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The Lutheran Educator

The WELS Education Journal



The Lutheran Educator

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THE LUTHERAN EDUCATOR

Forward (not froward)



Forward (not froward)

Forward in Christ. It's a theme we've been seeing and hearing often in our church body lately. By that theme we are saying that we want to move forward in Christ and for Christ. With God's blessing we want to realize growth outwardly and inwardly. We don't want to stagnate. We want to be progressive. We want to move forward.

But what does this theme mean for me as an individual? What does it mean for me as a teaching minister in the WELS?

It doesn't take much to change 'forward' to 'froward,' just the juxtaposition of a couple of letters. But it suddenly becomes the opposite of what I want to be. I don't want to be froward, that is, habitually disposed to disobedience and opposition. I want to be forward thinking. I want to be progressive, cooperative, and obedient. The gospel of Christ requires as much of me.

Forward in Christ means I certainly don't want to be froward in dealing with my students. I don't want to be fractious and irritable. I want to be agreeable and amenable. I don't want to be petulant and insensitive. I want to be good-natured and friendly. I want to reveal by my words and actions that Christ lives in my heart, and that I am determined to live in him and for him. I want the love of Christ to be evident even when I must discipline or correct my students.

I want to be forward thinking in the way I teach. Instead of teaching the way I always have, I want to try new methods, employ new technology, and learn about the latest developments in my field. I want to stretch my mind in every way I can.

Forward in Christ means that in contacts with my fellow teachers I want to be polite, courteous, and gracious. I want to be caring. I want to seek after their welfare. Moving forward together requires as much.

Forward in Christ means I want to be respectful and obedient toward those who are called to positions of authority over me. If I am uncooperative, defiant, or obstinate, I impede not just the meeting I am attending or the group of which I am a part, but I hinder the cause of the gospel.

Many is the time I've been more froward than forward. But it isn't what I want to be.

Christ went forward for me. Resolutely he set his face toward Jerusalem. He didn't slow down. He didn't stop. He didn't quit. He wasn't froward. He wasn't obstinate or rebellious. Always he went forward. Determinedly he went to the cross for me. That's why I always want to go forward for him.

MJL

Singing for Worship: Cognitive and Affective Outcomes

Jackie Gerlach

OW CAN CHILDREN be made more active church members? Joel Gerlach, using concepts from the writings of Lawrence Richards (1975), helped many teachers and pastors answer this question and distinguish between cognitive and affective goals in Christian education (Gerlach 1999).

Cognitive learning is what the students know; affective learning is what the students do. There is always a danger of losing sight of the relationship between the cognitive and affective. The danger is that we assume since a child has the head-knowledge, actions will flow from that knowledge, including active church membership and faithfulness to corporate worship.

I believe God has blessed me with an opportunity to teach cognitive and affective goals through my involvement with the music program at Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wisconsin. At Christ the Lord I have a call to serve as music coordinator. I teach music to grades one through eight and direct the junior choir and junior bell choir. I am responsible for preparing all these groups for singing and playing for worship. In addition to my school responsibilities, I make the music schedules, direct the adult handbell choir, and organize special music for worship.

Joel Gerlach writes that the "use of a concept is more significant in the devel-

opment of an attitude than a formally learned idea ... a truth is more caught than taught" (197). Gerlach goes on to describe Richard's triangle (see figure 1) showing beliefs, behavior, and attitudes. A teacher who focuses his or her teaching at a single corner of the triangle is more likely to teach in isolation from beliefs, attitudes, and actions. "The solution is to change one's strategy from intervention at one point in the system to intervention at all points in the system at the same time. To the extent that we fail to do so, to that extent we will continue to content ourselves with teaching primarily for cognitive outcomes and reap the consequences" (Gerlach 1999, 198).

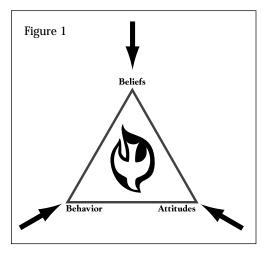
There are three areas in which I hope I can influence students in their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, particularly in the areas of music and worship.

These include...

The children can participate in worship through singing meaningful songs. I believe I am doing this successfully by helping children produce music that is edifying for the worshiper. The children and the congregation seem pleased with the variety of quality music that children sing with rich texts and interesting accompaniments that use different instrumental accompaniments.

The children can learn the content of the text. Most of the music that I select for worship is carefully chosen because it is

based on the Scripture lessons and theme of the day. In the past three years, I have gathered the students at the back of church before they sing. While the Scripture is being read, I point to my ear and mouth the word "listen," in order to encourage them to pay attention to the lesson being read. Instead of being moved by the text and



the spirit of the service, the students may be moved by the satisfaction of a loved-song sung well. Then, in the eyes of the children, their singing becomes a performance for parents and congregation members rather than a musical offering and act of personal worship.

For graduation Sunday this year, the seventh and eighth graders sang a two-part mixed arrangement of the well-loved folk hymn, "Seek Ye First." The accompaniment included the Canon in D by Pachelbel. One eighth-grade boy who has always loved to sing said, "This is the best song I ever sang during all my years at Christ the Lord." Indeed,

the students enjoyed the challenge of the boys singing a bass part and sang very well.

The students can experience delight in the quality of their experience when singing for church, camaraderie with friends, a good relationship with the director, and support from parents and congregation members. The teacher is as much a model as an information processor. The learner is more an imitator than a sponge. As a director, I hope I am modeling and communicating love, patience, and delight to my students as I serve in my call.

The home is a key ingredient in producing affective outcomes. "Scripture must be communicated as a lived and a livable reality. Its truths must be communicated by those who have integrated them into their personalities and who, in the shared experiences of life, talk the Word and works of God with their children. The critical location for Bible teaching is not the classroom but rather the household, the walk, the sitting together on the porch, the snuggling into the warmth of bed, the joy of rising to a new day" (Gerlach 1999, 198-199). Even though I am not my students' parent, I have often said that I am able to work with seventh and eighth graders more effectively in the music classroom because I am also their classroom teacher. In our classroom, we often develop relationships that are almost like family.

A year ago, I taught a group of students I was especially fond of for their personalities and abilities. I chose to teach this class Kurt Eggert's great hymn "Lord, When in Glory I Shall See." This seven-line tune by Eggert is a challenge. When he first heard the melody, one outspoken boy in the class said, "That is a dog of a melody! I could have written a better one myself!" I just smiled to myself because I knew what a moving melody it actually was.

We continued to practice this hymn daily. We sang it twice for worship with-



There is a dimension of worship that is often unexplored in WELS churches... called symbolic communication.



in two years. I will never forget the tears in the eyes of that same boy who had proclaimed the melody "a dog" as we sang that song for worship near the end of his eighth grade year.

I believe this is an example of reaching students at all three points of the triangle. I did not teach this hymn in a purely cognitive sense. The children grew to love the song through knowledge of the meaning of the text, my modeling, their own opportunity to express emotions (positive and negative) concerning the hymn, and gradually growing to love the hymn within the class-family. Finally, they were able to

sing the hymn in the context of corporate worship.

