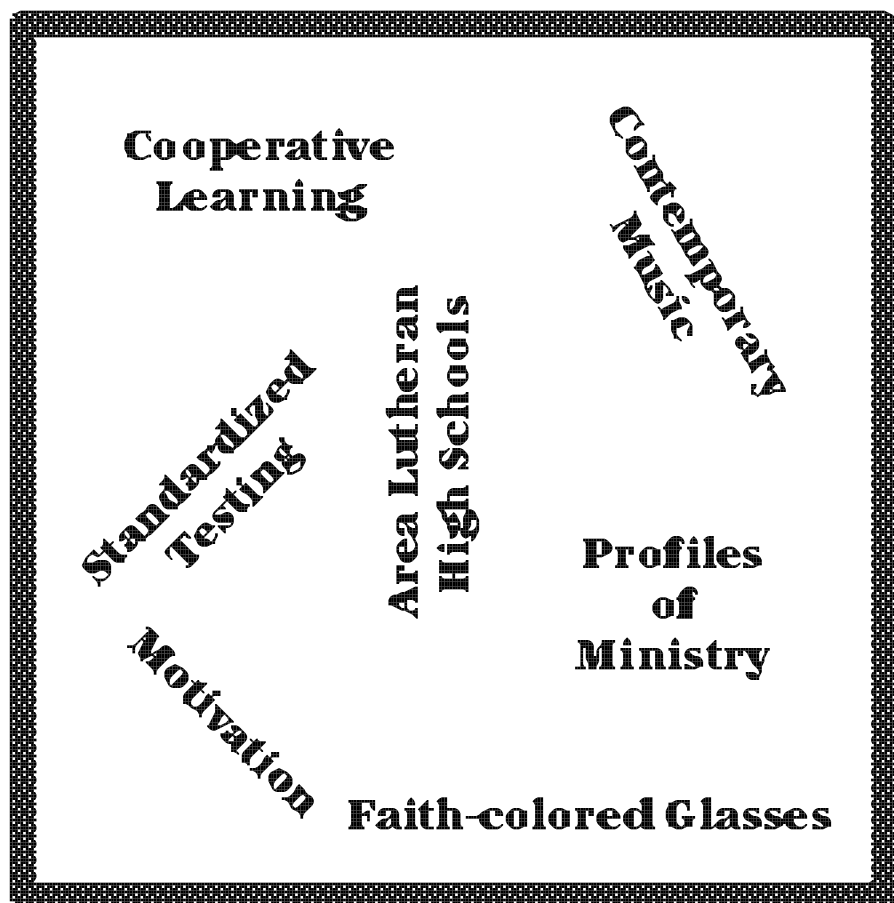


The Lutheran Educator

The WELS Education Journal

VOLUME 33
NUMBER 3
FEBRUARY 1993



The Lutheran Educator

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

ARTICLES

- Gospel Freedom and
Contemporary Music (2)** 68

Paul O. Wendland

- Area Lutheran High Schools:
Are They Worth It?** 72

Paul M. Hartwig

- Cooperative Learning in
the High School Classroom** 76

Gail L. Deltgen

- What Will Make It Happen?** 80

Wayne L. Fischer

- Characteristics of a
Motivating Teacher** 85

Debra Heinz-Peterson

- Yes, Standardized Testing
Has Value** 89

LeDell Plath

- Profiles in Ministry:
The Great Plains** 93

Jennifer Meyer Werre

DEPARTMENTS

As We See It

- The Reading-Writing Connection** 67

- Teachers Share Ideas 78

- Letters from Home 95

Ramona M. Czer

VOLUME 33 **NUMBER 3**
FEBRUARY 1993

Editor — John R. Isch

Editorial Board —Martin D. Schroeder, Irma
R. McLean, Mark J. Lenz

Editorial correspondence and articles
should be sent to *The Lutheran Educator*, Editor,
Dr. Martin Luther College, 1884 College Heights,
New Ulm, MN 56073. Phone 507/354-8221.

Subscription service information on a new
subscription, a renewal, a change of address, or
an inquiry should be sent to Northwestern
Publishing House, 1250 N. 113th Street,
Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284. Phone 414/475-
6600. Subscription rate for U.S.A. and Canada is
\$5.00 for one year, payable in advance to
Northwestern Publishing House, postage includ-
ed. For all other countries please write for rates.

The Lutheran Educator (ISSN 0458-4988) is
published four times a year in October,
December, February and May by Northwestern
Publishing House, 1250 N. 113th Street,
Milwaukee, WI 53226. Second Class Postage
paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin. POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to *The Lutheran
Educator*, c/o Northwestern Publishing House,
Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284.

Copyright © 1993 by Dr. Martin Luther College.
Requests for permission to reproduce more than
brief excerpts are to be addressed to the editor.



THE READING-WRITING CONNECTION: SOMETHING NEW?

Much has recently been made of the vital connection between reading and writing. Certainly, if you were one of the more than a thousand persons who attended our National Literacy Convention last summer, you were impressed with the importance of this connection since it is one of the tenets of the Whole Language movement which has gained prominence especially during the last decade.

But this idea has been spooking around for a much longer period of time. When the New English curriculum was devised in the early 60s, Jerome Bruner insisted that one learns to read by reading and to write by writing. In the late 60s, the Bay Area Writing Project carried this idea one step farther with the hypothesis that one learns a discipline by writing about it. The result was the Writing Across the Curriculum movement in our nation's schools and colleges.

Actually, the seed was sown centuries earlier. Francis Bacon in his famous essay "Of Studies [Education]" (1597), trenchantly observed that "reading maketh a full man, conference [conversation] a ready man, and writing an exact man." There, in a nutshell, you have all the language arts or skills of communication—the whole of language—a very old idea reincarnated today.

But is this connection important enough to warrant our wholehearted endorsement? Bacon thought so, as his exposition indicates: "therefore, if a man writes little, he had need have a great memory." Indeed, memory is fleeting; only when we put an idea into written form do we ensure it some measure of permanence, at least the opportunity to look at it again to see whether it says exactly what we mean.

But communication is dyadic; we not only express ideas in writing, we must receive ideas through reading. These processes are interdependent. And so we must read and our students, too. As Bacon says, "if he [the student] read little, he had need have more cunning, to seem to know that [which] he doth not."

How often haven't we laughed to ourselves when reading some student's empty response to an essay question. Obviously, she or he hadn't read the assignment! Or how often haven't we smiled at other students' attempts to conceal their ignorance through the clever use of words. Not "cunning" enough to fool me! She or he should have reread the assignment and the directions!

Indeed, there is a vital connection between reading and writing—an old idea currently being appreciated anew. Let's keep the connection alive by modeling it for our students to emulate. Such a continuous effort ought to guarantee a truly literate population. Viva, Bacon!

MDS

GOSPEL FREEDOM AND CONTEMPORARY MUSIC (2)

Paul O. Wendland

This issue continues Pastor Wendland's timely article on contemporary music. This issue contains the second part, "Music is God's good gift and creation." The May issue will discuss the final part, "Music is a part of any people's culture."

Part Two **Music is God's Good Gift and** **Creation**

IT MAY BE APPALLING to some to think of rock music as somehow having its source in God as part of his created world. Some would prefer to regard rock as an abuse of music, a sinful and intrinsically degraded form. This reaction is due in part to the associations rock has in many people's minds. We have discussed that matter already (cf. *The Lutheran Educator*, December 1992). It also may be due to cultural bias. We will discuss that matter in the next issue.

Yet unless someone can demonstrate from Scripture that syncopation, guitar riffs, drumming and vocals are simply "not on" so far as God is concerned, we will have to accept rock as simply a specific variety of music. And if it is a specific variety of music, it shares with all music the quality of being a gift of God.

