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The Lutheran Educator

The WELS Education Journal

Each tree is recognized by its own fruit.

Luke 6:44

The Lutheran Educator

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ARTICLES

DEPARTMENTS

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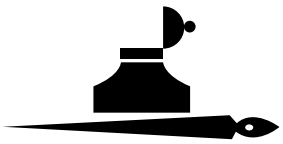


Hunkered-down Christians

Bombs in parks and bombs in airplanes. Drive-by shootings and downloaded pornography. Ethnic cleansing and polluted environment. Abortion on demand and divorce by whim. As this century comes to a close and the world continues its mad careening toward Judgment Day, a Christian's response might be to hunker down and wait it out.

We hunker down in our safe nation (?), our safe communities, our safe neighborhoods, our safe homes, and our safe schools and we ignore those "other places." We hunker down with people we know—people who are like us—and we avoid the different ones. We focus even more on our own family and build those lot fences higher. Even Christian schools become only a place to hide our children so they won't be infected by the sinful viruses of public education.

Hunkering down is not necessarily a bad strategy. There are some demented weatherpersons who chase tornadoes and there are other people who stick their heads up out of foxholes; most of us, however, duck when necessary. But Christian hunkering down doesn't work in the long or short run.

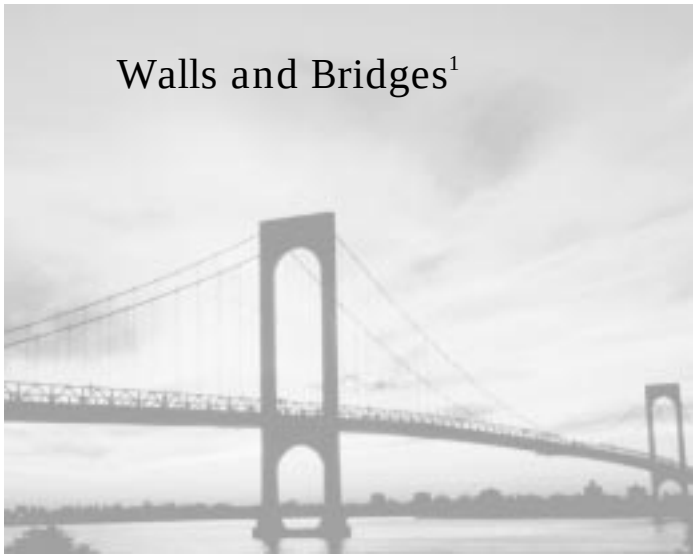
It doesn't work because sin isn't just "out there." Sin is also in here, in us. The things that kill us spiritually are not just things in the world; they are also part of who we are. We can run but we can't hide from them. We will never escape sin on this side of eternity. Christ has destroyed the power of sin but temptation will always be with us.

Hunkering down also doesn't work because it tends to hide our testimony. Who can hear us or see us when we hide from the world? Who can hear our testimony of the hope we have when we are in the closet? Friendship evangelism and outreach through marriage are fine starters but we don't reach a lot of people that way. Christ told us to go out into the world—not just the safe and comfortable places in the world, not just the places where there are Christians, or nice people, or people like us. We are suppose to go out into places where there are sinners and bad people and terrible things happen. That is what the world is and that is why the world needs the gospel message we have.

The world is a big place and it can be a scarry place for teachers and for students. Your school and community may be a comfortable haven in an increasingly immoral, hostile, and destitute world. You might think it would be great if you and your students could stay in Lake Wobegone forever. But you and they can't. Take heart though. There is one who has overcome the world not by avoiding it but by conquering it. He is with you always and he will be with your students as they go out into the world. Teach your students to face the world with confidence and resolution with the message the world needs.

JRI

Walls and Bridges[1]



Paul O. Wendland

Communication is a tough business. This is true even between a man and a woman of similar backgrounds. Marriage counselors generally find the number one problem in marriage is communication. But the complexity and potential for misunderstanding increase exponentially as we attempt to communicate across cultures.

Different ways of looking at the same world

It is not simply a matter of having different languages or different forms of the same language. It is also a matter of people possessing different cultural "lenses" through which they view the world. A sophisticated Western man sees the world through a scientific "lens." This lens screens out images of demons, angels, or spirits of any kind. Because it gives him an illusory feeling of control, he chooses, for example, to put his trust in all those little circles and arrows his local TV weather-person draws on the map. Compare him with the subsistence farmer of Central Africa. The African views himself as living in a world where the veil dividing the realm of the physical from the realm of spirits is gossamer-thin. So convinced is he that God sends the rain that he can even say in a striking metaphor, "Leza ulawa! God is falling!" when he sees the storm approaching.

Not only do these lenses organize our world into set categories as we look out upon it, they also change into filters of the raw data coming into us, altering its meaning in some cases, filtering it out altogether in others. A Mormon reads the word "Savior" in the sentence, "Jesus is our Savior," and because of deeply-held beliefs he connects Jesus' saving work with his making it possible for us to rise from the dead on the last day. The Mormon does not connect it with Jesus making it possible for us to share eternal life in heaven with God. That is still something, as the Mormon sees it, that we must do

for ourselves. Even though he reads his Bible, and even though the Bible connects Jesus' work with the forgiveness of sins, the Mormon will either reinterpret those statements in such a way as to make them fit in with what he already believes, or he will filter them out altogether as essentially meaningless.[2]

Another example of this would be a rural African mother who is told by the dispensary nursing sister that her child died of the measles. She believes the nurse well enough, so far as it goes. But she also believes that the measles must have been sent by some witch, or by an offended ancestor who does not like the child's name. As one African put it when told that a mosquito bite had caused his malaria, "Yes, but who sent that mosquito?"

Different cultures have different histories—different sets of common experiences—which shape the individuals within them in ways that make one cultural group view life from a different angle. One of the supreme values of America, enshrined in all textbooks and monuments, is freedom. But to the elders of the Hmong community now living in this country, the shock of seeing their children corrupted by the violence and loose morals of the urban portions of this land of free people has led them to say, "This country has too much freedom!"[3]

It is easy to see how these "filters" work with people who are of a different culture; it is less easy to be aware of them in our own. We lack the objectivity to see. But if the Lord who spoke of mote and beam meant what he said, we cannot exempt our own eyes from examination.

These filters also have their effect on our doctrinal perceptions. In a real sense, we can regard the past, even our own past, as a different culture. Every era of our history has had its own struggles over its own questions, and the questions posed in the past are never exactly the same as the ones we ask today. We may draw parallels, we may see similarities; but similarities and parallels are not exact matches. Unless we pay attention to the differences, unless we understand past communications within their original frame of reference, we will run into problems when we try to transfer the meanings into our own.

"Questions posed in the past are never exactly the same as the ones we ask today."

A glance at the history of the discussion between the WELS and the LCMS on church and ministry will illustrate this. It was our contention for years that the "traditional Missouri" interpretation of Walther's theses on the subject was an attempt to make Walther's words answer questions that he was not trying to answer. In shifting his words

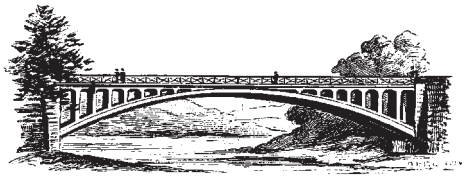
into a modern context without attempting to understand them in their original setting, Walther was made to say things he never intended. The meaning of his words was skewed. (Lawrenz)

Significance for gospel communicators

The importance of historical study

There are several important considerations we want to keep in mind as we apply this matter of culture to our work as gospel servants. The gospel we want to proclaim is itself embedded within a history, a culture. To be more accurate, the Spirit-breathed texts delineating the spread of God's Kingdom span the rise and fall of several distinct cultural periods. But even if we confine ourselves to the "fullness of time," God's golden moment for sending his Son into the world, we still have to face the fact that there is this great gulf of time separating us from Caesar Augustus and his census decree. The world in which Jesus was born and grew up was a world far different from the one we know.