I have known for a long time (from my college musical training) that the most important way a choir can function in worship is to participate in the hymns, liturgy, and propers of the day. In this way, the singers are contributing to the service and assisting the congregation in its worship. It is so easy to get away from these things and focus energy on the "special piece" or anthem. A danger, related to cognitive and affective learning, in having the children sing only the anthem is that the participation in worship that these children learned to love in elementary school becomes an isolated event, not one that will be repeated throughout their lives when they are not part of a special choir. They may not join a choir and sing that special anthem, but they will sing hymns and liturgy throughout their lives when they remain faithful in their church attendance.

How much better (than to just sing an anthem) to give these children a "taste," in the biblical sense, of the beauty of the liturgy and hymns that we are blessed with in the Lutheran church. If our children come to love the liturgy and songs which are used every week, if teachers in their teaching of this music come to touch children in their attitudes, emotions, and beliefs, I believe children may be more likely to act in their lives (affective) with a regular pattern of active participation in worship.

As a guide in planning for teaching to both the cognitive and affective, I suggest the following:

* Teach hymns, liturgy, and propers.

Develop a systematic list of hymns and liturgy that you will teach throughout the grades. At many schools the classroom teachers also teach hymns for memory work. They are good at doing a consistent job with this. But, these hymns are not generally the ones that the children sing for worship. Each time the children sing for worship, you can have them learn part of a hymn, psalm, verse of the day, or portion of the liturgy that will be used that day.

* Have the children sing hymns, liturgy, and propers for worship in addition to their "special anthem."

When the children sing for worship, they sometimes can sing the larger liturgical songs alone in place of the congregation singing them. By having the children sing these songs alone occasionally, you can add variety to the service. The worshiper may notice parts of the Magnificat, for instance, in a new way. The beauty of children's voices may make the person in the pew sit up and take notice. Another reason for having the children sing the parts of the liturgy is the benefit to the children. This concentrated effort on their part to learn these liturgical songs well gives the teachers an opportunity to touch these children on all points of Richard's trian-

* Explain the theme of the service based on the readings of the church year.

Explain to the students how the readings fit with the theme of the service and how their songs reinforce those truths.

* Channel the emotions by touching the cog-

nitive through teaching the text.

Emotions are touched naturally through participation in music. But, what emotions are being touched? If students believe they are singing in church to perform music simply as melodic decoration in a service and don't understand the text of the piece or how it fits in worship, what is the student feeling? In my training as a musician, I have at various times encountered a non-Christian musician or a musician who seems much more moved by the beauty of the music than the text. I must be careful as a teacher never to elevate the performance of the music above the one being praised!

* Encourage words of appreciation.

There are many times when you will receive compliments about the music on behalf of the children. Pass these comments on to the children and even encourage the person making the compliment to speak directly to the children. In this way, the congregation members are showing the children that they value the children's contribution to worship. The congregation members are serving as models of Christians who value worship.

* Use symbolic and nonverbal communication in worship.

There is a dimension of worship that is often unexplored in WELS churches. It is sometimes called symbolic communication. Just as we may too often stress the cognitive in teaching, we may also too often communicate verbally in worship without adding the helpful nonverbal dimension. Children seem to respond well to nonverbal efforts to

enrich the message. (For example, see Becker et al., 1997a, 1997b, 1998)

As a music coordinator, I have the opportunity to incorporate and suggest more types of symbolic communication. Processions, banners, stripping of the altar on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday Tenebrae services, times of silence within the service all serve as nonverbal communicators to God's people. In some congregations, some of these symbolic communicators must be introduced slowly and carefully.

* Teach the children that they are serving when they sing for worship. Serving is part of sanctified living.

Just as young Christians learn to live a sanctified life by serving others, young musicians should be taught to realize that their musical participation in worship is also a service to others. A teacher might tell the group of choristers that there will be someone in the congregation when they sing, and they won't know who it is, who has a specific spiritual need. The words they sing will speak to that person. And, because the words are set to music, they may touch the person's heart in a special way. I might illustrate various scenarios that may be plaguing a fellow-Christian. This certainly helps touch on the emotions point of Richard's triangle.

* Keep the children participating after grade school

Some of my former students at Christ the Lord are now in high school. I have ample opportunity to invite them to participate in worship during their high school and college years. I hope this continuing participation will help these young adults to see their important place in their church as valuable participants in worship.

Teaching for cognitive and affective goals is a vital part of Christian education. Those who teach music and direct choirs in our congregations and schools have a particular opportunity for such teaching. With God's blessing, we will see the fruits of such teaching now and in eternity.

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How Lutheran School Teachers Can Assist Home Schooling Parents

Rachel Mendell



PREVIOUS ARTICLE (*The Lutheran Educator*, October 1999, pp. 9-11) discussed home schooling in general and the reasons some parents have for choosing home schooling. Yet, sometimes there is still mystery and suspicion about home education. Simply put, home schooling is private tutoring at its best. If you are a Lutheran teacher who is state certified, you are in a position to help the home schoolers in your church and in your area.

For example, you could be asked to test or assess a home-educated student. This article will help you to decide whether you should do that assessment and how to go about assessing a homeschooled child.

Standardized testing is a good tool for assessing academic skills. However, in my experience, the home education program of the families I work with is

heavily experiential, that is, the schooling does not follow a textbook scope and sequence. Many parents use the unit method or the classical method to accomplish the same goals as textbook education but at different times. Thus, standardized tests such as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills may not be appropriate. Curriculum in home schools is tailored specifically to each child and routine testing often falls short of accurately assessing yearly accomplishment. Simply put, home education doesn't follow "the rules." This is why I searched for, and found, a written assessment form that can be used as a replacement for the standardized test.

Every state is different in regard to the laws and regulations for home schooling. You should know the law of your state and what is expected of the certified teacher. In Ohio, the person in charge of the child's education must notify the appropriate authorities at the beginning of each school year that the child will not be attending a traditional school. Together with this notification must be the assessment of the year before (unless this is the first year of

Box 1 Assessment Report

To: Whom it may concern (the parents)

From: Assessor

Date: Month, day, year

Re: Narrative Assessment of Home Student (Name)

This report is prepared pursuant to the regulations provided in the ... laws (example: Ohio administration 3301-34-04, parts A and B)

Part 1: (Include your qualifications, teaching, and testing experience.) Questions about this report may be directed to (your name address, or school address, phone)

Part 2: Assessment Findings

Background: when, where, who was present, and why this family is pursuing home education

Assessment Conference and Review: (I strongly suggest a visit to the home. A box of workbooks and a lesson plan book don't show the whole story. At the home you will see where they do their work, reference books, posters, ongoing projects of all kinds, picture books of trips, and games. Don't forget the trip to the basement or garage to see the projects Mom won't let in the house. Also include who was present, the time of day, and materials and artifacts observed.)

