should be devoted to stretching to reduce the chance of injury during class. Teachers can use the same drills and exercises with the middle and upper grades as were suggested for k-2. He can spend more time on these drills and increase the number of repetitions. At this level lead-up skills are emphasized and various games and sports are played.

Everyone is involved unless health considerations prevent participation, and even then his encouragement from the sidelines is welcomed. Such a policy also provides the "fan" with an opportunity to remain mentally active in the class. The children can

recognize the fact that God has blessed all with various gifts and abilities. They are encouraged to demonstrate that as good Christian stewards they develop and use the physical capabilities God has given them. Also, Christian love would suggest that the teacher's attitude of encouragement and praise should be

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shown by the class. The teacher should not allow negative comments. The watchword is "positive." Teachers and students need to remember, with the proper planning and implementation, all feel like winners, whatever the game's outcome. Art Kamiya's text (1985) has a wealth of suggestions for activities and developmental games on all levels.

Sports

Sports are a natural extension of physical education. I see their respective purposes as being different, how-

ever. Physical education provides a means whereby each student can aim toward a healthy and active future. That future may include sports. Sports serve a much more limited clientele in a specialized way. A sport's participant practices to develop skills which ultimately are intended to produce success on a field or court.

The most common sports played by our students include volleyball, soccer, flag football, basketball, softball and track. All of them can be promoted with varying degrees of competitive intensity. They can be played in physical education classes and, if facilities and personnel allow, they can also be carried on at an intramural or interscholastic level. The school I have served has been involved with sports organized in various ways—squads, teams and leagues. Regardless of how the sports program is organized, the team concept needs to be emphasized over individual performance. Team sports, properly viewed, teach interdependence and cooperation. Thinking on one's feet and learning to win graciously and

lose with dignity are lessons that can be learned. Fellowship and dealing with Christians and non-Christians in a sport setting can be a valuable part of growing up. Proper guidance provided by a teacher or a coach can make sports in Lutheran schools a valuable co-curricular or extra-curricular activity. They afford an opportunity for players and fans alike to demonstrate their faith outside the church or school setting.

May a gracious God guide us all in promoting physical education and sports in a manner that brings honor to him and truly benefits those we are called to serve.

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