Luther deserves the credit for giving us the eyes to see music as God's creation and gift. Prior to him, theologians chiefly saw music as "guardian and shaper of morals," as Carl Schalk points out in his excellent study of the topic (1988, 32). John Calvin was the reformer who emphasized this

point of view, with the result that he looked at music with some suspicion, due to the deleterious effects it could have. Here's an example of the man from Geneva's reasoning on the matter:

There is hardly anything in the world with more power to turn or bend, this way and that, the morals of men....It has a secret power to move our hearts in one way or another. Wherefore we must be the more diligent in ruling it in such a manner that it may be useful to us and in no way pernicious. (Schalk 1988, 33)

While Luther certainly would have agreed concerning music's great power to move the soul for good or ill, his comments on music do not breathe the same spirit:

I would certainly like to praise music with all my heart as the excellent gift of God which it is and commend it to everyone...And you, my young friend, let this noble, wholesome, and cheerful creation of God be commended to you...At the same time you may by this creation accustom yourself to recognize and praise the creator. (Schalk 1988, 33)

For Luther, the consideration that music was God's created gift made all the difference in the world in the way he made use of it, and encouraged

others to do the same. Since the gospel was at the center of Luther's life, it was only natural that he would urge this gift of God be used in the service of him who gave it. Thus, too, it was only natural that Luther's attitude created a climate of freedom in the church that bears his name for "composers, congregations, choirs, and instrumentalists to develop their talents and abilities to the highest degree possible." (Schalk 1988, 36)

Someone here may point out that rock music, instead being pressed into service of the gospel, is primarily being used in service of the "love ballads and carnal songs" from which Luther wanted the young "weaned away" by formal training in music (Schalk 1988, 33). There are two things one could say by way of reply. The first is this: Weaning away the young from songs of lesser worth by teaching them music of greater worth is hardly the same thing as forbidding the young to listen to the lesser music at all.

Secondly, just because something is abused doesn't mean it cannot be used properly. The man who wrote the following words would never consent to the prohibition of something merely because of its potential misuse:

We must not...condemn anything because it is abused This would result in utter confusion...There are many people who worship the sun and the stars. Therefore we propose to rush in and pull (them) from the skies. No we had better let them be.... Indeed, if we want to drive away our worst enemy....we shall have to kill ourselves, for we have no greater enemy than our own heart, as the prophet,

Jer. 17:9, says. (Luther 1959, 85)

You can prohibit something without, but doing so will never kill the beast within.

We have been talking about music as a gift of God. As music, rock also fits under the same designation. We have noted that an abuse of something created ought not lead us to condemn the thing outright. Just so that no one misunderstands, however, we should not go on to draw the false conclusion that if rock music is part of God's good creation, any abuse that occurs in it is beyond godly criticism. Far from it. Here every Christian ought practice discernment, examining the lyrics for ungodly attitudes, immoral actions, etc. To chime in with Robert Louis Stevenson and blithely sing, "I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings," is to be blind to some very real dangers.

One of the greatest dangers is the way the rock generation—not content to let music be God's creation—came to worship it as a god. Joni Mitchell typified this attitude in singing of the "child of God" who was on his way to Yasgur's farm to listen to some rock and roll. This farm is better known to us as Woodstock. In a mystic vision she saw fighter bombers turning into butterflies through the power of the music. When Don McLean sang of "the day the music died," he was mourning the death of a generation's god, as many images in the song suggest.

This idea of art being godlike in its ability to regenerate humanity has been around a long time. But never had it filtered through to the masses to the degree it did in the 1960s. Susan Howatch comments in one of her novels:

“All you need is love!” sang the Beatles, as the Great Pollutant, seeping into the gap created by the absence of a strong religion, began systematically to poison our lives. Pascal wrote: “It is natural for the mind to believe and for the will to love; so that for want of true objects, they must attach themselves to false.” The true objects all went under in that part of the 1960s where I wasted what remained of my youth, and only the false gods survived to ensure our ruin. (1989, 373)

It would be wonderful if this danger were past. Judging by the arrogance of many modern day rock-idols and rappers, it has not. In the name of freedom of speech, they will accept no restraint whatever on their behavior. After all, how can a god accept restraint? And if someone should point out that ideas in their songs may have destructive consequences, they refuse to accept responsibility. The gods, as we know, are above all petty human laws.

As we consider music from the theological perspective as God’s creation, a related question must be, “How can we use it to give glory to God and to serve our neighbor?” Carl Schalk answers the question for us in general terms by giving us Luther’s view that music was to be used to give God praise and to proclaim the gospel (1988, 37-39). As in all offerings, so also in musical praise and proclamation, God has every right to receive the best we have to give.

In this connection, Paul’s words in Philippians 4:8 have been expounded as giving us a Christian perspective on all art, both sacred and secular, “Whatever is true, whatever is noble,

whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”¹

To me Paul’s words suggest that music in the contemporary pop/rock idiom not be admitted into the church as part of public worship until it has first been carefully strained through the sieve of aesthetic judgment and analysis. Whatever is bad is to be filtered out; whatever is good is to be offered up to God. The label “Christian” cannot sanitize bad poetry and substandard music, any more than it can purify an uncertain theology. “Holy shoddy is still shoddy!” (Braun 1992, 22) After listening to Christian music, no unbeliever should have cause to say (as did P.J. O’Rourke upon being exposed to “Christian” rock in Heritage, USA), “I found God and lost my talent” (O’Rourke 1988, 94).

Paul’s words also suggest that the best way to handle contemporary music in our homes and schools is to train our children in making aesthetic judgments (as well as in exercising the spiritual discernment mentioned above). This involves more than just presenting children with a pre-set categorization of “acceptable” and “unacceptable” music. In his sermon to the Areopagus, the Apostle evinced familiarity with the Epicurean and Stoic schools of philosophy. He could quote from memory the poets Epimenides and Aratus (Ac 17:22-31). It seems Paul’s mother did not simply tell him, “Paul, Greek philosophy and poetry is bad. Stay away from it!”

So also we might teach our children to test and approve what is excellent in various genres of music. We can

train them in the fine arts and encourage them to make judgments about the beauty of a particular piece of music which run somewhat deeper than, "It's got a good tune, a snappy beat; you can dance to it. I'll give it a 'ten'!"

It is impossible to discuss aesthetics without an understanding of how a person's culture determines his perception of what is noble, excellent, pleasant, admirable and praiseworthy. That is the subject of the conclusion in the next issue.

Notes:

1. See, for example, Tiefel, James. "Sermon at the Dedication of the Seminary Chapel Organ," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 88, (Fall 1991): 294-298

WORKS CITED

- Braun, Mark E. "Worship in the WELS—Changeless Principles" *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 89 (Winter 1992): 11-26.
- Howatch, Susan. *Scandalous Risks*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989.
- Luther, Martin. "Eight Sermons At Wittenberg, 1522." *Luther's Works*, vol. 51, edited by Harold Grimm, 333-337. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959.
- O'Rourke, P. J. *Holidays In Hell*. New York: Vintage, 1988.
- Schalk, Carl. *Luther On Music: Paradigms of Praise*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1988.

Paul Wendland is pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Artist: Donald Muth. From *The Small Catechism*
© 1983, Dr. Martin Luther College. Used by permission.



AREA LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOLS— ARE THEY WORTH IT?

Paul M. Hartwig



I REMEMBER THE EVENING WELL and always will. Having been called to the Appleton area to plan for and start a Lutheran elementary school, I was about to see the fruits of our labor after three years of ground-work. Our school had become a reality! That evening I received a phone call from a friend and member of our church. He asked me over to talk about the new school. At their home, I was shocked when he and his wife told me that, nothing against me, but they had changed their mind about sending their children to our new school. In sum, they just didn't have the personal commitment to be part of this new and exciting venture and were in fact transferring from our church to another. Thus began my introduction to hearing the many reasons why parents don't feel that a Christian education is "worth it." I also began to learn that the meaning of those words "worth it" can and will vary depending on the reasons and

the persons involved. Whether we are talking about the worth-whileness of Lutheran elementary schools or high schools doesn't really matter, but this article will focus on the area Lutheran high schools since there might be more excuses, pardon me, reasons, people might offer in attempting to justify why Christian education isn't for them.