Social Assessment: From my observation student appears to be a normal, well-adjusted boy, involved in church, clubs, in a caring family environment, etc.

Academic Assessment: (Here you would include the student's work, including the texts used, field trips, clubs, classes or other private lessons, work done in cooperation with a school, work study or apprentice programs, and workshops.)

Part 3: Conclusions and Recommendations: The home student's academic, social, physical, and religious education for the ... school year appear to have been appropriate for his age, grade, and ability level... (Here is an excellent opportunity to commend the parent's responsibility and commitment to excellence in their child's education. You may include strengths and weaknesses and any recommendations for textbooks or specific skill strengthening.)

home education). In Ohio a parent has a choice of (1) standardized test (Bob Jones University and others provide tests for parents to administer), (2) a written assessment by a certified teacher (a form is sent to the superintendent with the teacher's signature—the actual assessment remains in the student's permanent file), and (3) some other

method mutually agreed upon by the parent and the local superintendent. Every year there are many misunderstanding between local authorities and parents.

If you or the parents do not understand laws in your state, you can contact the people at the Home School Legal Defense Association (see note). They

will be happy to help or put you in touch with someone in your state.

The assessment form, including the teacher's signature, goes into the local superintendent's file. This means that if there is ever a question about the student's work for that particular year, the teacher may get a call. The teacher must be confident of his or her findings if ever this happens. I suggest at least keeping a personal file of notes, and better, if time permits, a report form developed by Dr. Gregory J. Cizek. This form has held up in court. In addition the form can be used in a number of circumstances.

Basically, Cizek's report form consists of three parts: qualifications of the assessor, the assessment findings, and conclusions and recommendations. This can be a five page, singled space report depending on the work of the student. A sample of the assessment report is shown in Box 1.

When I get a request to write an assessment, I set up a time to meet in the home. I take with me a list of skills and question to ask based on state requirements (e.g., Ohio History). I take detailed notes and ask questions about field trips and hobbies. Sometimes the parents ask me to listen to the children read, recommend math drill books, or ask advice about music or art. I come prepared for these questions. The conference can be a rewarding and helpful experience for everyone because I also find myself asking for catalogs and writing down book names, stores, and publishers, for my personal use. I take the student's work, texts, and

lesson plans I haven't had to study home with me. Then I write the first draft. When I return the materials, I give the parents the first draft for their comments and corrections. I keep one copy of the completed report in my personal files and send a copy to the parent along with Ohio's required "yellow" sheet and a cover letter thanking the family for the visit and the opportunity to serve.

If you are state-licensed teacher you may be able to help home-schooling parents in this way. Check with your state laws and if you wish to obtain the form described in this article, write to me at the address below.

Rachel Mendell is a certified teacher in Ohio. Currently, she assesses home schooled students in her area, tutors, gives music lessons, and home schools her six children. Occasionally she is free for substituting in the classroom. Her address is 8491 State Route 61, Galion, Ohio 44833.

** The Home School Legal Defense Association is a "non-profit advocacy organization established to defend and advance the constitutional right of parents to direct the education of their children and to protect family freedoms." It lists over 55,000 members. The web site (www.hsdla.org) allows you to check the individual state laws, contact local organizations, and obtain information of past and pending legal cases. The HDSLA may be contacted at 540-338-5600 or PO Box 3000, Purcellville, VA 20134.

N THE 1980s "burnout" became an educational buzzword. There were many articles warning of "teacher burnout." Conference papers were written and debated over "WELS teacher burnout." Occasionally we still read articles about educator burnout in our professional journals. Most of these articles say teacher burnout is bad. Most of these articles describe methods for avoiding teacher burnout. If these articles describe burnout as losing one's effectiveness as an instructor, then we need to avoid burnout. I have never read an article advocating teacher burnout, have you? Yet if burnout means to give your all to fulfill your calling, to be completely used up in God's service, then burnout is a good thing. This is your chance to read an article that advocates this kind of burnout.

An incident in the life of Elijah may illustrate what we call teacher burnout today. After the defeat of the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Jezebel threatened his life and Elijah ran away from his call. He asked the Lord to take his life, for he felt he was not successful in his calling. He lost confidence in the triumph of God's kingdom and he felt his life was no longer worth living (1 Ki 19). You and I would say that Elijah was

burned out. If we continue to read in 1 Kings, however, we do not read that Elijah enrolled in a stress management course, nor did he see a certified psychiatrist. He did not even consult his local Called Workers Care Committee. Instead he ran away. The Lord was very patient with Elijah just as he is with us. God sent an angel to sustain him and gave him the ability to rest. He then inquired of Elijah about why he was in the wilderness. After that God showed Elijah his almighty power in a powerful wind, an earthquake, and a fire. God then showed Elijah his abundant grace in a gentle whisper. Again God inquired of Elijah why he was there and not at his calling. He urged him to go back to his work and assured Elijah that the kingdom of God did flourish in Israel. We usually leave the story here, making the point that Elijah's burnout had been overcome. But read the story again. In urging Elijah to get back to work, one of the jobs God assigned Elijah was to anoint Elisha to succeed him as God's prophet. After a while Elijah was taken into heaven and Elisha took his place. Elijah was burned out, and God took him home.

Another example of burnout may be found in the New Testament. Paul tells us he is torn between a desire to die and go to heaven and the realization that he had work to do in his calling (Php 1:21-25). He was writing from a prison cell, perhaps in Rome on his Fourth Journey, and wrote with a joyful spirit, yet he still made this statement. Several years later Paul gave his life in his calling. Before his death he wrote to Timothy, "I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure" (2 Ti 4:6). He was burned out, and God called him home.

Being burned out does not imply we are to neglect our health or ignore personal needs. Christian stewardship compels us to conserve our strength and energy so we may serve well in our calling. We need to place our confidence in the Lord, eat right, exercise, and take some time away from our work. Learning to pace ourselves is an important skill in teaching. We need to remain effective in our classrooms. Jesus, too had to "get away for a while" in his ministry. We read he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray (Mt 14:23, Mk 6:46). At another time he left the crowds behind and sailed off in a boat with his disciples (Mk 4:35-36). Jesus also felt the pressures of his calling just as you and I do.

However, in instructing his disciples Jesus tells them, "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it" Mt 16:25). Our personal well being is not to be the focus of our lives. Again he says, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God (Lk 9:62). Our God expects us to be faithful in our calling

and he demands everything from us in his service. We are to be "poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service" coming from our calling and to rejoice in it (Php 2:17). We are to "live on; beaten and not yet killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (2 Co 6:9-10). We are to give our all to the service of God. We are to burn brightly and, finally, be burned out in his service.