The country of our birth, our social background, the shared wisdom and experience of our "tribe," our language, the stories our mother told us, the type of obedience our father expected of us—all these things shaped us to view life somewhat differently from the way Jesus' first disciples saw it. Some of these differences are obvious, some are not so obvious. Some we can easily overcome; others are removed only by dint of careful study and discipline. Still others we may never become aware of our whole life through. Paul said it long ago, but it remains true today, "We know in part and we prophecy in part."



As an example, consider Jesus' warning against putting new wine into old wineskins. To get at his meaning and to apply it to ourselves today, it is useful to consider more than the dynamics of wine fermentation in first century Palestine. We might ask whether the people of Jesus' day perceived words like "old" and "new" in a way different from the way we see them now. We know that we live in a culture that worships the new and scorns the old. If something is new, it must be improved. What is old has got to be bad, unless of course, it happens to be better than whatever came after. In that case, we'll have to give it a new name, "classic," for example. Once we recognize this bias towards the new within our own culture, we are ready to pose the question, "Did these words have a similar ring at the time of Christ?" The answer is revealing.

The culture of Jesus' day *feared* the new. To refer to *novae res* [new things] in both Greek and Roman culture was to talk of revolution! The tradition of the elders was a very important concept within some sects of first-century Judaism. While advocates of traditional ways of doing things today may have to speak in defensive tones; in the first century BC a person would only have to say, "We've never done it that way

before," and his argument was practically won! For Jesus to refer to his teaching as new wine unsuited for old wineskins was for him to say something that must have sounded shocking to his original hearers.

The example above also illustrates another point. Historical and cultural studies of the Greco-Roman world do not reveal meanings in Scripture so radically new that we could never have grasped the text without them. Doubtless everyone today could understand Jesus' words without knowing anything of about cultural definitions of "new." But historical and cultural studies like this do give us valuable insights, and they do help us win for ourselves anew some teachings we may not have understood as well. They also help us to avoid foolish mistakes as we communicate to people in other cultures the timeless truths by which we live.

> *Someone whose job it is to communicate with the young in the classroom must at some level show an interest in the world in which the ones he is teaching live.*

The importance of being aware of one's own culture

When it comes to cross-cultural communication, there are really three distinct cultures involved: (1) that of the gospel history, (2) that of the recipients of the message, (3) that of the communicators of the message (Wendland 20). As much as possible, the communicators of the gospel must minimize the effect of filters from their own culture in addition to framing the message in ways that are accessible to the individuals they wish to reach. They will want to do this, however, only after they have worked hard at understanding the gospel message in its original context.

This is as applicable to the teacher preparing to teach a Bible history lesson in a Lutheran classroom as it is to the missionary spreading God's truth in foreign lands. Both must pay attention to their own filters. Both must have a care for the culture in which his particular audience has grown up. Because of our bias for the new, our own culture is changing at tremendous rate. A person ought not think that computers are the only things that become obsolete in three months. In fact, the rate of change is so rapid, one wonders how long we'll be able to sustain it without ceasing to be a culture.

Language, customs, and world-view differ enough between generations of

our own culture to be able to speak of a "Generation-X," a "youth culture," and of "generation-gaps." Even the definition itself of generation is feeling the pressure of change. What used to take 25 to 40 years now requires barely five. The burned-out boomers do not feel much affinity with the Generation X-ers and the Generation X-ers see themselves as quite distinct from their younger brothers and sisters. Here's a quickie-quiz for the boomer generation: Who or what is a Weezer?[4]

This cultural gap becomes especially significant in the teen years, since that is a time when young people are particularly conscious of their separateness. Someone whose job it is to communicate with the young in the classroom must at some level show an interest in the world in which the ones he is teaching live. This is an appeal for listening, for understanding, and for reaching out to people where they are, not where you'd like them to be. It is a caution not to assume younger adults understand what you say simply because you know perfectly well what you mean. This is *not* an appeal for oldsters to make themselves foolish by adopting the latest argot. In an attempt to be rad, many have succeeded only in being ridiculous.

Yes, this takes thought. Yes, this requires effort. There's no doubt about it: Communication is a tough business. So is any way of showing love. It is no wonder the Apostle Paul was moved to write, "Let us not become weary in doing good."

But we do not lose heart

At the same time, I don't want to overemphasize the complexity in communicating to the point where people despair of saying anything. When Christians talk about multiculturalism, they are not on the same page as those who use the word in secular universities.

The modem multicultural movement is busily at work destabilizing all confidence in universals. Without universals, there is no true communication from one culture to another. Naturally, this philosophy leaves a deep sense of futility and pessimism wherever it penetrates. Languages and cultures become mysterious codes, the significance of which we can only guess at. Audiences are free to create their own meanings, practically out of whole cloth, from the words they hear. In fact, multiculturalists see these as the only meanings that exist. In their view, acts of communication only approximate shared understanding, and in the end, even the best-intentioned must shrug and say, "Differen' strokes for differen' folks." Radically relativistic, many proponents of multiculturalism would reject the notion that there is a God who calls us all to repentance on the basis of one universal moral code, or that there is only one name given among men whereby we must be saved.

We reject their relativism and their extreme pessimism towards language. Because we believe, we must speak. We do not, however, reject their call to understand each group on its own terms. We seek to understand not as a

prelude to post-modern despair, but so as to better carry out the commission of him who loved us.

God's bridges

Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations!" In saying this, he wants his disciples to assume that the truth about his saving work can be communicated from one culture to another. He also assures us that the message we proclaim is one which contains, in itself, the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, we believe and are sure that our Savior did not simply leave us to our own devices to bridge the gap between two cultures. We possess a Spirit-powered message.

In addition, we believe that there are commonalties we share by birth with all other humans. We are creatures of God, we possess the gift of human reason, and we have the "work of the law" written on our hearts. We are not trying to communicate with dolphins, but with fellow human beings.

Finally, we believe in a God who bridged a far wider gap than any we will face in our fissured cultural landscape. The infinite, holy God sent his eternal Son into a sinful, finite world to redeem us all. Compared to crossing that divide, communicating with another human being of a different culture is like a step across a puddle. The Son of God assures us that those who hold fast to his word "will know the truth." Without reservation or qualification, then, we not only believe that the truth is knowable, but we also believe it can be communicated through the means God has provided: the gospel in Word and Sacrament.

We believe and therefore we must speak, carefully, lovingly, considerately proclaiming what God has done in Christ for a whole world of sinners just like us.

END NOTES

1. Those of a particular cultural epoch will recognize this as the title of a record album by the late John Lennon.
2. Mark Cares, *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons*, describes many more examples of the way meanings of common biblical words have shifted among the Latter-Day Saints in his "Dictionary of Mormonese" in his book. His entire book, in fact, is a good, concrete example of what this essay argues for.
3. Personal interview with Loren Steele, 2/6/96.
4. For those who don't know, a Weezer is an alternative rock band. The author's teenage daughter supplied this example.