This article will address a number of issues that impact families as they consider a Lutheran high school, and after addressing each issue, I will include excerpts from a variety of interviews that I had with families who have students in our school at Fox Valley Lutheran in Appleton.

First, let's set the scene. As a parent, you are weighing the options of sending your son or daughter to an area Lutheran high school (ALHS). One of your first and most important concerns is the cost of tuition and other fees. According to the ALHS Statistical Summary of 1992, tuition and other fees will range from a low of \$1750 to a high of over \$3000, depending on the area of the country. At Fox Valley Lutheran High School (FVL), the total this year is \$1995 for the first Federation student, with a reduced amount for each additional family member. This is fairly typical for the Midwest. The actual cost of educating a student in an ALHS ranges from \$2800 to nearly \$6000! This year's cost per student at FVL is \$3139. For most schools, the tuition

amount exceeds 50% of the total cost, so we are talking significant dollars! If you are a typical family with an average income for your community, tuition can be a formidable figure and somewhat frightening.

What kind of an impact might paying this tuition have on your family? I interviewed two pastors, two teachers, and three lay families. Because several asked to remain anonymous, I will honor that request and indicate all responses with a P (pastor), T (teacher), or L (lay person). This is how some of the FVL families responded.

What kind of financial impact does tuition have on your family?

L – “At times none, but other months things are tight.”

L – “Take it one month at a time—consider it like one new car that you’re not going to have. We pay the bills first, and spend little on anything else.”

P – “A substantial impact, with little spent on family recreational things, home furnishings, and the like.”

T – “Have to sacrifice other things, had to buy another car because of the distance. Spouse and kids are required to work more than I want in order to meet expenses.”

As I talked with families over the years regarding tuition, I found the above responses to be typical regarding financial impact, and many, many families do make personal and family sacrifices. Some will work two jobs, sometimes spouses will work sooner or longer hours than what is desirable, and the teens are often expected also to contribute to the costs.

As a parent, you now have made the decision and commitment to send

your child to an ALHS. Another item you need to consider is how time demands will impact you and your family. Here you need to take into consideration the distance you live from school. FVL has students that commute daily from more than an hour away, so many miles are spent on the road.

What kind of time impact does an ALHS have on your family?

L – “Mainly picking them up after co-curricular activities, since there is no activity bus like the public school has. This amounts to a half hour of driving each time.”

T – “Nothing real significant—this is our life and that’s part of it.”

T – “Family time has suffered—thirty-two miles spent going each way, so we’re always on the road.”

P – “I’ve offered my time as part of my commitment to Christian education.”

In talking with parents who live long distances from school, I came to understand better the additional sacrifices they made due to distance. This included an additional car in many cases, more money spent on gas and upkeep, a tremendous amount of time spent on the road so their children could be involved in school activities and with their school friends, and other reasons. I think it’s safe to assume that the farther away you live from the school, the more you are going to spend for transportation and the more time you will spend traveling back and forth.

Many families ask for financial assistance. How does this work? Once again, the amount of tuition assistance available varies from school to school. Some have established endow-

ment funds with several thousand dollars in them up to some funds with more than a million! FVL has been blessed with an endowment fund of more than 1.3 million, and therefore it has been able to give significant assistance to many families. This year alone more than \$73,000 was granted to 125 students. Tuition assistance is also offered by some local congregations for their own members, so this is another avenue to explore.

Just how do you feel about asking for assistance?

P – “If you need it, don’t be embarrassed. It’s a blessing for many.”

T – “We don’t feel good about it, but thankful that we receive it from both FVL and the local congregation.”

L – “Many people don’t like to admit that they need help, but it’s a great blessing for us and handled very professionally.”

With the continual rise of tuition, more and more families may need to seek financial assistance. This need not be something embarrassing. People need to realize that many are requesting help and they aren’t the only ones. Ask your ALHS what avenues you can pursue to receive assistance.

As a parent of an ALHS student, you will want to get involved in your student’s education. In its mission statement posted throughout the school, FVL has a phrase mentioning its partnership with the parents in educating today’s teens.

In what ways do you get involved?

L – “We attend all the children’s

activities and give support whenever possible to the programs.”

L – “We volunteer our time with the canteen, and serve on several support groups.”

T – “I serve on the Board. If I’m supporting and speaking about FVL, I want to know what’s going on and help shape the education of my child.”

L – “We attend school functions, parent-teacher conferences, and the orientation. It gives us a chance to meet the teachers and other parents and get to know them.”

T – “Help with the homework and we’re there for the kids.”

There are many ways in which parents can get involved, and the ALHS is always looking for volunteers to help with various functions. Without the parents’ involvement, I doubt if our schools could exist as they do.

Why do you send your children to the ALHS?

Every one replied that it was for the Christian education. Other answers included the following:

T – “As far as I’m concerned, there is no other alternative—this is the way I was brought up.”

L – “This is the best way to prepare them for the future and for eternal life.”

L – “It’s a continuation of their Christian education and for us it’s a K-12 commitment.”

T – “We believe in it and in today’s world, it’s extremely important that they have the training and values. It’s also important for developing Christian friends.”

After completing these interviews, it was very obvious that the words commitment and priority are com-

monly heard when discussing a Christian high school education. More than once the comment was made that if it is a high enough priority, a Christian high school education is still possible for most, if not all people. So how important is it? I remember discussing parochial high school education with an administrator from the local school district as we commuted back and forth from classes at UW-Madison in the summer of 1987. He and his wife had two children and their combined income at that time was more than \$63,000. When I mentioned that our four children would be attending FVL when they were in high school, he remarked that they would like their children in a parochial high school, but they couldn't afford the \$1800 tuition amount that the local Catholic high school charged at that time. Obviously Christian education was not a very high priority in their lives.

In talking with parents about the cost of attending an ALHS, I found that many do not plan ahead for this segment of education, and thus the tuition costs become more prohibitive. Budgeting for these costs early in the child's life will better prepare for the educational costs that lie ahead; and with a little careful planning, the expenses can be met. It's amazing what amount can be saved by setting aside as little as twenty dollars a month, year after year. Another way to look at the tuition costs is that it is just an extension of what will have to be paid yearly for a college education. It's well worth the cost to start paying it four years earlier.

In summary, one can see that many parents make the financial commitment because of the benefits of a Christian high school education. Some have to sacrifice more than others; but in most cases, there is assistance available to those who need it. If a Christian education is a high priority, most families will find the means to send their children to the school. Planning for a child's Christian high school education, which includes careful budgeting, needs to start early in the child's life. There still are many parents who are willing to invest their time, money, and self into their children's high school education. In order for the ALHS to continue as it does, it will need this continued support of many parents and others; and we will need to continue to pray for God's guidance, direction, and blessings.

In conclusion, I will quote a comment made by one parent, a layperson who receives tuition assistance at FVL: "We could find all sorts of excuses to take our two children out of Christian high school education if we wanted to, but it's a high priority and the school helps us to make it possible." May our gracious Lord continue to bless our area Lutheran high schools with committed parents and dedicated teachers as we work in partnership in making disciples of our young people for eternity.

Paul Hartwig serves as principal at Fox Valley Lutheran High School in Appleton, Wisconsin.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN THE HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Gail L. Deltgen

WHAT IS THE BEST way to paint a picture? Should the artist use just black and white, or should she just use the primary colors? The question should probably not be stated as an “either-or” but as a “both-and.” In most cases, artists use a variety of colors. In a way, a teacher—like an artist—must answer the question of what is the best way: “What is the best way of teaching? Should I use lecture or group techniques?” The best overall result will probably result from a mixture. Lecturing is a part of group work because the class will often need to have common background information before starting a group task, and group processing is a part of lecturing because learning happens best when the group—teacher and students—communicate about problems. Cooperative learning is one way of combining the two techniques so students learn academic tasks and social maintenance. What is cooperative learning? What are the advantages of cooperative learning? How can cooperative learning use both lecture and group processing techniques?