This is not what human wisdom tells us. Our society is "me" oriented. Our Old Adam lives in an egocentric universe in which everything revolves around him. But we, as do all Christians, desire to live for others. Our world revolves around Christ. What other religion teaches its followers to "consider others better than yourselves" (Php 2:3)? We were not made for selfish purposes. It is not our goal in life to find ourselves, to nurture ourselves, or to develop, assert and advance ourselves. We are made to sacrifice and pour ourselves out for others. Our call was not designed to benefit us, the called workers, but to help in the service of the church of Jesus Christ. It is designed in such a way that we are there to help others. We are clearly taught this lesson when we read how Jesus stooped to wash the feet of his disciples (Jn 13:5-17). We are called to serve and not to be served.

This does not mean we are abandoned by our heavenly Father. Just as he took care of Elijah—sending him an angel, providing food and giving him rest and comfort—so God treats us in a

similar loving manner. David writes, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Ps 23:4). Paul writes, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows" (2 Co 1:3-5). God also provides for us. After the Seventy returned, Jesus asked them, "'When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?' 'Nothing,' they answered" (Lk 22:35). Jesus did not condemn Peter, but treated him gently when he asked Jesus, "'We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?' Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life'" (Mt 19:27-29). And again Jesus assures us, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Mt 6:33). God also renews our burned out spirits. Isaiah writes, "Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail" (Is 58:9-11). God never abandons his own. He always has and always will care for our every need (Ps 37:25).

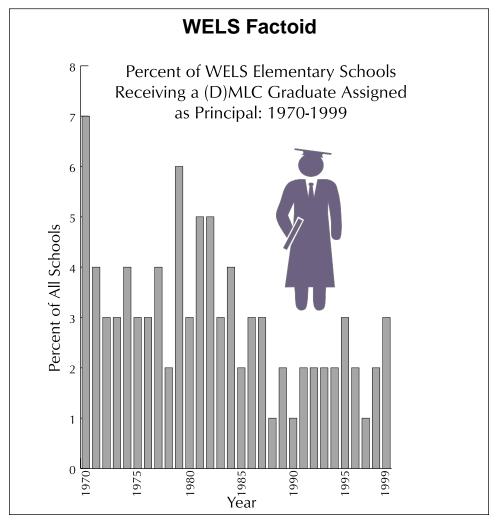
Tough it out! We are not living in the Garden of Eden. Read and study the lives of the prophets. The Children of Israel had no great love for Moses. They continually complained to him and about him. Even his brother Aaron and sister Miriam were jealous of him and conspired against him. Elisha was mocked by children. King Ahaz did not listen to the prophet Isaiah. The prophet Hosea married a prostitute to make a point for God. Amaziah, the priest at Bethel, opposed Amos. Jeremiah was threatened with death. From Abel to Zechariah God's prophets have been killed (Lk 11:51). Jesus was crucified and said, "If men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" (Lk 23:31) What indeed?

You and I are living in the time of the "dry tree" and can expect a lack of respect, lack of compensation, and a difficult time in fulfilling our calling. Yet we are never forsaken of God. Jesus will take care of us. Paul writes, "We are

hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Co 4:7-10). God promises, "Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Is 40:31). We may burn out and we should expect to burn out, but God is with us. Let's go out in a

blaze of glory, glorifying him who has called us and promised, "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him" (Jas 1:12).

Paul Willems teaches at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, New Ulm, Minnesota.



Continuing Education: No Longer an Option for Lutheran Educators

John D. Kolander

Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and actions. (Acts 7:22)

UR SOCIETY IS FILLED with opportunities for adults to learn. Weekly television shows give insights into cooking, sewing, home projects, golf, and much more. Bookstores are filled with shelves of literature written with the intent to educate on topics ranging from car engine repair to the selection of wine. Technical schools, public and private universities, local school districts, and community organizations all provide catalogs of courses offered for the education of the populace. A person's ability to learn about a given topic is limited only by the size of their modem or the number of channels on their cable system.

Why do people crave learning? Why do they look forward to that fishing show, that gardening workshop, that software application course? It is because people have a natural tendency to fill voids of knowledge. The desire to improve drives adults to seek education on their own in areas of interest.

Many professionals also continue their education in order to stay current

in their field. We expect our family physician to be informed on the latest advancements in medicine. Accountants study the new tax laws. A farmer who ignored the agricultural research and trends of the past century would still be using the horse.

What about you, Lutheran educator? Have you continued learning in your chosen profession?

The title suggests that continuing education was once an option for teachers in the WELS. Twenty or more years ago calls were much more diversified than today. It was not uncommon to have people serve their congregation as principal, teacher of grades 6-8 (with 38 students), coach, choir director, organist, VBS director, bus driver, and other duties mutually agreed upon. In generations past a teacher was one of the more educated individuals in the congregation and community. Opportunities to grow professionally were scarce and limited.

Much of that has now changed. There is increasing tendency for specialization in a call, which is accompanied by the expectation of quality. Courses of benefit are offered on a regular basis at times and in places of convenience. College

degrees are common among the people we serve. Employers of our students'

parents require them to take classes for the purpose of increased productivity and effectiveness. Continuing education is not optional for virtually every profession. Is it optional for Lutheran teachers?

This is not to suggest that a synodical undergraduate education degree is inadequate. Under the guiding hand of the Lord, DMLC and MLC have carried out their mission and purpose of teacher education for over 115 years. However, there are limits as to what can be taught in the course of four

years. Also, there is only so much future teachers can understand, value, and apply to their chosen profession. Graduates of our synodical teacher training institution have a solid educational foundation based on Christ and his Word, but that should be only the beginning.

The key question for all of our decisions in life is this: Does it lift up Jesus? Is continuing education a blessing to be used? Will your effectiveness as a servant of Christ increase through planned and purposeful learning? We must not use our calls from the Holy Spirit and the ability to use our all-powerful weapon, the Word of God, as excuses for not seeking to improve professionally. Noted individuals in the Bible were highly educated and used by God for his

purposes. In the Old Testament Moses, leader of God's people, and Daniel, cab-

inet member of two great ancient empires, are good examples. The Apostle Paul calls himself the Pharisee of the Pharisees, educated in all the ways of Judaism. The Holy Spirit inspired the educated Luke to write a major portion of the New Testament from his factual and historical perspective. Education did not destroy the faith of the faithful but was used by God to increase their wisdom and knowledge and effectiveness and leadership.

Suppose a Lutheran educator takes a course on how to use creative publication software.

The knowledge acquired has

the potential to increase the ability to communicate effectively with the families of the congregation. The ability to use a software program can assist an educator's ministry. The knowledge gained in the class does not replace the importance of God's Word or in any way override it. Computer knowledge simply assists a Christian educational leader in being a more effective and productive Christian educational leader. If it makes sense to learn more about computers, it can also make sense to learn more about ways students process information, instructional supervision, curriculum development, school/community relations, or alternative assessment methods.