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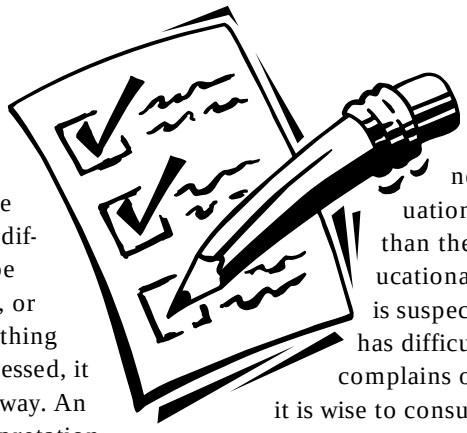
Psychoeducational Evaluations

Daryl B. Hanneman



Teachers and parents sometimes want more information about the nature of a student's difficulty, which could be academic, behavioral, or physical. When something about a student is assessed, it is measured in some way. An evaluation is an interpretation of the results of the assessment. Psychoeducational evaluations are conducted for the purpose of (1) specification and verification of problems and (2) making decisions for or about students.

Teachers continually assess the progress of students. They "measure" students' academic, social, and physical development informally, through observation, as well as formally, with "tests." Research has shown that regular classroom teachers are not only good at assessment, but also good evaluators; that is, they measure something about a student (e.g. reading fluency, ability to follow rules, weight) and "evaluate" the results. They may decide that more practice is necessary, a different strategy should be used for instruction, or an eye exam is warranted, for example. When should a teacher's evaluation of a student lead to an evaluation by someone outside the school?

Sometimes the need for a medical evaluation is more clear-cut than the need for a psychoeducational evaluation. When it is suspected that the student has difficulty seeing, hearing, or complains of physical symptoms, it is wise to consult medical personnel. When the child has difficulty reading, should an evaluation by someone other than the child's teacher be conducted? To answer that question, it may be helpful to know what to expect from a psychoeducational evaluation.

Evaluations vary widely, depending on the nature of the presenting problem. Although there may not be a "standard" set of procedures, often a developmental history is gathered from the parents, along with a health history. Parents and teacher may be interviewed, or checklists are completed by them to gather as much information related to the concern as possible in a brief amount of time. The student will be asked to perform academic tasks and often take an intelligence test. Many techniques are used if an emotional/behavioral problem is suspected, such as drawing pictures, telling stories, and answering special questions.

When the above assessment procedures are completed, the evaluator will interpret the results. If specific criteria are met, a disability may be determined to be present. This determination is made by a person certified by the state to make such decisions. Keep in mind that if a disability is present, the teacher

> *"The classroom teacher will first try to address the problem by making a change in instruction, materials, or management techniques."*

usually already knows what the student can or cannot do, based on the teacher's own assessment in the classroom. If there is a learning disability in the area of reading, for example, the teacher already knows that reading is difficult for the student. The information that is perhaps new is the student's intellectual abilities, if an intelligence test was administered. This can be of some value, but what needs to be addressed is the student's reading skills.

If it is determined that the student has a disability of some sort, this may enable the student to receive "special services" in the public school. This may involve small-group instruction under the direction of a special education teacher. Special education will rarely be able to"solve" the problem, however. Techniques and materials used in special education can be used in regular education as well and that, in this writer's opinion, is the preferred setting for instruction, except in the case of severe disabilities. Some modifications to instruction or materials may be necessary, based on the strengths and weaknesses of the student's skills and abilities, but as mentioned earlier, regular education teachers are good at assessing the needs of learners.

From the description above, it may be clear that a psychoeducational evaluation will rarely tell the teacher how to instruct the student, but such evaluation can further identify strengths and weaknesses, many of which the teacher is already aware. Perhaps the advantage of an evaluation is the opportunity to speak with another professional about the problems a youngster is experiencing and jointly plan a program to improve skills or behavior. Several steps should be taken prior to seeking an evaluation, however.

The classroom teacher will first try to address the problem by making a change in instruction, materials, or management techniques. It is important to monitor closely how these changes affect the student's performance. The teacher will want to consult with other teachers for ideas to try. The

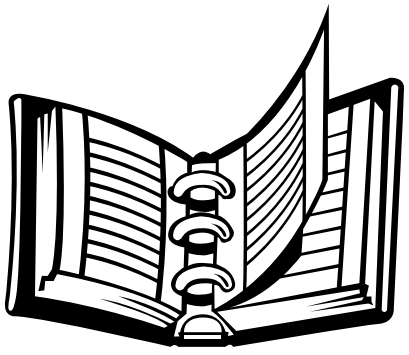
principal should be kept informed of the concerns and attempts to remediate the problem. The child's parents should also be informed of the concerns; they are valuable partners in the child's education. When attempts to improve skills (academic or behavioral) are not successful and, using sound professional judgment, the teacher believes another professional may be able to provide information not yet available about the problem, a psychoeducational evaluation may be considered.

Where do you go for an evaluation? Unless there are circumstances which would discourage it, our WELS teachers can contact the principal of the local public school for procedures on how to request the service of the school psychologist. Usually, this involves completing a referral form and having the student's parent sign permission for the assessment to take place. Sometimes the policy is to conduct the assessment in the public school, but many school districts will send the psychologist to your school. The services of the school psychologist are available without charge to the parents.

If, for some reason, the public school is not an option, the local community mental health facility will be able to recommend agencies which will conduct psychoeducational assessments, often on a sliding fee basis. In large communities, local hospitals often have Child Guidance Clinics which conduct psychoeducational evaluations. Another option, if a university is nearby, is to contact the child psychology department or education department for availability of this service. Often, the student's health insurance will pay for at least a portion of the fee at hospitals and universities.

Our WELS teachers are very conscientious about providing good instruction. When a student experiences difficulty, the teacher may assume someone else can help "fix" the problem. Daily interaction with the child provides more information of value than a battery of tests is likely to do, however. We can get information for problem-solving from a psychoeducational evaluation, but an important first step is to try changes in instruction and/or management techniques before considering an evaluation of this type. Continuing to update our instructional skills and broadening our understanding of the learners entrusted to our care is often of more value to the learner than a psychoeducational evaluation.

Daryl Hanneman has experience as a WELS teacher and is currently a school psychologist in Cedar Rapids, IA.



Addressing Parental Concerns: Eight Habits of Highly Effective People (I)

John R. Freese

> I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.... Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.... In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words can not express.... And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Ro 8:18-28).

Introduction

Do you recognize the conditions that Paul describes in the above reference? In this world of hurt and sin, all Christians experience disappointments and frustrations. On an intellectual level, we all realize this, but when the weight and the reality of true suffering unfolds around us, Paul's use of words like "groan inwardly" and "groans that words can not express," are not just some academic exercise. They are real. One situation that can cause called workers to consider their "present sufferings" and to eagerly anticipate "the glory that will be revealed in us" is the sometimes painful work of dealing with the concerns of those they serve.

Every teacher addresses parental concerns. The longer we serve, the more opportunity we will have to experience this aspect of professional life and ministry. These concerns, ranging primarily from the pleasant and the simple to the excruciating and the complex, are part and parcel of our work in the Lord's Kingdom. In any number of situations and circumstances, how we deal with parental concerns will impact our ministry and our reputation far more than our ability to present a lesson, manage a classroom, administer a school, direct a choir, coach an athletic team, or anything else we might do in our various roles.

In some ways this may seem unfair, in relation to our over-all responsibilities, but especially if the concern being raised is outside our control or our calling. The classic "lose/lose" scenario seems to lie before us. No matter what we decide, or what we do, it will be not sufficient because someone will be less than pleased with us. To those among us who have the need to be liked by everyone, this concept is especially painful. Unfortunately, not being liked

by everyone, sometimes even by those calling themselves fellow believers, is not something new to God's representatives. Examples of such can clearly and often be seen in the lives of heroes of faith. The writer to the Hebrews, discussing this exact point, noted

> Some (heroes of faith) faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. (Heb 11:36-40).