Cooperative learning is one of three goal structures (cooperative, competitive, individual) which goes beyond the traditional isolated use of lecturing or group processing. The competitive goal structure uses lecturing to

give students information they will use to try to do better than their classmates. Group work is rarely done in this type of goal structure because it is not in everyone's best interest to share if his or her grade could be lowered because of the sharing.

The individual goal structure also uses lecture to give students information; they may use that information in group work. In this structure, students are responsible for their own grade only. A student's grade is not influenced by the grades other students receive so some sharing may freely occur, but the group structure isn't actively promoted to be tightly knit.

The cooperative goal structure uses lecturing to give students information designed to help them as they work in groups, so the information will be academic and social in nature. The group is actively promoted by the teacher who has students sit face to face and work on positive interdependence in different ways: tasks, goal, identity, fantasy, environment, resource, role, outside “enemy,” or reward. The teacher will look for the use of academic and social skills during group work and include instruction in group processing at the end.

Using cooperative learning to teach students how to do academic tasks

and practice social responsibility has many advantages. Research conducted by psychologist Kurt Lewin showed that learning is achieved most productively in groups whose members can interact and then reflect on their mutual experiences. In this way, they spark one another's creativity. "During the past 90 years over 600 studies have been conducted by a wide range of researchers in different decades with different age subjects, in different subject areas, and in different settings. We know far more about the efficacy of cooperative learning than we know about... almost any other facet of education" (Johnson, et al. 1991, 2-3). A brief research review shows higher student achievement, increased retention, greater use of higher level reasoning, increased perspective taking, greater intrinsic motivation, more positive heterogeneous relationships, better attitudes toward school and teachers, higher self-esteem, greater social support, more positive psychological adjustment, more on-task behavior, and greater collaborative skills when cooperative learning is used (Johnson et al. 1991).

If teachers should use the "both-and" approach to lecturing and group work, how could it be done? Cooperative learning can significantly increase the effectiveness of lecturing by using focused discussions before and after a lecture. In an English class the teacher could prepare questions on an overhead or blackboard for students to discuss at the beginning and end of the lecture. For example, "How does the beat affect the mood of a poem? Which kind of beat do you find most appealing? Why? Which poems in your book

show each of the four metrical feet?" Another way of using cooperative learning would be for the teacher to lecture ten to fifteen minutes on each of the four metrical feet and follow each segment with a group task. For example, "Summarize the mini-lecture. React to a poem which has that kind of meter. Predict the mood of a poem based on its meter. Create a poem with that kind of meter." Besides preparing the lecture material for herself and the academic tasks for her students, the teacher would set the scene for the social side of cooperative learning by facilitating a class discussion on the importance of equal sharing of ideas before the lecture on meter and include time at the end of the lecture for students to share their group's answers with the rest of the class and to discuss how well they functioned as a group.

As in all choices about methods, the teacher needs to consider her goals, the students she teaches, and the content she wishes to teach. Cooperative goal structure fits many types of goals, students, and content. It can be very successful in a high school classroom and part of its success is its ability to promote academic as well as social goals in a complementary way.

WORK CITED

- Johnson, David W., Roger T. Johnson, and Edythe Johnson Holubec. *Cooperation in the Classroom*. Edina, MN: Interaction Book, 1991.

Gail Deltgen teaches at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Teachers Share Ideas



A Children's Palm Sunday Service

We have found a way to make Palm Sunday special and meaningful for our children and the congregation. We do not have confirmation on Palm Sunday so we have special children's service, somewhat like Christmas, but requiring less organization, preparation, and memorization. Schools interested in sample copies of the service which we use may contact

St. John's Lutheran School
119 W. Broadway
Redwood Falls, MN 56283

Band Participation in Church Services

Our grade school band includes a number of talented instrumentalists. We have used such individuals in solo, in ensembles, and even the entire band to enhance worship services with their music. Appropriate music is prepared for preservice, postludes, and special times within the services especially on festival occasions.

Classroom Authors

Our reading and language curriculum encourages children to be authors. It is especially satisfying and exciting for them to author their very own hard cover books. We have found a resource which explains the production of quality books by our classroom authors with a minimum of extra work by the teachers. You can obtain further information by writing to:

Bare Books – Blank
Treetop Publishing
2200 Northwestern Avenue
Racine, WI 53404-2519
1-414-633-9228

Bulletin Boards the Easy Way

Busy teachers do not always have time for long hours of bulletin board preparation. Other problems are finding time to put up bulletin boards and storage of displays which teachers want to use again in the

Teachers Share Ideas

future. To solve these problems we frequently prepare poster style bulletin boards with pictures drawn and colored directly on the background. Words are also written directly on the background. These bulletin boards are attractive and can easily include student participation. Such bulletin boards are put up in very little time and can easily be rolled up for convenient and safe storage until needed.

Record Keeping Tip

In an upper grade classroom it works well to give each pupil a number. Students are required to write this number at the top of every assignment. Papers are handed in in numerical order. This saves the teacher considerable time in the process of correcting papers and recording grades.

Parent-Helper Program

Our faculty successfully initiated a parent-helper program this past year. We have gathered information concerning which parents are available for such a program, what their talents are, and when help can be given. These parents help us in many different ways depending on our needs. The advantages are that the teachers now have more time to work directly with the children. We can also draw from the parents' wide variety of abilities which are not always present in such a small faculty as ours.

The faculty of St. John's Lutheran School,
Redwood Falls, MN

Gordon Vetter Susan Brummund
Dave Gartner Janet Lund
Jane Price



Send your ideas and clip art to
Teachers Share Ideas *The Lutheran Educator*
Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN 56073

Clipart
courtesy of
Joy Klatt

WHAT WILL MAKE IT HAPPEN?

Wayne L. Fischer



Melissa is okay. Her family is in church regularly. She comes to school with some of her work done some of the time. Melissa seldom has a paper I really want to display. Her family refrigerator has more grocery ads posted than school papers. As her teacher I tell her what is expected; I explain the material. Yet she probably won't have it done tomorrow—or at least not right.

What am I supposed to do that will *make it happen* for her?

Let's start by asking who is this girl? We already know her name; it's Melissa. I have it written right there in my grade book. But that doesn't answer the real question. When I see Melissa, do I see one of God's wonderful creations? If I think any less, I have called God a liar. And that's not nice; in fact it is a sin. Now it isn't always easy to think that highly of her—that she is wonderful, but God does think that of her, according to Psalm 139. So should I.

Yes, who is Melissa? She is also one of the most precious parts of this world. We learned that about ourselves when we studied the meaning of the second article of the Apostles' Creed, "that he (Jesus) has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the

AS CHRISTIANS we want to see people succeed. As Christian teachers, we want our students to succeed. We also want to know what we can do to help them on the road to success. There are many different ways in which to discuss motivation for learning. In this article we will look through a teacher/student relationship to ask *what will make it happen?*

Sarah is a nice girl. She comes from a faithful Christian family. She comes to school with her work done every day—well, almost every day. She can happily display her neat "A" papers on your wall or her family refrigerator. She is such a joy to work with. Why, she is so good, I hardly need to do anything other than give her the new assignments and make a few comments about the material. And like a true thoroughbred she is off and running.

devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death." So valuable did God consider me that he sent his Son, Jesus, to pay the ultimate price for me, that I might be his own forgiven child. So is Melissa.

Once more, who is Melissa? God the Holy Spirit searched the world over until he found me and turned me around, converted me. He brought me to faith in Jesus my Savior. He brought me into the family of God. He made me a brother of Jesus and Melissa.

If I really want to know *what will make it happen* for Melissa, as a Christian teacher I must lovingly consider her for who she really is—my sister in Christ, just as wonderful, precious, and chosen as I. With such a conviction I will not need to brew up some magic potion to motivate her. I just need to deal with her for who she is. She too loves our God. And she and I can say with Paul,

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men.... If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one

from a worldly point of view.