There is an old joke that goes something like this: A devastating flood hit a town and a God-fearing man fled to the roof of his house. His neighbor in a canoe came along and the man refused to get in. "The Lord will rescue me," he said. A little while later came the local sheriff came along in a boat. Again the man refused to get in. "The Lord will rescue me," he said. Still later the National Guard came to the man with a helicopter. The man refused a third time. "The Lord will rescue me," he said. Finally the man was swept away by the water and drowned. When he entered heaven he said to the Lord, "Why didn't you rescue me?" "What do you mean?" answered God. "I sent a canoe, a boat, and a helicopter. Why didn't you use them?"

Concerned teachers are daily challenged to meet the needs of the students and the expectations of the parents with the gifts and abilities the Lord has given them. Guidance and comfort are sought in the Word of God. The Lord promises to hear the prayers of his servants and guide and direct them in their calling. Are we at times like that man on the roof, waiting for supernatural solutions to our problems as the Lord provides normal and obvious solutions for us to use?

Continuing education has benefits for Lutheran educators. The acquisition of skills, knowledge, information, resources, and abilities in the field of education can increase confidence, effectiveness, and assist in joy of ministry. The Lord daily provides answers to our prayers and reasons for joy in this life. These are blessings from him. Lutheran educators need to use all the

vehicles the Lord provides for their benefit

As a person grows professionally, they gain expertise in their field of study. Solutions to problems unique to education become available. A storehouse of knowledge is built from which solutions to educational difficulties can be drawn. Paradigms are challenged and ineffective behaviors are defined. Educational trends are understood and evaluated for the purpose of defining what can be best applied to specific educational situations. Classroom effectiveness and student learning increase. The educator gains confidence and becomes energized in his calling.

Continuing education can also lead educators to realize the blessings of their present situation and confirm the validity of their current practice. In the process of growing professionally, an individual comes in contact with others from the same profession. Awareness of other educational situations grows. Educators realize problems are not unique to their local situation, others have difficulties as well, certain challenges are found in every educational setting and what's going on back home is actually quite good. The numerous positive and productive norms of a school's culture become ever clearer as educators expand their horizons through professional growth.

Continuing education symbolically identifies the called worker as an educational leader in the eyes of the families of the school and members of the congregation. It is important for educators to model lifelong learning; a teacher's

image in the congregation has a great impact on his effectiveness. What message does a teacher who chooses not to grow professionally send to the school's stakeholders? Intended or not, it may be arrogance, laziness, or apathy. Conversely, the message sent by those who grow professionally is one of continuous improvement, dedication, and concern. People observe how called workers spend their time. Committing some effort to continuing education can be reassuring to those we serve.

Given a Lutheran educator's desire to grow professionally, various obstacles may still stand in the way. Most likely first and foremost is cost. Depending on the class, institution fees may be \$50 for a workshop to \$ 1000 for a three-credit graduate course. Ideally, the local calling body will cover the costs associated with professional growth. Discussion needs to take place among school boards and church councils as to the need and benefits of continuing teacher education. An increasing number of congregations are budgeting funds for that very purpose. Chapter 9 of Making the Pieces Fit, the recently published synodical principal's handbook, contains an excellent essay regarding continuing education that can serve as the basis for such discussion. In reality, however, Lutheran educators may still need to make a personal contribution to their professional growth. Such a commitment sends a powerful message to the calling body as to the importance of professional growth. In the personal and institutional allocation of financial resources, continuing education needs

to be viewed as a priority not a luxury.

A second difficulty may be the availability of applicable courses. This concern has greatly diminished in the last decade. Institutions of higher education are making a concentrated effort to provide pertinent courses and workshops at times and in places convenient for their intended audiences. Instead of people going to the schools, schools are now going to the people. Informational flyers regarding professional growth offerings arrive in a principal's mail on a weekly basis.

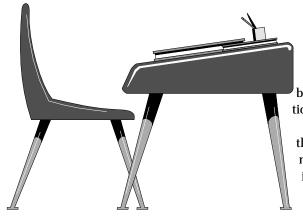
Finally comes the issue of time. Lutheran educators are busy people. The demands and expectations of the calling are great, especially during the school year. Try scheduling yourself into a weekend workshop or a course for four successive Thursday nights. It can be a welcome change from the routine of school. Also, the months of summer offer ample time to grow professionally given the desire to do so.

A Lutheran educator who believes in the need and benefits of continuing education will find the time and resources necessary to pursue that education. Take note of the blessings and opportunities the Lord offers each day. Seek to grow in the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively fulfill the duties of the teaching ministry to the end that the Lord may use his workers to carry out the mission of his church.

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Learning Centers in Lutheran High Schools

Emily C. Armstrong



God preserve to our Lutheran Church the Christian School for upon it depends, humanly speaking, the future of our church.

HESE WORDS of Dr. C.F.W. Walther are engraved in stone at the entrance to Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lake Mills, Wisconsin. Beneath the quote it reads, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" On this foundation is built the philosophy of our school.

"Let the children come to me and forbid them not." "Feed my lambs." These have been the guiding beacons of our WELS schools in all the decades of their existence. We hold these words of Jesus to be the hallmark of Christian love and support to the parents in our congregations. "Children are a blessing of the Lord," and we as teachers are blessed to be the partners in education with their parents. Now we stand at the threshold of the millen-

threshold of the millennium. Times are tougher in our schools. There is a teacher shortage and education costs have

risen. Technology is here to stay with its training and retraining and annual updates of equipment and programming. At times I am reminded of the old black-and-white movies with everyone running around in a jerky, fast-paced expense of energy and motion.

Enter the scene: slower-processing, reluctant learners with an inability to maintain focus. The critical ingredients in their education are time and attention. They come into our schools often untested, undiagnosed, and unprogrammed. They walk into our classrooms looking exactly like their peers and we are at a loss as to why they don't "pick it up" as their peers do. Frantically we work to help them "catch up." We apply educational Band-Aids, we stew, we counsel, we discipline, we tutor, we demand, we implore, but they don't "catch up." We become discouraged

and frustrated by the demands on our time and our emotions. As one of my co-workers said, "I used to be able to handle thirty in a class. Now I can hardly handle twenty because they each need so much attention." We begin to ask, are such children a "blessing," and are we really called upon to feed these lambs?

Premises

To answer this difficult question, teachers need some basic premises:

1. All children can learn.

Surely no one would question that all children are constantly learning. Social interactions start from the moment of birth. Environmental information is bombarding children even before they are born so that a newborn will react to his or her mother's voice or a song that was repeatedly played. The brain is an organ of such amazing capacity to receive and process information that its only limitation is its inability to comprehend its own potential and to access that potential.

However, can we also say that all children can learn academically? It is clear that there are severely, profoundly handicapped children who will never learn to read or write or even to speak. These children do not come to our schools. Mild and moderately handicapped children will learn to read and write, to communicate, to do math, to build friendships, to be faithful church members, and to be responsible and solid citizens. Furthermore, there is a long list of handicaps that do not prohibit cognitive functioning. We must be careful not to drop the word, handicap, like a bomb that mushrooms into hopelessness in our homes and schools.