It is extremely unlikely that any of us have faced the extremes mentioned above; furthermore, we now know that the world has received the long promised Savior in the person of Jesus Christ. What a joy and a blessing that knowledge is! The fact is, as much as we may sometimes feel persecuted by the things some may say or do to us—and on occasion these things can truly be brutal and hurtful and sinful—we do have much for which to be thankful. Satan, however, continually tries to frustrate the work of God's people by any means possible—sometimes through horrible persecution, sometimes by irritating confrontations.

Examples of addressing parental concerns can be seen in the lives of heroes of faith. Moses had to deal with parents who constantly grumbled and complained about life and conditions in the desert (Ex 14:10-12). The fact that only two people from the entire nation of Israel over the age of twenty were allowed to enter the promised land gives us an indication of what Moses heard and experienced from parents. Elijah had to listen to the insult of the widow whose son died while he, a prophet in hiding, was being miraculously supported by God through her (1Ki 17:17-18). In these examples, Moses and Elijah were faithfully following God's commands, and yet they were personally blamed by angry parents for difficult circumstances.

Christ himself had to deal with at least one parent of his disciples who had a concern. We are told the mother of James and John wanted Jesus to favor her sons and elevate them to positions of prestige. Furthermore, her concern (raised with the full and sinful cooperation of her adult children) created such a rift among the other disciples that Christ in turn had to address this larger issue with them all (Mt 20:20-29).

As long as we are on this side of our true home, sin will affect our students, their parents, and us. Temptation will arise, conflict will result, and anger will develop. How these situations are dealt with is important. In some situations, such as with Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, parents sin in what they demand or even politely request. The proper application of Law and gospel is required to

address these concerns. In other situations, called workers sin in how they respond to parental concerns. An example of this can be seen with the disciples, as recorded in Mark 10, when they literally rebuked parents for wanting to bring their children to Jesus for his blessing. The proper application of Law and gospel is required here as well to address these concerns.

We will examine the importance of addressing parental concerns. We will look first at what the world, with its emphasis upon humanism, materialism, and instant gratification, has to offer and how these sinful influences can so easily and so seriously affect all of our lives. In the second installment we will then apply this topic to a model that is popular in professional circles right now, *The 7 Habits of Effective People* (Covey). In addition to these seven, we will add an eighth habit that people of God have as an invaluable tool. Finally, some specific suggestions will be offered that may help in this area of addressing parental concerns.

Concerns

The title of this article mentions concerns. The dictionary suggestions this definition:

> Something that relates or pertains to a person, business, affair; A matter that engages a person's attention, interest, or care, or that affects a person's welfare or happiness; Worry or anxiety.

A fair assumption would be that each of us, almost on a daily basis, addresses such parental concerns. Parents ask us about details of an assignment or activity. They wonder about fees, our classroom or team expectations, their child's progress. Most would probably never regard such concerns as irritating or threatening. Instead, parental concerns of this sort are opportunities to communicate, clarify, and set someone at ease.

However, that does not always happen. It may not happen because the other parties don't like the message they receive from us. Perhaps they didn't get their way, and subsequently they take it out on us, the messenger. Perhaps they hold us personally responsible for their unhappiness. Situations such as these—and they are legion—are one way in which parental concerns can easily escalate into care, worry, or anxiety.

Another way concern can escalate is the result of our being ineffective messengers. How we relate to people with such low level questions or concerns can give clear signals or impressions to parents. Do we have an answer? Do we perceive such contact with parents as insulting? Do we give an impression of tensing up, becoming defensive, or even sarcastic? A very pointed statement of God's Law notes that "A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult" (Pr 12:16). Even if an announcement to an issue at hand has been given in the congregation's monthly newsletter, weekly church bulletin, school newsletter, school calendar, and an accompanying informational letter and permission slip, some parents may still ask. When they do, it is important, at that moment

particularly, to relay the information calmly again. It is especially important to calmly relay it again even if it was intentionally brought up as an insulting concern. It is an opportunity to be helpful and friendly.

Once we give the signal we resent or dislike some aspect of parent-teacher communication, or we pick up a similar message from a parent, the situation has been changed. What was hopefully once relaxed and comfortable, can now be awkward and potentially tense. Parents and teachers communicate this tension in body language, tone or volume of voice, and facial expression. From this point, the next level of communication may not be concern, but rather what the relationship actually has become—conflict.

Conflict resolution

Conflict resolution is a phrase under which volumes of educational research may be found. The underlying principle of this concept is that conflict of any kind has a resolution—tensions can be eased, arguments can be settled, problems can be solved—all we have to do is "find a way." The problem is that most attempts at finding such a solution are not based on God's Word, but on three worldly philosophies that in turn cause all manner of sin and further repercussions: humanism, materialism, and instant gratification.

Humanism

We know there is only one real way to resolve conflict of any kind and that is through the all-forgiving blood of Jesus. Unfortunately, humanism, the basic religion of most people in this world, teaches that people can solve all of their own problems, no matter how great, if just enough mutual cooperation, patience, time, and energy would be applied.

This philosophy can so easily enter into our thinking and the thinking of parents. We see this when we as teachers try to handle situations on our own, instead of taking everything to our Lord in prayer and relying on him to guide and direct us. We see it in parents when they try to solve school concerns simply in human terms, such as through new programs or specialists.

This is the way of thinking that deceived Adam and Eve (Ge 3—"you will be like God"), the people at the Tower of Babel (Ge 11), the Children of Israel in their dealings with the Gibeonites (Jos 9), Israel when they rejected God and asked for a king (1Sa 8), Israel before Goliath (1Sa 17), the disciples when they came up with foolish suggestions for the feeding of the 5000 (Jn 6).

It also happens to parents and us today. In sin, we may tend to think of earthly solutions first and call upon God only when all else fails. Have you ever caught yourself doing this? The times I have made my worst decisions in regard to parental concerns have been those occasions where I quickly and hastily relied upon my own sensibilities, my own intuition, and acted without prayer and scriptural reflection.

Materialism

The chasing after the "things" of this world has brought more pain and suf-

fering upon God's people than anything else, with the possible exception of its sister false religion, humanism. This is a curse that truly afflicts our American society, and it finds its way into our attitudes and actions as well. Again, Scripture is full of such examples: the world at the time of Noah (Ge 6); Achan's sin at Jericho (Jos 7); Absalom (2Sa 15); Ahab and Naboth's vineyard (1Ki 21); the nation of Israel (Amos, Micah); the rich, young man (Mt 19); Judas (Mt 26); Ananias and Sapphira (Ac 5).

We note this dangerous philosophy within ourselves when we emphasize money, and the things that money can buy, more often and more emphatically than we proclaim the riches we already have in God's promises and blessings. We also see this philosophy at work in parents when they do the same.

Sometimes we may see this even more clearly with member families who choose not to enroll their children in our schools because of material concerns—multiple grade classrooms, fewer computers or supplies, no gym, a principal who teaches for a major portion of the day, no hot lunch program. Our efforts at reaching these families and addressing these parental concerns should not be to meet or exceed the facilities and equipment of the local tax-supported schools (which sometimes take on all the manifestations of local false gods), but rather to emphasize the gospel and what we can freely proclaim. The most affluent public school can never offer what even the smallest of our one-room schools provide on an hourly basis—the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mt 16:27). This passage is not merely some catchy phrase coined by a noted teacher thousands of years ago; it carries a huge implication. On Judgment Day the amount spent per student will not save one soul.

Instant gratification

We live in a unique time in this world's history. While there are more quick and readily available time saving devices than at any other age (the internet; ATMs; copy machines; computers; telephones; appliances; cars; instant coffee, soup, cameras, divorces), we also seem to have less time and energy to get everything done that apparently needs to be done.