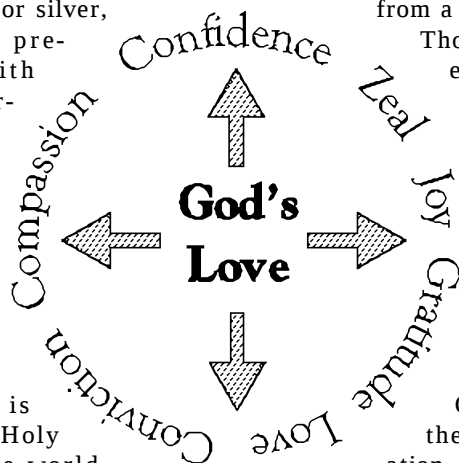
Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us

the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Co 5:11-18)

This love of God is the key to *what will make it happen*. Once Melissa and I know where we are coming from, we will be going in the right direction. Now we both will be motivated, because—

1. God's love inspires love: "We love because he first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19).
2. God's truth inspires conviction: "It is written, 'I believed; therefore I have spoken.' With the same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus" (2 Co 4:13, 14).
3. God's power inspires confidence: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Ro 8:31).
4. God's grace inspires gratitude: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me



abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” (1 Ti 1:12-14).

5. God’s grace inspires joy: “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2).
6. God’s grace inspires zeal: “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Ac 4:20).
7. God’s grace inspires compassion: “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Php 2:1-4).

Surely the gospel alone changes us so that we want to do what God says; *this is what will make it happen*. This is gospel motivation, the only real motivation we want.

At this point I admit I am a sinner and have not done any of this perfectly. But I really have tried to look at Melissa from this viewpoint. I will continue to ask God to approach her with gospel motivation so she can believe the same about herself and be motivated to succeed.

But

But even when we have used the gospel motivation, Melissa hasn’t succeeded. What else is there? *What will*

make it happen for Melissa? Certainly nothing can outdo the gospel. But sometimes, things get in the way of motivation. I do not want ever to replace the purity of gospel motivation. But I also ought not be blind to blocks to success in a gospel motivated student.

Block 1: *Sin* Yes, my students, including Melissa, are sinners. When sin enters the learning process I need to confront it in a way that will lead this student to see the sin. Then moved by the Holy Spirit confess the laziness, cheating, and poor stewardship, and ask for the strength not to fall for this temptation again. As a faithful handler of the Word, God may use me to correct and lead Melissa to follow the will of God instead of the will of Satan.

Block 2: *I wonder if I am loved?* Melissa has been told that she is loved by God. I pray she believes that. Does she feel loved by her family? By her friends here at school? By me and the other members of the faculty? In pure theory, once we are confident of God’s love, the other loves shouldn’t matter that much. In the real world they do. Is there some kind of abuse at home? Do the other children make fun of her or exclude her? Do I try to catch her being bad? How much different it would be if home were a safe loving place; if her peers accepted her for who she is; if I tried to catch her being good! How important it is that I do all that I can to foster and encourage such expressions of love. I need to look forward to seeing Melissa in my class and letting her know that I thank God that he has given me the opportunity to minister to her. When I meet with Melissa’s parents, I need first to find the posi-

tives to celebrate and then together with them look for solutions for the negatives. Though I cannot supply the needed love in all areas, if I love her as my sister in Christ, at least in my classroom she will have a chance to *make it happen*.

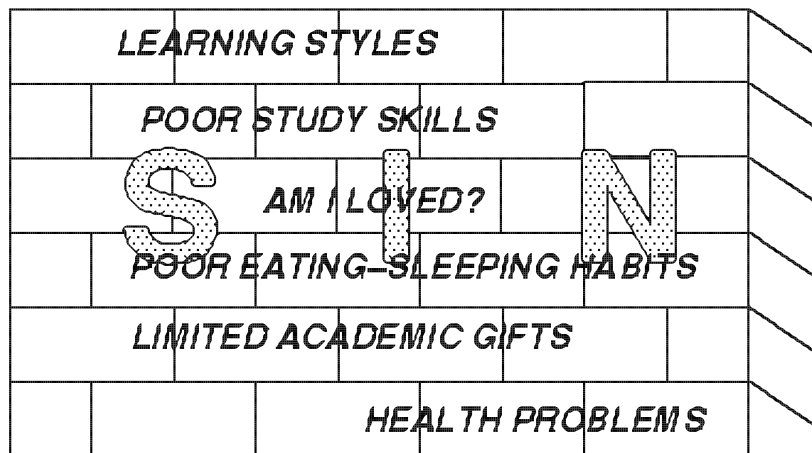
Block 3: Poor Study Skills Melissa may be highly gospel-motivated but be blocked because she really doesn't know how to go about the work I give her. Melissa may be like a superb engine that can really roar but will not get anywhere until it is connected to a transmission. The gears which will allow Melissa, properly motivated, to succeed may be time management skills, having a study spot at home, knowing how to read a textbook, knowing how to take notes, knowing how to study for a test, or being able to organize. How often do I criticize Melissa for not being with the program when she doesn't know *how* to get with the program? Through proper instruction and guid-

ance, motivated Melissa may also be able to *make it happen*.

Block 4: Learning Styles Red is a pretty color. Blue is a pretty color. Red is not blue. So is red bad for not being blue? This sounds silly or even ridiculous! Yet Melissa might be red and I only see or understand blue. Or to put it another way, I might be a great lecturer, but Melissa learns by seeing things we are talking about or by doing something. Is Melissa lazy or naughty because she isn't the same kind of learner as I? How often have I criticized God and Melissa because she learns in a different way? By my professional growth, with a broader arsenal of methodology, Melissa will have a better opportunity to *make it happen*.

Block 5: Poor Eating or Sleeping Habits No matter how good or important last night's late activity was, I will not be able to concentrate as well or be intently attentive today. Or if my eating habits eliminate some

Blocks to Success in a Gospel Motivated Student



essential vitamins or minerals, I will not be able to function in the best way. The same is true for Melissa. Perhaps I can work with her family on this so that she can be well enough rested and nourished to *make it happen*.

Block 6: Health Problems Somehow mathematics and science don't seem so important when I have a cold, a broken bone, an operation, or a serious illness. When my body won't store iron, I am run down, no matter how gospel-motivated I am. When I am clinically depressed I cannot do my language assignment the way I should, no matter how gospel-motivated I am. When my appendix bursts, I cannot keep up with my school work, no matter how gospel-motivated I am. When my eyes and mind mix up the letters I am looking at, I cannot learn the lesson as quickly as the other children, no matter how gospel-motivated I am. When my neurological circuitry misdirects the messages of my ears, eyes, hands, or mind, I will struggle more than my classmates, no matter how gospel-motivated I am. And on and on the list goes. As Melissa's teacher, I can be sensitive to these problems and make her assignments appropriate so that she can *make it happen* as she too celebrates the gifts and opportunities God gives her. Or maybe I need to suggest some special help since I may not be able to meet her needs.

Block 7: Limited Academic Gifts We are all limited in our academic gifts. Only God knows it all. Anyone else who thinks he or she does, is

wrong and is usually a pain to everyone else. God has made each of us a unique individual. Some people jump higher than others. Some people sing better than others. Some people talk better than others. Some people can learn more than others. Our students are people too. Melissa is a person. She may have more difficulty than some of my other students. We can celebrate Melissa's special gifts. I can look for ways to allow Melissa to go as far as she can, as fast as she can, instead of wondering what is the least she (we) can get away with. If she is gospel-motivated, then she wants to *make it happen* just like the rest of my students. As a Christian teacher, God wants to use me in Melissa's life.

As I go back into my classroom I will see Melissa again sitting in the row two seats behind Sarah. I will pray that God will make me his instrument to use his Word properly so that Melissa will be motivated by the love of God to be all that she can be. As God's children, Melissa and I both need to confess our sins, focus on the cross of Jesus for reassurance of the forgiveness which is ours, and, knowing the realities of our lives, go on living under the providence and direction of God. Then we will both know what will *make it happen*.