2. Every child has a unique pattern for learning.

It makes no difference whether the student is an "A" student or "D" student; thinking patterns are unique. Every person focuses on different ideas in presentations and books, assimilates information with his own set of experiences, and, by his own standards, tunes out what he determines to be useless information. What is filed in the brain is dictated in a particular manner, in a particular location, according to a particular sequence. This is the beauty and the wonder of God's creation. Each design is as personal as a thumb print and that design is right for each person's work in the Kingdom.

3. God chose the pattern for each person's uniqueness.

There are no mistakes in God's creation. Children, whose learning patterns present a challenge to the teaching style of their teachers, are not made poorly. "Children are a blessing." I, as teacher, know that every one of the children in my classroom is truly a blessing. It is a challenge to my mindset to think of every child as "wonderfully and fearfully made," as a soul to be brought into the Kingdom, maintained in faith, trained in godliness for good works ordained by God for her to do. These are the children who will be out in the workforce, rubbing shoulders with mainstream America. They will in the course of their lives touch people with

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whom I would never come in contact. Every child is worth my time and energy. Indeed, if I can teach and train these children who demand the whole range of my teaching abilities, tap the creativity of my teaching mind, and drive me to learn more about learning, then surely all the other children in my care will benefit. Now that is a blessing!

Philosophy

These premises form the basis for a philosophy of education appropriate to every aspect of the learning center.

1. All the children who enter the learning center are a blessing, God's per-



Children, whose learning patterns present a challenge to the teaching style of their teachers, are not made poorly.



sonal creative work in a teacher's care.

- Every child will be the teacher's passion. The teacher is called to nurture, to teach, to model Christian love and concern so each child can grow in her faith.
- 3. Interactions in the learning process

- will demand change and accommodations from the child and from the teacher. Teachers and students will learn about each other and apply that learning to the academic tasks.
- Learning will happen in this area.
 Realistic expectations will be set and goals will be established.
- 5. Independent learning will be the ultimate academic outcome. The area is here to give support and to discover successful strategies, but finally it is the student who must apply them and work to succeed.
- 6. The goal of all Christian education is training for lifelong Christian living in the confidence of Jesus blood "shed for me" and the certainty of "my" heavenly home. It is personal and real. Above all, this is the emphasis for at-risk and special needs students.

Application

This philosophy now finds its application to specific areas where at-risk students can be helped in our Lutheran high schools. Two of these areas are the enrollment of at-risk freshmen and the use of the learning center.

Enrollment of at-risk freshmen

Students can be tested sometime in the second half of their eighth grade year for math and reading comprehension skills. The math test can originate with the math department and include levels of performance that are necessary to enter courses such as General Math, Algebra IA, Algebra I, or Geometry. Those scores are sent to the elementary school principals for their recommendations. The Nelson Reading Test, comprehension portion, which is normed to grade levels, can also be used. Anyone falling below grade level is considered at-risk. Along with a letter of explanation, the elementary school principals are encouraged to discuss the information with the eighth grade teacher and verify the accuracy of that score. Sometimes scores do not accurately reflect a student's abilities. For example, a student might have been excessively tired or been sick the day she took the test.

The learning center coordinator can phone each principal or eighth grade teacher to discuss concerns about individual students. The teacher can offer a recommendation for placement in a smaller class or in a guided study hall if he feels that is appropriate.

The records of students identified in the testing as at-risk ought to be examined for previous testing that may have been done to find evidence to support the areas of concern. Individual meetings need to be set up for each student and his parents with the learning coordinator. In this meeting items such as the following can be covered:

- * Evaluation of study skills
- * Expectations in class work
- * Parental concerns and expectations of the school
- * Academic history
- * Career hopes and dreams
- * Consequences of class options
- * Informal testing of reading and writing skills
- * Informal testing in math (if that is needed)

By the end of this meeting, the coordinator and the parents should mutually arrive at a decision for the freshman year programming. The options include (1) number of classes to take, (2) math placement (General Math or Algebra 1A are the usual choices); (3) English placement (Should the student be taught by the coordinator in the smaller section that offers a multi-sensory approach?); (4) further support systems, such as tutoring or guided study hall; (5) if no formal testing has ever been done, a recommendation might be made for that to be completed.

If severe needs are apparent, another meeting might be set up with the parents and the teachers to discuss modifications for the classroom. The coordinator will meet with teachers individually to explain needs and modifications that will be required for the student's suc-

Unfortunately, at-risk upper level students who enroll as new students may not receive this kind of attention. Particularly if they come in during the school year, they may simply show up in class one day. In such cases, their chances of success are greatly diminished by this lack of preparation and planning.

The extended learning center

The extended learning center at Lakeside is manned by the coordinator and a fulltime aide. Generally, an average of fifty to sixty students a day use the rooms. The learning center offers several levels of support.

Students who have been identified as at-risk Students who have tested dyslexic or

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who have an attention deficit disorder (ADD) are almost certain to need support. They need to receive tutoring, one-on-one or in small groups. Often they need re-teaching of classroom material. Note-taking and organizational skills are common problem areas. The learning center must communicate with classroom teachers with regular updates concerning work accomplishments and completion of tasks. Test taking is difficult for these students and sometimes they can be helped when the test is read aloud to them. Encouragement and spiritual/emotional support are essential and frequently there are social issues that must be resolved. Efforts are made to encourage friendships and develop relationships. On occasion, a student might receive some direct instruction in appropriate social interactions. At the freshmen level, these students would probably be in General Math and a small section of English 9.

Students who struggle academically but have not been diagnosed

Occasionally these students might fall into the previous category but these students more likely will receive small group work with an aid or the coordinator in those subject areas that create the most problems. Depending on the particular period they are in, it could be one-on-one work. As much as possible, these students are encouraged to develop better study habits and overcome an academic weakness. Their placement in the guided study hall is more for guidance than for direct instruction. If there were a deficit in learning strategies,

those strategies would need to be taught. Often social skills are also an issue and negative attitudes may add to the problem.

Students who are limited at-risk and walkins

These are generally students who struggle only in one class. They may come in regularly or off and on as needed. Sometimes parents or teachers may insist they come and sometimes they come of their own desire. Students with social problems may also seek out the area. The need is more one of support and encouragement than of direct instruction. Group work and appropriate interaction is encouraged in the learning center. For some students it is a more effective way to study than in a traditional study hall. Peer tutoring may also be an option if an appropriate tutor can be found.

In all cases, the goal is to make independent learners of these students. Learned helpless is a very real problem for at-risk students. Some students come to high school already incapacitated by helplessness; they have become convinced they are failures. At the high school level, students with learning differences often arrive with many negative survival patterns in place. Cheating and lying are too common. Con artists who can get others to cover for them or give them answers are a frequent dilemma. It is not so much that these are "bad kids" as that they have had to learn how to get through this thing called school. Hence, it is essential that real training and teaching go on with the expectation that learning will happen. Just

going through the motions and playing the game of school will not work. Knowing math and being able to demonstrate that in the evaluation process, writing well enough to communicate your thoughts to others, and reading with meaning and understandingthese are the goals of education in the learning center.