Why is that? It certainly is not in the model God sets before us in his Word. God teaches patience from the very beginning. He took six days to create the universe, and on top of that set aside the seventh for our rest, when he could have done the entire job in less than a microsecond of thought. Scripture records other examples of patience: 120 years for the world to repent before the Flood (Ge 6), Abraham having the son of the promise after decades of waiting (Ge 21), the Children of Israel suffering for 400 years in Egypt before being delivered (Ge 15:13), Jacob working 14 years for Rachel (Ge 29:27), Joseph suffering for years as a slave and as a convict (Ge 39-41), the wait of the believers for the Savior to be born, Christ suffering for hours on the cross, Christ lying in the

tomb for three days before the resurrection, the Church waiting now for almost 2000 years for Christ's return, God patiently giving each of us a time of grace. Thus God teaches and God practices patience. This does not set well in a world demanding faster and faster conveniences.

Under inspiration, Paul spoke of a request he urgently made to God. While the initial answer God gave him was "No," the greater blessing he received—"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2Co 12:9)—gave him comfort and gives us comfort today. But in an age of instant gratification, this all-important truth can easily become lost amid the frantic pace we allow the world to set for us.

The world's view

The secular world also realizes the seriousness of parental concerns and the manner in which educators address such issues. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), perhaps the most influential professional educational association in the United States today, offers training sessions for teachers in this area at regional training sessions across the country. An ERIC search lists dozens of articles written on this topic within just the last year.

But what is the foundation of such training sessions and research? This often-repeated phrase sums it up quite well: "Life's hard, and then you die." God's Word and the eternal salvation freely offered to all through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ will certainly be absent, but what will be offered in its place? Descriptors of the sessions and articles emphasize such concepts as "techniques to reduce tensions between diverse cultural groups," the "Creative Dialogue" process, "paradigm shifts" in interpersonal communications, and team building strategies (ASCD).

These human relations skills can be valuable in raising awareness of potential problems, offering suggestions for improving communications, and reducing tensions. As such, they may well offer good ideas that a Christian may adapt to the concept of addressing parental concerns. However, the greatest tool we as educators have in addressing these concerns is found in God's Word, the Law and the gospel.

One text that I suggest to illustrate some worthwhile suggestions and helpful starting points for addressing parental concerns is *Understanding and Relating to Parents...Professionally* (DeBruyn). DeBruyn is a widely read author of ethical educational suggestions. Many readers may have read some of his material through *The MASTER Teacher* series of pamphlets.

In this text, Mr. DeBruyn makes some potentially worthwhile observations. The first is that in many situations, parents have real fears approaching their child's teacher with a concern. While that may seem difficult to believe, especially in some situations you may have experienced, it can well be true. Here is where we may sometimes experience hurt. Some parents cover personal fear through loudness, strained humor, denial, avoidance, sar-

casm, not-so-subtle insults "whispered" to people sitting nearby, and anger. Sometimes teachers do the same.

While teachers may wonder what anyone has to fear from them, the answer may be more apparent if they have children of their own and hear their concerns. When the roles are reversed, concern sometimes takes on a new perspective. It is easy for our children's fears to become our own, especially if we see them hurting or struggling. DeBruyn gives considerable emphasis to the fact that some parents fear talking to a teacher because they honestly expect repercussions to fall upon their child. He very boldly notes that

> We can deny these parents' beliefs all we want as teachers. However, we had better take a good look at how we and our colleagues have reacted to parental criticism or confrontation in the past (6-7).

DeBruyn emphasizes "nuts and bolts" things a teacher can do to properly address a parent's concerns. In simple list form, he suggests the following:

- Don't wait for parents to contact you, contact them first;
- Never be defensive—be direct, positive, warm, calm;
- Do not use the phone to discuss a problem;
- The best place to meet for a conference is the classroom;
- Remember you are dealing with children and parents, not things;
- View such conferences as opportunities to solve problems;
- Understand the parent's hurt if a child is having problems;
- Never return a parent's anger; maintain your professionalism;
- If a parent "blows up," let them; don't interrupt, stay calm, stay focused;
- Follow up on the concern and keep communicating.

Again, for emphasis, these are examples of some suggestions that may have procedural value in addressing parental concerns. However, the application of Law and gospel is totally absent and yet totally necessary for substantive growth. A worthwhile suggestion might be to take all of these points, or at least some of these points, and apply scriptural truths to them.

(To be continued)

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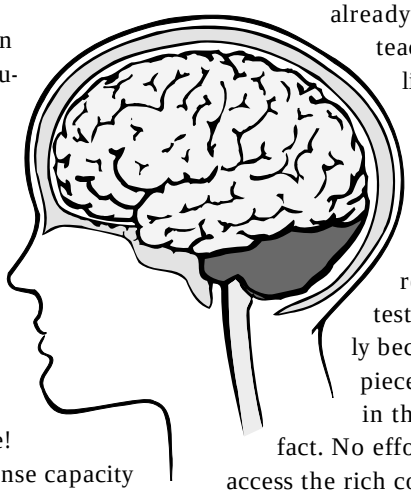
Brain-based Learning—Re-discovered

Dawn J. Ferch



Why the struggle in our ability to educate? Many educators have assumed that learning takes place only through the memorization of facts, the development of skills and the passing of tests. That is like looking at a computer, naming its parts, and believing you understand the system. There is more!

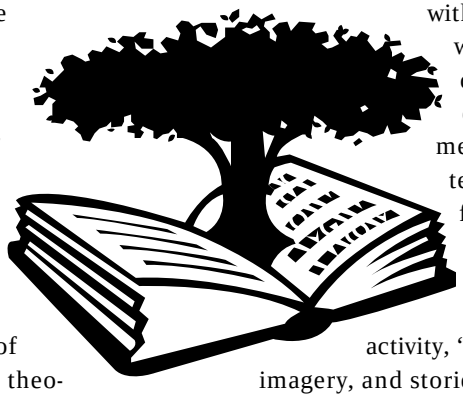
The brain has an immense capacity to remember instantly and deal with life experience. It is a matter of finding out how what a child knows relates to what is being taught. I will use an example from *Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain* (Caine and Caine) because it describes well the difference between ignoring and using experience.

Children live with parallel lines long before they ever encounter school. By the time parallel lines are discussed in geometry, the average student has seen thousands of examples in fences, windows, mechanical toys, pictures, and so on. Instead of referencing to the parallel lines students and teachers have already experienced, most teachers will draw parallel lines on the board and supply a definition. Students will dutifully copy this "new" information into a notebook to be studied and remembered for the test. Parallel lines suddenly become a new abstract piece of information stored in the brain as a separate fact. No effort has been made to access the rich connections already in the brain that can provide the learner with an instant "Aha!" sense of what the parallel lines they have already have encountered many in real life, what can be done with them, and how they exist other than as a mathematical abstraction.

Recent literature has discussed "brain-based learning" as though it were new. A Christian teacher would venture a guess that not many of the researchers were ever Bible-searchers. The reason one can make this assumption is that Jesus was a "brain-based educator" long before any research existed. Significant similarities exist

when comparing brain-based learning theory with Jesus' example.

Consider the brain-based learning theory on the capacity of the brain to make connections. The brain is a pattern detector with a "natural" memory for the events of life always seeking to make sense of what is happening in our world. Brain-based theorists suggest that the teacher design life-like, enriching, appropriate experiences. Compare this to Jesus' example in teaching his disciples. Jesus did just that. Weren't his experiences life-like and appropriate? In calling Peter and John, he asked them to be "fishers of men." How appropriate and life-like for men who were fishermen!



Using a step-by-step comparison let us examine the example of Jesus and "brain-based theory."