Pastor Wayne Fischer is the Director of Guidance and Counseling and teaches religion courses at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Wow! What an interesting lesson...

CHARACTERISTICS OF A MOTIVATING TEACHER

Debra Heinz-Peterson

The Scene

St. John's Lutheran School Welsville, USA
Fourth Grade Classroom 24 Students
Math Lesson: Addition of fractions with like denominators
Teacher: Mr. Smith

The Dialogue

Mr. Smith: Now class, you get to try these on your own. Do the even-numbered problems on these two worksheets. Show your work. We'll correct them tomorrow.

Student A: Do we have to do 'em all?

Mr. Smith: (encouragingly) Only those with even numbers.

Student B: (urgently) Can you help me? I don't get these!

Student C: (whispering to classmate) These worksheets are always boring.

Mr. Smith: (sharply) Ron and Sam, you'll be invited to complete all problems if your attitude doesn't improve!

MR. SMITH would like to have finished his math lesson by telling himself, "That was an interesting lesson for my students." But it wasn't.

This article addresses the challenges each teacher encounters in trying to solve several instructional problems at one time. Mr. Smith desired that the students practice and master the math skill. He was also trying to deal with the behaviors, understanding, and motivation of the students. Mr. Smith's approach is likely familiar to those of us who have experienced any period of time in the classroom, regardless of age or

grade level.

The students let Mr. Smith know that his motivational strategies were less than successful. This was demonstrated by the responses he received from them and the attitudes they displayed. It is likely that various levels of arousal, anxiety, irritation, and boredom were being experienced by the students in his class. In addition, Mr. Smith's displeasure and disappointment with his pupils were escalating rapidly.

The previous article in this issue (cf. Fischer, "What Will Make it Happen?") addressed the primary reason for motivation: to demonstrate

the love of our Savior through a life of living worship and sanctification. This and articles in forthcoming issues will deal with the topic of motivation in the classroom: its importance, identification, and planning for instruction.

What is motivation and why is it important?

Motivation is intangible. It cannot be directly measured. However, understanding why people behave as they do is vitally important in assisting them in learning. Most learning theorists use the word motivation to describe those processes that can 1) arouse and instigate behavior, 2) give direction or purpose to behavior, 3) continue to allow the behavior to persist, and 4) lead to choosing or preferring a particular behavior (Wlodkowski 1985).

Translated into educational terms, the definition leads teachers to ask the following types of questions:

“What can I do to get my students involved?”

“How can I make this lesson exciting for my pupils?”

“Where could I have made changes to help them want to learn what I have to offer?”

“If I could only get them ‘into the lesson,’ they’d enjoy it, but what do I do?”

Teachers frequently rely on a “bag of tricks,” specified curriculum, intuition, common sense, and a trial-and-error method to instill within their students the desire to learn. Consider the last time you presented an outstanding lesson. Recall the behaviors and attitudes of the students. They likely were excited to learn, anxious to hear and discuss the topic, cre-

ative, inquisitive, and focused. A motivating presentation can lead the student to positive experiences, reinforcing attitudes, and future interest in what will be presented by the instructor.

Motivated learners will work longer, harder, and with more vigor and intensity when motivated than when they are not motivated (Wlodkowski 1985). Time spent actively involved in learning is definitely related to achievement (Levin and Long 1981). As teachers, we are much more willing to give our best effort when we know that the students are giving their best effort. The reciprocity of the relationship is invaluable.

What are the characteristic of a motivating teacher?

Attempt to recall a teacher who really moved you. It is likely that you can vividly picture this individual and offer some pleasant memories of that instructor. Consider the teaching style of this individual. Teachers who motivate students have their own personal style and strengths. However, there are common elements which support the foundation of their teaching. These elements can be viewed as cornerstones for structural building points.

The teacher should be viewed as offering something which will be beneficial for the student to learn.

Knowledge for the sake of knowledge is rarely a motivating force for the majority of students. As a teacher, ask yourself, “Using concrete examples, what do I have to share that will help my students to



Offer
something
of
value

understand, use, or apply the information?" You know that you have something of benefit to offer to your students. The challenge is to convey this to them.

**Knowledge
and
planning**

Knowing the material well and planning the instruction are critical to learning. Being well prepared for instruction allows the teacher to be relaxed with the material and maintain eye contact with the students. With preparedness, there should be a fluidity of instruction between the learner and the teacher. Being well prepared allows the teacher to "read" the students by watching for signs of interest, insight, understanding, and possible boredom. The teacher will be comfortable alternating instructional strategies which may include shifting of positions, inflection of voice, spontaneously altering activities, and others which will be discussed in the final article.

**Understand
each
pupil**

Students enter the classroom with various experiences of their own and unique expectations of the teacher. It is probable that the student has heard from others, "He's nice," "She's a tough grader," or "Listening to her play the piano is like hearing fingernails on the chalkboard!" The effective and motivating teacher attempts to understand each of the pupils.

**Imitate
Christ**

The Christian attitude in instruction is one of discipleship and gentle guidance. Consider the manner in which Christ moved people from one behavior and atti-

tude to the direct opposite. The power of the Word and the Christ-like behavior demonstrated by the teacher will never be replaced by any human plan or strategy.

The manner in which the teacher disciplines a student is rarely, if ever, received by that student alone. Rather, each student in the classroom is watching, learning, and to some extent personalizing the behaviors. When that behavior models our Savior, students begin to identify with such behavior. Identification allows us to "make disciples" in the most personal manner.

To motivate students to learn, the teacher must have a realistic understanding of the students' needs and expectations. Consider once again that teacher whom you respected and found enjoyable. It is probable that this person was thought to be fair, understanding, realistic in expectations, and receptive to student needs. The instruction was likely challenging, yet within the students' level of achievement. In other words, the effective instructor attempts to match the learning process to the abilities and experiences of the learners.

When considering motivation, it is likely that you may have thought of the word "enthusiasm." An enthusiastic teacher is one who cares about and values the subject matter and teaches it in a manner that expresses those feelings with the intent to encourage similar feelings in the learner (Wlodkowski 1985). When a teacher cares about the topic, the natural

**Establish
realistic
expectations**

**Demonstrate
enthusiasm**

result will be animation and some form of emotional display. The use of language such as, "Listen to this, you won't believe it," "Wow, this is the incredible part!" or "I can't wait to share with you the rest of the story" conveys to the students that you truly believe in the value of the material. Such a teacher can serve as an inspiring, powerful force for the student.

**Provide
instructional
clarity**

Children seldom learn that which they cannot understand. Instructional clarity and an organized presentation are necessary for learning. The teacher who instructs clearly teaches with an awareness of the students' levels of understanding. The main goal in instruction is to avoid being vague and to describe as precisely as possible what is important for the students to know. A teacher needs to understand that the "looks on their faces" is an accurate barometer of instructional clarity. Teachers who motivate students are capable of offering alternative forms of instruction when students are failing to grasp the information.

Each teacher has the desire to have students respond with, "Wow! What an interesting lesson!" Understanding and planning for motivation are critical components in consistently reaching students. The corner-

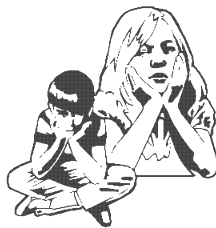
stones for effective teaching include the teacher's 1) imitation of Christ as the master teacher, 2) offering something of value to students, 3) knowledge of material and planning of the lesson, 4) understanding of each student, 5) establishment of realistic goals, 6) demonstration of genuine enthusiasm, and 7) striving for instructional clarity.

The next issues of *The Lutheran Educator* will include articles dealing with the topics of "What Motivates Students" and "Planning for Motivation." Before you receive the next issue, you might consider the manner in which you could incorporate these "cornerstones" into your teaching.