Some remaining questions

Learning centers in area Lutheran high schools raise many questions regarding enrollment, grading, teacher accommodation, and communication. The following questions can serve as discussion-starters for a faculty.

Enrollment

- 1. Do we actively recruit students with at-risk learning differences?
- 2. Is there a limit to how many of these students we will take?
- 3. Is there a cut-off level at which we will not attempt to work with a stu-
- 4. Are we willing to promote the learning center and talk about what we do or is there a fear that that would bring in more students with prob-
- 5. Is our image largely college-prep; are we afraid of losing that image?

Grading

- 1. How do you grade the student who received help with his work?
- 2. Is it fair to modify the work and then grade according to the student's potential to perform within those guidelines?
- 3. Currently, teachers will give a D- and

- pass the student if she simply does all the work. Is it fair to the student who had to work three times as hard to accomplish that?
- 4. Should the student's transcript reflect all modifications?
- 5. Does the student get a full diploma upon graduation?

Teacher accommodation

- 1. How do we train teachers to present information in varied formats according to the differences of the children within the classroom setting?
- 2. When does a teacher decide it is time to evaluate in a different way or expect different avenues of performance?
- 3. How does the teacher communicate expectations that are different for different students?
- 4. How do we help teachers take ownership of the at-risk students and build strong bonds with them?

Communication

- 1. How can we ever get enough meeting times with teachers, parents, and coordinator to stay on top of things?
- 2. How do parents get enough information quickly enough to be effective in the home setting with homework?
- 3. How can we communicate the positive and still be realistic about where the student is functioning?

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When Harry Met Dick, Jane, and Sally

Ramona Czer

ARRY POTTER'S IN trouble—again. But this time it's not Draco Malfoy, Snape, or even You-Know-Who giving him problems—it's Dick, Jane, and Sally.

Harry Potter has come to school, not to Hogwarts, but to our children's schools. He's come because teachers got to thinking if kids are enjoying these books so much (three so far, starting with *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*), why shouldn't classrooms share in the excitement?

However, just like so often at Hogwarts, Harry is now in danger of being kicked out of school. Not by the kids, of course—they still love the boy with the mysterious scar on his forehead, an ethical, adventurous spirit, and



a gang of English friends. No, it's the teachers who have turned on Harry, the teachers who are saying, due to pressure from nervous parents, "Harry isn't worth saving." In response, other parents of disappointed children, are clamoring loudly, "Oh, yes, he is!" Another battle between the dark and the light.

Or is it that easy? Some parents in Twin Cities public schools have complained about the books because they involve wizardry, witchcraft, and magic. One mother said, "The world is so full of evil; why do we have to bring it to them on such an intimate level as the classroom?" (Draper 1999, B1). As Christians, perhaps we too should examine this controver-

sy closely. Harry Potter does attend a school for young wizards and witches, he is learning magic, and some of the characters he encounters aren't just

mean, but
malignantly evil. Is
this appropriate
material
for
Christian
young people?
I'm a



Potter mom myself. Almost every night about 8:30, my eight-year-old son says, "Are we reading Harry Potter?" Then we curl up on his bed, often with his two older sisters joining us (ages twelve and fourteen), and enter the world of Hogwarts. It's a typical English boarding

> Children learn that beautiful princesses are not automatically kind and good, nor ugly beasts hateful, and that even the hero or heroine is not perfect.

school in many ways, except that ghosts haunt the halls, portraits move and talk to each other, a black cat hunts for mischief-makers, and students go to classes with names like "Potions" and "Defense Against the Dark Arts." And all over the country, the Potter books occupy top spots on even adult bestseller lists. They're a publishing phenomenon.

Still, Christian parents and teachers know that just because "everyone else is doing it," doesn't mean we should. Do the Potter books go against our beliefs? Are they bad for children? Is it wrong to read about witches, magic, and the battle against evil?

Fantasy books have long held a special place in children's literature. Even many Christian authors, such as C. S. Lewis, Tolkien, and Madeleine L'Engle, have used the realm of fairy to tell their tales. What has made this way of writing for children so popular and effective in the past?

From my reading there seem to be five main reasons why fantasy appeals to children and why they need this kind of literature: (1) Fantasy accurately depicts the child's viewpoint; (2) fantasy reveals the complexity of life, the dark and light sides of issues, situations, and people; (3) fantasy nourishes the imagination; (4) fantasy rewards faith over reason; (5) fantasy admits the need for sacrifice and courage.

A child's viewpoint

In his landmark book, The Uses of Enchantment, child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim states that for young children, fantasy is not escapism—it's an accurate portrayal of how they see the world. Egocentric, they imagine everything to be like they are; therefore, rocks, trees, and animals feel, think, and talk. Fantasy also reflects their inner lives accurately, which is why they find them "more satisfying than all other children's stories....They speak about his severe inner pressures in a way that the child unconsciously understands"

(Bettelheim 1977, 6).

When fantasy stories immediately project the hero into severe dangers, this also seems believable to children. "To the child it seems that his life is a sequence of periods of smooth living which are suddenly and incomprehensibly interrupted as he is projected into immense danger" (145).

Complexity

These dangers often force characters to face the complexities of life. A prolific fantasy writer, Jane Yolen, believes that "A magical story is not a microscope but a mirror, not a drop of water but a well. It is not simply one thing or two, but a multitude. It is at once lucid and opaque, it accepts both dark and light, speaks to youth and old age" (Yolen 1981, 18). Therefore, children learn that beautiful princesses are not automatically kind and good, nor ugly beasts hateful, and that even the hero or heroine is not perfect.

Bettelheim says that this complexity speaks powerfully to children's unconscious minds because they know deep down that they are not always good. But because this so often "contradicts what they are told by their parents," this "makes the child a monster in his own eyes" (7). Do we also confuse and frighten children by giving them tales filled only with sweetness and light?

Christian children know their evil natures are both present and salvageable through Jesus' blood. Perhaps, as Yolen claims, it's vital that children "have books that confront the evils and do not back away from them. Such books can provide a sense of good and evil, a moral reference point" (Yolen 1981, 73).

Sometimes people accuse fantasy of being too simple, of not admitting the gray areas between the dark and the light. Another fantasy author, Ursula K. Le Guin, explains in her essay "Why are



Most children's fantasy books reward faith over reason.



Americans Afraid of Dragons?" that even Tolkien has been accused of such simplicity. However, when you look at his story, *The Lord of the Rings*, as a psychic journey, you see something quite different and strange.