The brain is a pattern detector. Jesus always spoke in parables using the concepts common to the people whom he was addressing, for example, fishers of men, wise and foolish builder, bride and bridegroom, sower and seed, patch of unshrunk cloth on old garment, salt, and light. The learner was able to create personally relevant patterns. Life-relevant approaches must be used and teaching should be thematic. If ever there was a thematic teacher, it was Jesus!

The brain seeks to make sense of what is happening in our world. The Bible tells us that faith is foolishness to man. Jesus sought to have the people "understand with their hearts" (Mt 13:15). "The more positively lifelike such learning, the better" (Caine and Caine). Jesus lived with his disciples. He presented the lessons in such a way that the disciples could extract a pattern. Jesus used a life-relevant approach. By various examples and parables, Jesus provided the familiarity and stability that is part of the function of routine. As a sower sows his grain, so we "sow" the Word of God. As the grass withers and dies, so will we all whither and die. These were examples that were meaningful to Jesus' listeners. They were familiar.

We are always in a physical context. Jesus used real-life activity, "field trips," visual imagery, and stories in teaching his disciples. Specific items were given meaning when embedded in ordinary experience. Think of Peter hearing the cock crow three times the night Jesus was betrayed. Jesus asked his disciples to "leave all and follow him" thus engaging their entire physiology. They walked with him, they lived with him, they dined, fished, and traveled with him.

Emotions are critical to patterning. Emotions and cognition cannot be separated. We do not simply learn things. An old saying, "touch them where it itches," pretty well summarizes this principle. Emotions help with the recall of information. The disciples on the

way to Emmaus spoke of the way their hearts burned while Jesus spoke with them. Yet, they didn't recall this until later in the evening after Jesus had revealed himself to them and left them. In Mark 8:17 Jesus speaks to the Pharisees of not understanding because their hearts were hardened. Without involving the emotion of their heart, they could not understand. In a learning environment, the entire environment needs to be supportive, based on mutual respect. Belittling and sarcasm have no place in the classroom; rather, there needs to be an atmosphere of respect, love, and caring.

The capacity to learn is reduced under stress. Jesus often intervened to keep his disciples safe. He fed the crowds when they were hungry. He comforted those in distress. He took care of the needs of his disciples. He stilled the storm. Are the students in the classroom hungry, cold, too warm, listless? Do they need exercise, a break, a snack, or a restroom trip?

Each brain is unique. Jesus considered his audience, he allowed for individual differences. He spoke harshly to some; to others he spoke gently. He led the young lawyer by means of questions. He spoke in parables specific to his audience and their experience.

Consider the children in your classroom. Who needs gentleness, who needs strong words? Who could benefit from an adjusted assignment or a modified curriculum?

It is not that we are unaware of these techniques or the needs of our students, but rather we tend to put scores, grades, and achievement levels ahead of real learning. Scores, grades, and achievement tests are not the be-all, end-all of education. Our goal should be to educate the child to know his or her Savior, to lead a God-pleasing life as a productive citizen of this world, and remain a lifelong learner.

We can all hold high expectations that each child will achieve these goals if we follow Jesus' example.

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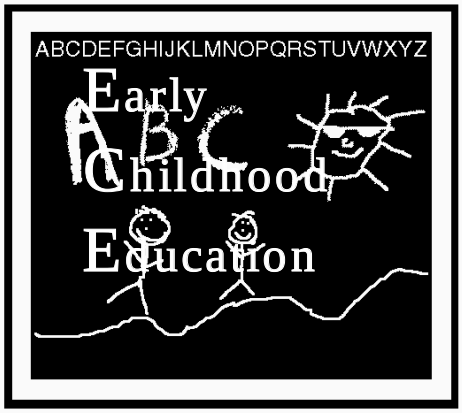
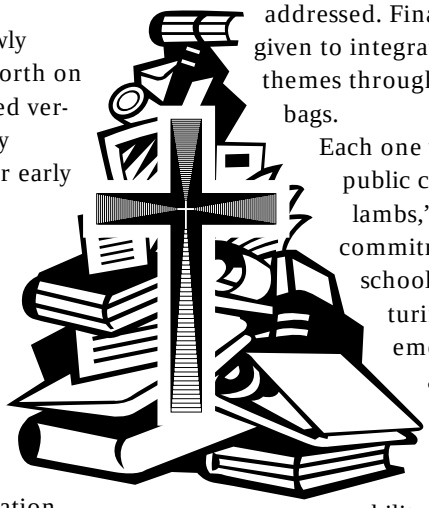
Thank you to everyone who dropped off examination copies of textbooks at the MLC Library. The Curriculum Library shelves are slowly beginning to fill up. As you continue your curriculum studies and have sample texts your don't have to return to the publisher, think about giving them to the college. Please call (507 354 8221 Ext 242) or write to the college library to see if we could use the series you have available. We are also in need of school, faculty, and board handbooks for our files. These are used both by students and graduates as reference for classes and as guides when developing their own handbooks. Thanks for remembering your library in this way.

Integrating God's Word Throughout the Curriculum and Into the Home

Sharon R. Burow



The pendulum slowly swings back and forth on more carefully articulated versions of developmentally appropriate practices for early childhood curriculum. Within the WELS many early childhood educators are using an integrated approach, with child-centered learning relevant to their student's lives. When masterfully implemented, this approach is a unification of meaningful materials and activities, physical arrangement, relationships with others, and adult guidance.



Specific attention in this article will be given to the appropriate integration of God's Word into the early childhood curriculum and the crossover into the home. General thoughts and suggestions for developing Christ-centered integration and implementing a religiously oriented theme will be addressed. Finally, attention will be given to integrating evangelism mini-themes through family take-home bags.

Each one who has received the public calling, "Feed my lambs," recognizes that the commitment of our Lutheran schools goes beyond the nurturing of physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. Being entrusted to nurture faith development is an awesome responsibility. The word "nurturing" itself infers training and, for Christian teachers, a continuum that goes beyond classroom devotions and Jesus time.

There is no doubt that children can enthusiastically and sincerely give correct Bible lesson facts and provide examples for application during instructional Bible time. However, an appropriately developed Christian curriculum is designed for extending

beyond this setting. Recognizing that social interactions are to dominate, early childhood classroom teachers serve as facilitators, helping children "practice" Bible lesson applications. From this, children confidently grow in Christian love, forgiveness, and look for natural evangelism opportunities (Beccue, Kammrath).

Rather than developing an inexhaustible list of examples of the teacher (shepherd) modeling and prompting integrative conversations throughout the secular theme, it would better be served for the teacher to do two types of reflective questioning:

Subject-related reflections

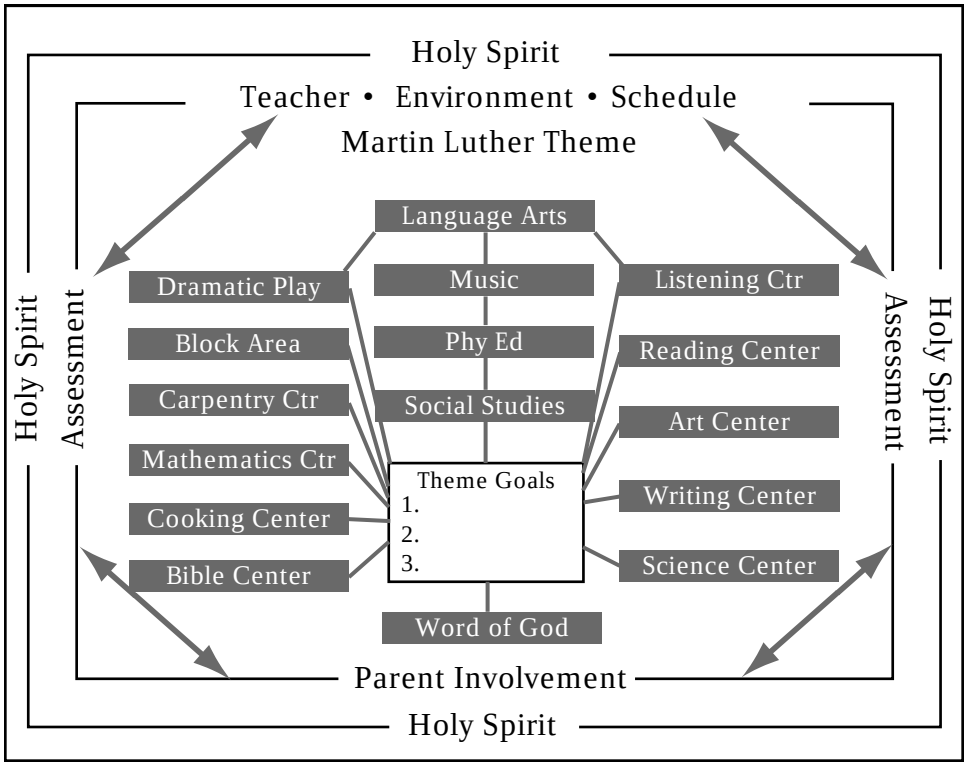
- Do I diligently search the Scriptures, pray for guidance, and have an evangelism outlook in preparing to teach the most important subject, *Word of God*? How is this observable to students and their families?
- Do I regularly express to the children that *music* is a vehicle for evangelizing and praising our Lord for the gift of eternal life?
- Do I radiate appreciation of the children's *art* as a use and expression of their individual God-given talent?
- Do I enthusiastically praise the Lord because I am the crown of his creation (fearfully and wonderfully made) during *physical education*?
- Do I consistently remind children of the order in God's creation during *mathematics*?
- Do I constantly marvel with the children at God's greatness during *science*?
- Do I truly model Christian attitudes and values to all of my students as part of God's family in *social studies*?
- Do I truly encourage and support the children's individual growth in *language arts* writing, listening, speaking, and reading, recognizing that these skills will aid in their discipling? Do I convey that?

Shepherding reflections

- Am I really "feeding my lambs"?
- Am I modeling compassion and gentleness as I daily gather, protect, watch, lead and speak to my flock? Is there a balance of Law and gospel? (Henkelmann)
- Finally—how am I communicating with my families? Am I also really encouraging parents to be active in the classroom, allowing them to observe, be nurtured, participate and claim their role as chief shepherd of their children? (Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it Pr 22:6.)

The marketplace is deluged with manuals providing an endless variety of secular themes, apples and pumpkins, for two examples. How unfortunate that Christian teachers overlook developing themes which could take Bible lessons and extend them into most of the classroom centers and dominate a theme. Creation and Noah are two such examples. Other religiously oriented themes such as prayer, evangelism, or Martin Luther could also encompass most areas of the integrated curriculum.

Using the timely theme of Martin



Luther, attention will be given to defining goals, developing worthwhile centers and activities, and including a plan to share the theme with parents.

The teacher may define the initial goals for a Martin Luther theme as follows:

- to identify with Martin Luther's life as a child
- to view Martin Luther as a role model as he used his God-given talents to study God's Word and to share its important truths with others

As the theme extends, the goals may fluctuate. The center activities must also parallel those shifts.

With these thoughts in mind the teacher will provide a balance of planned and open-ended activities for the centers in the Luther theme. (Centering the goals and spreading outward on a theme sheet, helps avoid the pitfall of collecting disjointed "cutesy" activities.)

Space does not allow for the listing of every center's activity options or an explanation of teacher facilitation. However, two samplings from the theme, *Who Is Martin Luther?* (Burow) are given:

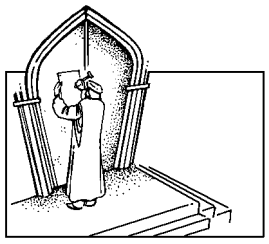
- *Art Center* Have materials available so that children can decorate masks as a reminder of the plays that Martin and others watched from the town square. (These plays were often meant to scare people as the church portrayed God as vengeful. Children

are frequently reminded of God's forgiveness and the gift of his Son when participating at this center. (What do their masks share?)

- *Writing Center* Martin studied God's Word in Greek and Latin. Then he translated the Bible into German so that others could read the Good News for themselves. The children could copy the word "God" in Greek, Latin, German, and English and share its significance with others.

Provision is also given to paper, envelopes, and seals. Martin wrote letters to others in the church about his beliefs as well as sharing his love for God with letters to his children. Students could write or dictate a note to someone. What might you share about God?

Children could copy from the Bible that is available at the center and make their own Bibles. The teacher might say "What message are you sharing?"



After the children have explored the theme centers over two or more weeks, invite the parents to come and participate in the Luther activities and hear the early childhood version of Martin's life and the Martin Luther alphabet. (Burow) Certainly the goals of the theme for the children carry over to the adults. The study of Martin's life has additional goals for parents:

- to serve as a role model for parents as devotional leaders in the home
- to appreciate their Lutheran heritage and the need to share the scriptural teachings Luther rediscovered

Another avenue in the integration of God's Word is extending classroom Bible lessons through mini-themes that are bagged and ready to be shared with the family. The development of these packets leads to a child's declaration— Let me tell the story!

Let me tell the story!
Evangelism Kit Format

Title:	Specific Bible Lesson
Purpose:	To provide devotional and evangelistic opportunities for preschoolers through 2nd graders To develop skills: hearing, reading, understanding, remembering, modeling, sharing For discipling
Materials:	Providing whatever is necessary to complete the directions
Directions:	Requires parent/child interaction

Builds a developmental knowledge base for discipling

May incorporate: dramatizing, singing, reading, writing, drawing, evangelism "give away" Will incorporate: praying, modeling, sharing

Extension: Additional opportunities to reinforce and connect the Bible lesson into daily living

Remember: A reminder to use the Bible as the base for the lesson (encouraging developmental Bibles for family members)

Theme kit development requires writing reflections by the teacher

Writing Reflections

- Does the kit encourage evangelism?
- Are the activities developmentally appropriate?
- Has the kit been designed to be successfully used by all families?
- Is God's gift of forgiveness and eternal life part of the lesson?
- Are all materials for the kit included?

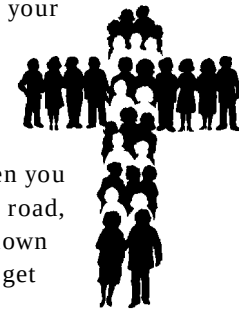
These kits might serve as aids in establishing regular devotional study.

Finally, a Christian educator continuously turns to God's Word for direction. Might assurance for developing an appropriate curriculum based on how young children learn come from 1 Corinthians 13:11?

> When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

Furthermore, might validity be given to integration in Deuteronomy 11:19?

> Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.



May Christian teachers recognize the responsibility of integration that God has given to them as shepherds and discipliners. May they also feel the strength that the Good Shepherd gives to them.

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When the Children Play, the Teacher Should ...

Monica L. Weiss

Do you remember...

making mud pies and sand castles?
climbing trees?
having a secret hideout or clubhouse?
cuddling a baby doll?
enjoying a tea party?
dragging a stick along the ground?
digging a sand tunnel?
following a snail's trail?

If you do, then you will understand that children have a vital need to play. Through play, they learn to function as individuals and find joy in doing things well. The faces of children at play are alive and intent! (Peterson, Felton-Collins).