WORKS CITED

- Wlodkowski, Raymond. *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985.
Levin, T. and R. Long. *Effective Instruction*. Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1981.

Debra Heinz-Peterson, a practicing school psychologist, resides in Casa Grande, AZ. Her teaching experiences include pre-school through high school. She has completed advanced studies in the areas of special education and school psychology and currently serves on the WELS Special Education Committee.



YES, STANDARDIZED TESTING HAS VALUE

LeDell D. Plath

YOU HAVE heard it before: "Eliminate all standardized testing." Undoubtedly standardized tests have weaknesses, and, yes, such testing can be abused. But there are some convincing reasons why standardized testing should be retained.

Before I discuss those reasons, here is a definition: standardized tests measure outcomes and content common to a majority of schools in the United States, test items are pretested on the basis of effectiveness, statistical reliability is high, procedures for administering and scoring are standardized, and scores can be compared to norm groups (Payne 1968). Both achievement and cognitive abilities tests are included in the term standardized tests.

Some assumptions

Achievement tests are useful only if the students have been taught most of the skills and concepts which are included in the test, in other words, if the test tests what has been taught. Testing for student achievement of skills and concepts which are not part of the curriculum which that student has experienced and, therefore, which have not been taught serves little or no useful purpose.

Test results are educationally useful only if the faculty studies and uses those results to help students, parents, and the school.

Benefits for students

Standardized test results help determine the academic growth of each student. If your school tests students in the third, fifth, and seventh grades, you are able to determine each student's growth (in the areas tested) over that span. You are able to tell whether the students in your school are growing in their achievement at a rate which is consistent with national, synodical, and school scores.

By using test results you are able to answer this question: "Has this student grown in knowledge, skills, and application of the knowledge and skills to the same extent as the students in schools nationwide, as the students in the WELS, or as the other students in our school?" Such information can be helpful in determining whether the student needs some specific extra help or whether the student needs to be challenged with some additional, more-difficult material.

Standardized test results are one means of helping teachers determine the academic strengths and weaknesses of individual students. The results of a mathematics test can help identify areas of concern in a student's knowledge and skills. For example, if the student's mathematics score shows possible deficiency in computation skills, a teacher can follow up with additional testing to see

if the student has actually mastered those skills or if that student needs some extra help with learning those skills. Teachers can do the same for each subtest which the student has taken.

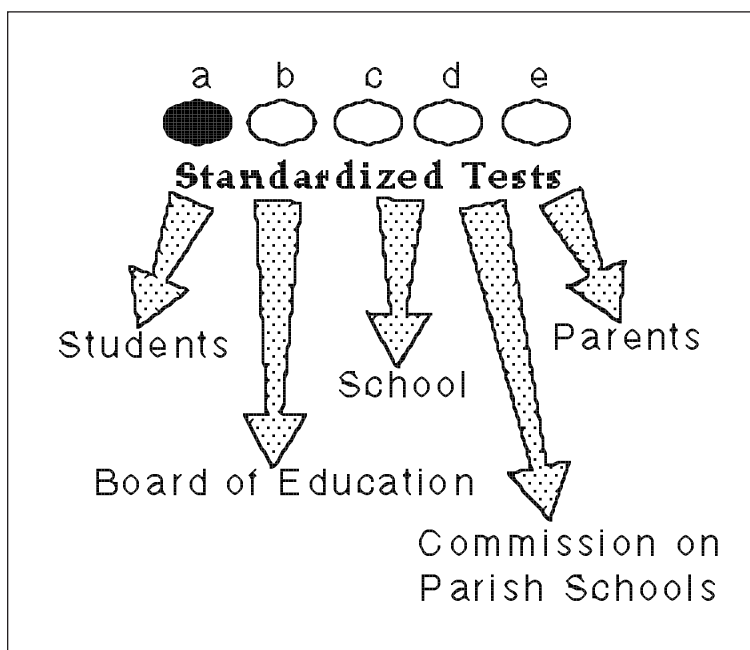
A cognitive abilities test can help a teacher determine the capabilities and potential a student has for doing certain school tasks. The score on the cognitive abilities test can assist teachers identify students who might perform well or poorly in mathematics or reading.

Achievement and cognitive abilities tests may uncover some unknown aptitude or some unknown disability. Discovering such information gives the teacher an opportunity to develop the newly found aptitude or to develop some remedial work which will help the student cope with the disability.

Results of the cognitive abilities test and achievement tests can be used to help students set goals for themselves, goals which challenge their God-given gifts. It is possible that the test results will provide the teacher, the pupil, and the parents some additional insights regarding a student's abilities.

Benefits for the school

Test scores help a faculty identify those areas of the curriculum which might need improvement. If the students' test scores in one area of the curriculum are consistently low, this may well indicate that the curriculum needs, as a minimum, to be evaluated. That evaluation could well demonstrate the need for developing different and more complete objectives for either a specific grade level or for the whole school. If the evalua-



tion of the curriculum demonstrates that no changes are necessary, then the faculty might examine the teaching and learning materials to determine whether those materials match the school and grade objectives. That effort could be followed by introducing different teaching and learning materials.

Test results could indicate that a faculty or an individual teacher might benefit from an evaluation of the instructional program. If the tests measure what has been taught and students are performing poorly, the cause of that poor performance might be the teaching methods. This conclusion has implications for the teacher, the principal, and the board of education. The teacher might benefit from the principal observing him or her in action. If the principal is to do this, the board will need to provide him with time and training to do that observation. Such classroom observation also has budget implications since a substitute teacher will be needed for the principal's classroom when he is observing other classrooms. The board might also assume the costs of extra training for the principal so that he can help teachers improve their instruction.

Test scores might also be used to evaluate a school's organization. For example, if a school has consistently low scores in mathematics and if the teaching methods and the curriculum are strong, such poor performance could mean that an insufficient time is being spent on mathematics. Maybe the school needs to look at the total number of teaching hours during the day. It might be possible that because of the busing schedule, the school day is too short. The length of

the school year could also be a factor.

Test results can be used for comparison. A faculty can compare the scores of its fifth grade students over a period of several years to the scores of the fifth grade over a different set of years. Or a faculty might compare its scores in each grade (assuming that at least 25 students are involved) with the composite scores of WELS schools. Such comparisons can be helpful in identifying strengths and weaknesses in a school's program.

Benefits for parents

Test results are one tool which teachers can use to report student progress and student potential to parents. Parents have the primary responsibility for the spiritual and academic training of their children. This means that teachers who are called to assist parents with the training of their children have an obligation to keep in close contact with parents regarding their child's school progress and potential for learning. Teachers will want to report test scores to parents, but in a manner which the parents can understand. After reporting those scores, the teacher and parents can work together to plan and implement strategies which will help a student overcome some obvious weaknesses or help a student expand horizons.

Benefits for the board of education

Test results can give the board one measure of the achievement of the students in the congregation's school. Together with the faculty, the board can evaluate the school's curriculum

Standardized tests,
properly and wisely
used, can help us
with the Christian
training of the
students in our
schools.

and instructional program. Following that evaluation the board can seek funding or adopt policies which will help the school overcome weak areas and make strong areas even stronger.

Benefits for the Commission on Parish Schools

One of the goals of the CPS is to help congregations establish new schools. Having test scores of WELS schools available when the staff is providing such assistance is very important. Usually a congregation which is contemplating the opening of a new school is not fully aware of the quality of WELS Lutheran elementary schools. Showing the members of these congregations the test scores of our schools helps demonstrate that our WELS schools are indeed quality schools.