You see then a group of bright figures, each one with its black shadow. Against the Elves, the Orcs. Against Aragorn, the Black Rider. Against Gandalf, Saruman. And above all, against Frodo, Gollum.... It is truly complex, because both the figures are already doubled. Sam is, in part Frodo's shadow, his inferior part. Gollum is two people, too, in a more direct, schizophrenic sense.... Frodo and Sam are the bright side, Smeagol-Gollum the

shadow side. In the end Sam and Smeagol, the lesser figures, drop away, and all that is left is Frodo and Gollum, at the end of the long quest. And it is Frodo the good who fails, who at the last moment claims the Ring of Power for himself; and it is Gollum the evil who achieves the quest, destroying the Ring, and himself with it. (Le Guin 1979, 58)

Imagination

This complexity is part of what so charms and nourishes the child's imagination. A child likes a story that entertains and arouses curiosity, but for him to be truly enriched, "it must stimulate his imagination" (Bettelheim 1977, 4). It does this by speaking the truth, not what is actually real, but by dealing, as Bettelheim says, with what is significant to a child's understanding and his greatest concerns (116). Le Guin believes that is one reason why adults fear fantasy. "They know its truth challenges, even threatens, all that is false, all that is phony, unnecessary, and trivial in the life they have let themselves be forced into living. They are afraid of dragons, because they are afraid of freedom" (Le Guin 1979, 34).

Eleanor Cameron, a well-loved author of children's books, believes that the finest fantasy tales challenge and help students sense how door after door can open for them, with "perhaps no Final Answer given but the wisdom of questing and the unwisdom of the frozen mind offered in its place" (Cameron 1962, 134). The frozen mind. When we

oppose such questing heroes, do our minds and imaginations seem frozen to our children?

Jane Yolen also observes that the word "magic" comes from the word "mage," or "magician." A "mage" plays with "images," giving his audience pictures that pass for reality, that change understanding, that push them past their initial perceptions into the world of "imagination" (Yolen 1981, 63). Le Guin goes even further by saying that the big idea behind her Earthsea trilogy is Art. "Wizardry is artistry. The trilogy is then, in this sense, about art, the creative experience, the creative process" (Le Guin 1979, 43).

Faith

Interestingly, though Le Guin is not a Christian, she believes that "fantasy is the natural, the appropriate, language for the recounting of the spiritual journey and the struggle of good and evil in the soul" (Le Guin 1979, 59), which brings me to my bravest point: Most children's fantasy books reward faith over reason.

If Madeleine L'Engle has something that is too difficult for adults to swallow, then she'll write it for young adults because they "haven't closed themselves off with fear of the unknown" (Hettinga 1993, 11). Many of her books deal with the need for characters to accept things on faith. The twins in Many Waters can't ride unicorns safely unless they believe in them—the unicorns will disappear if doubted! For the scientifically-minded boys it's a gargantuan challenge "to discover both the imagination and faith to deal with events that are anything but ordinary according to their former sense of things" (113). Yolen makes the connection between fantasy and faith when she says that the "tensions of the

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When Harry met Dick, Jane, and Sally at some schools, fear crept in.

99

stories carry us past the unbelievability of the magic into the credibility of miracles in our everyday lives" (Yolen 1981, 71).

Sacrifice and courage

But simply believing isn't enough for most heroes and heroines in fantasy tales. They must also suffer and find the courage to do the impossible. Tough Magic, claims Yolen, means doing what you must, no matter what the consequences.

The outcome is always in doubt at the moment of choosing.... Arthur waits in Avalon, neither dead nor alive, until he is needed again in the world, betrayed but not forgotten. Beauty would wed her

Beast in his loathsome form, never guessing a prince's face lies hidden beneath the hideous face It takes great courage indeed to cross Mordor with Frodo. It takes great courage to touch the dead body of Aslan upon the slab in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. It takes great courage to step aboard the little boat with Sparrowhawk in A Wizard of Earthsea. Yet in the end, this borrowed cup of courage, this acting out in fantasy, frees the reader from the fear of failing, the fear of powerlessness, the fear of fearfulness and shame.... The fantasy book pushes the reader on to a confrontation with life's greatest mysteries, the great unknowns that frighten us all. (Yolen 1981, 72)

So, if that is what fantasy can and should do for children, how do the Harry Potter stories measure up?

A child's viewpoint.

Children love the Potter stories because they see children doing amazing feats in them, things which seem possible, if we wish hard enough: changing toads into buttons, with a spell stopping your friends from being bullied, flying a broom so fast you catch the Snitch and win the house competition. However, the books aren't just wish-ful-fillment stories; they also deal with the hard side of childhood: unfair punishments, embarrassments, screaming letters from parents, and choices almost unbearable to make.

Complexity

There is real evil at Hogwarts. Though most of the wizards and witches are wise and benevolent instructors, they do make mistakes and have peculiar idiosyncrasies. However, the evildoers belong to the dark side. Yes, that's frightening, but it also makes the books matter. Harry Potter, an orphan and a boy in real danger, can make a huge impact by the everyday choices he makes. To many of the characters, Harry is great because of his past, but we come to respect and admire him for what he does in the hall, in the dorm, and on the Quidditch field in the here and now.

Imagination

How can a book written by such a fertile imagination not nourish us? J. K. Rowling has an uncanny ability to think up names, personalities, games, and settings which, while unique and clever, also seem somehow "right." She is also adept at dropping clues that leave young minds confused and a bit unsettled. Eventually, most of the mysteries are solved for us. But I wonder if some will ever be completely explained magic's like that, mysterious and beyond our conscious understanding. And so is art.

Faith

It's impossible, so far in my reading, to tell if the author is a Christian. Yet I do sense that the whole concept of faith

is near to her heart. Many small events involve Harry trusting his intuition or his conscience, and even going against "the rules" because he must follow a "higher good." Even the central danger in the first book is met with innocence and courage, not reason. The young friends are up against horrible odds, and they win, partly because they trust in goodness and in simply doing something, anything. They also have faith in each other. Professor Dumbledore seems to symbolize justice and mercy in the novels. His godlike qualities over and over help us believe in the ultimate triumph of light over dark.

Sacrifice and courage

This final category is where the books especially shine. Their greatest strength, in my opinion, is how they do not flinch from bad situations, how they admit that good people may have to suffer. Harry has a horrible scar, his parents are dead, he's supposed to be some kind of savior but he doesn't know why or how, someone's always out to get him, he can't solve many of his friends' greatest problems, and he's often misunderstood by his peers and those in authority. He's also often afraid and makes mistakes, and his failings sometimes have expensive price tags attached to them, even causing others to suffer for his mistakes. This is rich, real fare. Books to learn from, books to reread, books to rally around.

When Harry met Dick, Jane, and Sally at some schools, fear crept in. If Rowling could hear our twittering from

her home across the sea, I think this is how she'd react. First she'd listen, then ponder, and then say, "Yes! I can use this!" Next thing we know, in maybe book five or seven, we'll read that Hogwarts is in danger of being shut down! Muggles have crept into the wizard world! They've locked up Dumbledore and made some fake like Gilderoy Lockhart the head of a boring school for goody goodies who must always do things the hard way, who won't believe in ghosts or the dark side, and who desperately need to pretend they're something which they aren't—free.

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