Persons who study play define it as the following:

- Play is pleasurable, enjoyable. Even when not actually accompanied by signs of mirth, it is still positively valued by the player.
- Play has no extrinsic goals.
- Play is spontaneous and voluntary. It is not obligatory, but is freely chosen by the player.
- Play involves some active engagement on the part of the player. (Garvey)

To the casual observer the child may seem totally involved in playing rather than learning. To the alert observer, however, the child is developing oral language, listening skills, social skills, concepts of spatial relationships, conservation, classification, seriation, and mathematics readiness. Play provides opportunities for many types of learning in the young child; the most important, according to Piaget, is play's crucial role in developing representational language and thought (Peterson, Felton-Collins).

The diversity of types of play and the resources used for play parallel the demands and opportunities that human societies will present to the developing child (Garvey). Therefore, teachers have the responsibility to provide opportunities to ensure play is enriched in their classrooms.

The teacher's first priority in facilitating play is to design an environment where children can learn through a variety of play experiences. Providing play experiences should be done with careful planning. It is not simply a matter of throwing out a few toys for a short play time and then babysitting while the children play. A teacher must at all times be sensitive to the child and his or her play experiences (Stone).

Becoming involved in children's play is beneficial for several reasons:

*Approva*l Adults let children know that play is valuable and worthwhile by showing interest in that activity (Johnson, Christie, Yawkey).

Rapport When a teacher comes down to the children's level and joins in their

play, children learn that the teacher is an approachable human being rather than a remote authority figure (Wood, McMahon, & Cranston).

Persistence When adults participate in children's play, they act as buffers against distractions that can interrupt the play.

More elaborate play Play-training experiments have shown that adult modeling can lead children to engage in higher levels of play (Johnson, Christie, Yawkey).

Cognitive and social development Research has shown that play training also promotes children's cognitive and social development. Play training that involved direct adult participation in play resulted in gains in creativity, verbal intelligence, perspective taking, cooperation, and a number of other skills (Smith & Syddall).

There are four different types of play in which adults can effectively participate that will encourage these results. These are (a) parallel playing, (b) co-playing, (c) play tutoring, and (d) being a spokesperson for reality (Johnson, Christie, Yawkey).

Parallel playing Parallel playing occurs when an adult plays alongside the child, but the adult does not interact with the child. However, the adult's presence speaks volumes about the value of play. The child sees that play is worthwhile (Stone). For example, a child in your classroom may be using pattern blocks. With your own blocks you might imitate the pattern the child is making without any verbal comment to the situation. You are staying outside of the child's play and at the same time validating his or her play.

Co-playing When an adult becomes involved in existing play, but allows the children to control the play, the adult is co-playing. During co-playing, the adult may extend the play through questions or comments, thus enriching the play. Again, the adult's involvement impresses children with the value of play (Stone). For example, you may ride in the airplane the children are flying to Hawaii. You may sit down for dinner in the kitchen center. You may add a block to the tower that has grown too tall for the children to continue. All of these will enhance the play without changing the direction of the play as it was originally intended by the children.

Play tutoring An adult may initiate the play and take at least partial control of the play experience. This is called play tutoring. The adult may intervene from outside the play experience by making suggestions for play, or the adult may intervene from inside the play experience by taking a play role by directing the play experience or modeling new play skills. The adult must be careful that his or her intervention does not destroy the play experience for the children (Stone). If the children are creating a grocery store in which to play, from the outside the teacher may act as a play tutor by saying, "I see that you have a bagger and a cashier in your store. Where are the customers? How will the customers carry their gro-

ceries? You find something for the customers to carry their groceries and I'll see if I can find some customers for you." From the inside the teacher may act as a play tutor by saying, "Excuse me, cashier, I'd like to shop in your grocery store. Could you please get me a bag to carry my groceries?"

Spokesperson for reality The adult uses the children's play as a medium for academic instruction. The adult remains outside the play and encourages children to make connections between their play and the real world. Instead of encouraging make-believe, the adult's questions and suggestions are aimed at suspending make-believe and interjecting reality into the play episode (Johnson, Christie, Yawkey). For example, the children are playing with small toy cars and having them crash. You may ask, "What would you do if there was a car accident near your house? Do you know what telephone number would be important to know if you saw an accident?"

Remember that the teacher's sensitivity to the children's play is always crucial to appropriate intervention. Careful observation is a prerequisite to any adult's successful play. It is also important to note that more time should be spent observing than playing. Adult intervention is meant to enhance the play and not disturb the delicate balance that the children may have already created.

A good summary of the sequence for adult participation in play is (1) observe carefully to determine children's play interests and skills, (2) join in and play with the children, and (3) back away and observe again (Sutton-Smith).

The next time you are feeling a little guilty for allowing play-time in your classroom you should remember all of the benefits it allows your students. Enjoy the faces that are alive and intent. Then get out there and play!

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REVIEWS

Gaustad, Edwin S. S*worn on the Altar of God, A Religious Biography of Thomas Jefferson* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1996.

Edwin Gaustad has successfully presented the religious side of Thomas Jefferson. To help us understand this perspective of Jefferson, the author has carefully traced the evolution of Jefferson's religious development from his Anglican roots to his deistic theology of Enlightenment and finally to his reactions to the Second Great Awakening. We are shown how Jefferson's religious concerns permeated both his private and public life. Although Jefferson repudiated traditional Christian doctrine, Gaustad establishes the premise that Jefferson was profoundly religious in his outlook. This is accomplished by a scrutiny of Jefferson's "edited" Bible in which Gaustad carefully goes though the moral teachings Jefferson chose to preserve (in spite of the fact Jefferson deleted all references to miracles and the divinity of Christ). Further support of Gaustad's premise comes from his use of many written statements of Jefferson on religion which expressed the same concern for moral principles. Finally Gaustad rather skillfully incorporates the private communications between Jefferson and his contemporaries, especially John Adams, James Madison, and Benjamin Rush, to shed even more light on Jefferson's personal theology.

This book could well serve clergy and laymen alike to review Jefferson's logical arguments for a wall of separation between church and state and the necessity for true religious freedom. In today's climate of secularism and immorality one could see why some church leaders would want to remove the wall and impose their brand of Christianity on society. Yet, this study of Jefferson helps us to critique that approach.

Another thought of Jefferson worthy of reflection in today's society is that democracy rests on freedom and requires responsibility. Gaustad notes that citizenship implies more than stress on the individual (in a private cocoon), but there is also stress which relates to the community at large. He warns us of a multiculturalism (a group cocoon) that threatens national community by rejecting or ignoring common aspirations and a common morality. Liberty divorced from responsibility will result in a splintering of society. Jefferson preferred a society for all.

Professor Gaustad has written another scholarly book in church history. *Sworn on the Altar of God* is written in a clear and masterly style and worthy of a place in any library.

FHW

Prellwitz, Peter. *The Believer Beaver Series.* Milwaukee, WI: Commission on Youth Discipleship, 1995.

Using puppets to help children understand the privilege they have in proclaiming God's love is not a new idea, but this is a home-grown product. Mr. Prellwitz has written a set of 21 puppet scripts for children. Through the 21 skits children observe Believer Beaver's work of evangelizing his non-believing friend Curtis Bradford ("CB") Alligator. The series is realistic in showing the slow process of evangelism. CB comes to see Jesus as his Savior after many attempts by Believer Beaver to share Jesus by word and deed. The work of the Holy Spirit in Word and Sacrament is shown clearly. The characters, represented by animal puppets, act in ways typical of nine-year-old boys.

The skits were written for Sunday school classes to be presented during the year following events in both the secular calendar (Thanksgiving) and the church year (Christmas, Lent). A teacher in the primary grades of a Lutheran elementary school could easily use the series with minor adaptations. The series is simple, requires few materials, and appears both fun and instructive—a winning combination.

JRI

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