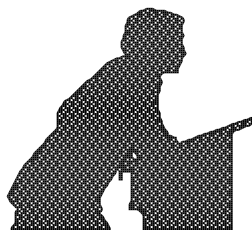
Conclusion

Standardized tests are not designed to be the only tool which teachers and principals use to evaluate students, instruction, or the curriculum. Those tests are only one evaluation tool. A recent publication from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development states, "Among all this controversy there is agreement that standardized tests should not be discarded completely. They are believed to have a place in education because they provide general data for large-scale comparisons that allow educators to see the big picture" (Malarz, 1991). That is the essence of what we have been saying over the years regarding our testing program which includes achievement and cognitive abilities tests. Standardized tests are a tool which when used with other evaluation tools can help teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses. These tests, properly and wisely used, can help us with the Christian training of the students in our schools. They should be retained, not eliminated.

WORKS CITED

- Malarz, Lynn. *Resource Module Eight*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 1991.
- Payne, David. *Specification and Measurement of Learning Outcomes*. Waltham, MA: Blaisdell, 1968.
-
- LeDell Plath is Associate Administrator of the WELS Commission on Parish Schools, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*





PROFILES IN MINISTRY: THE GREAT PLAINS

Jennifer Meyer Werre

NEBRASKA: On call day, the name conjured up a picture in my mind of flat, desolate prairie land, small rural towns, dust storms, blizzards, and little vegetation. After teaching in Nebraska, I have found that picture to be true, but only in part. There is another Nebraska: rolling green hills, golden fields of corn, magnificent red-orange sunsets, lively bustling towns, tall cottonwood trees, and incomparably warm, hospitable people who are proud of the Cornhuskers, their state, and its rich heritage. The WELS elementary school in Norfolk, Nebraska, to which I was called to serve, is a part of that heritage.

St. Paul's Lutheran School has many distinctions. It not only was the first WELS elementary school in the Nebraska district, but it is also the oldest school in its city and county. In fact, the beginnings of St. Paul's school were synonymous with the founding of Norfolk itself.

In 1866 a caravan of German Lutheran settlers from Ixonia, Wisconsin, arrived at their destination: a pre-chosen site at the junction of the Elkhorn and North Fork rivers. The story goes that the settlers wanted to call the town "Norfork" after the river, but the postmaster back East mistook it as Norfolk. Thus, many of the locals still pronounce the city's name as it was originally intended. A marker in a city park recognizes this group as the founding families of the city.

Among the first concerns of the settlers was their spiritual life, especially the Christian education of their children. The settlers' first place of worship was a small shed along the river that had been abandoned by some squatters who had returned to Illinois. About a year later the pioneers purchased 12 acres of land on which they built a log and sod structure. This building served as both the church and school until 1907, when a new church was built and the old church became the school building. The Rev. J.M. Hoeckendorf acted as both pastor and the first teacher of St. Paul's. German was the language of instruction for several years. No third teacher was added until 1950, even though the enrollment often exceeded 100. Also in 1950 a new school building was completed. It contained four classrooms, a gym, kitchen, and office area. Sixteen years later an addition including three classrooms, a principal's office, and a faculty lounge was built.

This past fall marked the beginning of the 126th school year for St. Paul's Lutheran. Over the years, the enrollment has stayed within the 90-100 range. Five full-time teachers serve the school. A preschool program with its own teacher was successfully launched last year. St. Paul's congregation supplies the majority of the students, with the remainder coming from the WELS sister congregation in Norfolk, Shepherd of Peace, and from a few non-WELS families. Many of



the students come from farm or rural families, but, surprisingly, more than half do not. Several of the students are descendants of the original pioneer group. Many of their parents, grandparents, or even great-grandparents have also attended the school. Although Nebraska is not at all immune to problems and sins of the 20th century, the school does seem to be blessed by a large group of supportive parents and fewer broken homes. It seems the hard-working, dedicated, and determined spirit of the pioneers still exists among the members of St. Paul's as demonstrated by their love and concern for the school.

After the establishment of St. Paul's, other congregations began in the area. There are three smaller WELS schools within a 30-mile radius of Norfolk. They are located in the communities of Hadar, Hoskins, and Stanton. Each of these schools has over a hundred year-old history. The faculties of all these schools, together with the pastors and everyone's families, share a close camaraderie. There are monthly "PT" (pastor/teacher) potlucks, bonfires, and numerous other social get-togethers which provide an opportunity for spiritual, emotional, and professional support for workers far away from other friends and relatives. In an area somewhat isolated from the more populous WELS regions, this group of called workers is bound together by a common faith, purpose, and life as the original settlers were when they gave up familiar territory to head West.

I miss Nebraska. I miss living there and working there. I miss the

open spaces, the open highway, and the open sky. I miss the friendly smiles and getting to know your neighbors. I miss the busyness of being a part of a big established church with numerous activities, roomy facilities, and a group of called workers nearby to lean upon. Now I'm in a mission church, with no elementary school, in the middle of Long Island, New York. The striking contrasts between the two churches have actually posed more of an adjustment for me than the people, traffic, or culture. We have a total Sunday school enrollment of seven children at Grace of God this year. Most of these children come from families that were raised in a non-Lutheran faith or are recent converts. Several of them have recently immigrated from other countries. I find it a challenge to teach a Sunday school lesson to a class with little or no background knowledge of the familiar Bible history lessons. But I also find it tremendously exciting to have the opportunity to tell these children the story of God's Love for the first time. My situation has changed, but the command of Christ has not: to teach the Word to everyone and in everyplace. New Yorkers or Nebraskans, those familiar with the Good News and those not, all need continual instruction in the law and gospel. Each and every area has its own hardships and unique challenges. What a comfort it is to know of God's merciful presence and that our labor in Christ is not in vain!

Jennifer Meyer Werre taught at St. Paul's, Norfolk for the last seven years. She is now living in Dix Hills, Long Island, New York, where her husband, Luke, is pastor of Grace of God church.



Through Faith-Colored Glasses

Ramona M. Czer

DEAR TEACHERS,

"Nerd!"

"Four-eyes!"

My daughter endured such greetings good naturedly the day she wore her new glasses. "At least I can see," she countered with a shrug and a smile.

It reminded me of the ridicule we all endure as Christians because of our strange outlook. We do see things differently from other people: "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ..." (2 Co 4:4). But the scales have dropped off our eyes due to the Savior's touch. We can see! We are saved from the dark horror of hopelessness swimming in front of other's eyes.

You know this well—so why am I writing to you? I heard recently that a nearby school is contemplating a schedule change. It worries me. Their

teachers suggest moving Bible history to the afternoon so those optimum morning hours can be used for reading and mathematics, admittedly important subjects. But dare you send a message to children that God's Word is less important than man-made subjects? Dare you teach them the one thing needful when they are less fresh and rested?

What really bothers me, however, is the subtle assumption that religion is a class like any other, able to be moved around and fit easily into another time slot. I encourage you to stand against this notion. Religion is not a subject like any other, it is The Subject. It deserves the highest place of honor; it shouldn't be contained too rigidly within a schedule so that as much time can be taken as needed for complete understanding; and it should permeate every class that follows it.

We parents support you and our school because we long to have our children see everything through faith-colored glasses. If one or two hours of Bible study a week would be enough, I'd send her to public school and Sunday school. As you know, it's

not enough. She needs to understand everything through God's perspective.

"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law," says the psalmist (119:18). Looking into God's Word is of primary importance, but I hope God and you can open her eyes to other wonders as well:

"Open my eyes that I may see the wonder of my God-created anatomy."

"Open my eyes that I may see language arts as the means to help me read the Bible and be able to write and speak clearly and persuasively for Jesus."

"Open my eyes that I may see the arts as opportunities to magnify Him."

"Open my eyes that I may see through mathematics that He is a God of order."

"Open my eyes that I may see that

God's saving grace is the determining factor in history."

This is how you already teach. My prayer is that you will continue to do so and let nothing dissuade you. By your "faith-colored classes" you teach them to wear at all times their "faith-colored glasses." Yes, sometimes they may think it a little strange when you use Bible verses to illustrate figures of speech or when you pray for our politicians in the middle of a civics class, but just shrug and smile, dear teachers, and think to yourself, "At least they'll be able to see."

In thanks for your Vision,

A Parent

Ramona Czer teaches art in the Education Division at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.