

Completing the Circle of Gospel Ministry

by

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Field Project

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Abstract

Overwhelmed with the number of families that walk into an early childhood learning center and do not become connected to the bigger ministry circle, early childhood directors struggle to solve the puzzle of completing the circle of gospel ministry. The purpose of this field project was to implement the recommendations from Maria Gines' research (2017). Building relationships and shamelessly promoting Jesus demonstrated the largest impact on re-enrollment of families. The results demonstrate that early childhood directors focus on what is in their control while diligently working to educate and promote that which is not in their control.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Identify the Issue

Currently the need is great to complete the circle of gospel ministry in the Early Childhood at Emanuel in New London, Wisconsin. Lost souls are walking into our early childhood learning center, and oftentimes back out. Each soul needs the Gospel. Within this project, I worked with some general understandings. The Gospel is always achieving the goal the Lord intends. The Lord's results are not always visible. These thoughts will not be reiterated, but please carry them forward as they are continually applicable.

For seven years, I have observed our early childhood learning center's families come into the building. The families who are already drawn to the school for a variety of reasons (alumni, Christian, former member) stay connected to the school as their student progresses through the grades. The families who do not have a prior connection to the school often leave without building that lasting connection. The connection to the family is not fully made to build a lasting connection to Jesus via the school and church. Over the seven years, we have had two ECLC children baptized and one set of parents confirmed. While we rejoice with these families, we sorrow over those families who we did not connect to our ministry.

Importance of the Project

As called workers, we should work to remove all stumbling blocks possible. Families are coming to the early childhood ministries, not being sought out or found (Gartner, 2010). They are searching for what we have on our campus. They are learning about Jesus and His love. However, currently, we have stumbling blocks for these families at Emanuel:

1. Weak relationships among the leadership team.
2. Trust concerns among the leadership team.
3. Low level of team ministry mentality on campus.

These stumbling blocks create barriers to connect these families already in the ECLC into the larger family of Emanuel including the church. It is eternally important to remove these stumbling blocks from our campus at Emanuel, New London in order to better serve our families within the ECLC. It is imperative, as Maria Gines (2017) found in her report, for ministers of the Gospel to work together as a team to best serve the families of our early childhood learning center and create that circle of gospel ministry.

Project Purpose and Goal

During this project, my goals were the recommendations from Gines (2017) in order to overcome the stumbling blocks that exist. While some of the recommendations were already in progress, my goal was to strategically execute these four recommendations:

1. Create a warm and inviting, mission-focused facility.
2. Intentionalize a personal relationship with children and caregivers.
3. Implement a comprehensive harvest strategy.
4. Shamelessly encourage a relationship with Jesus Christ.

These recommendations focus on what I did to further shepherd these young families. The outcomes that I prayed to see were increased church attendance among our early childhood families, increased involvement in our Bible Information Class - Life with God, and increased intent to return into our 4K and 5K classes for the following school year. As continued work with these recommendations moved forward, an increase in

child and adult baptisms was another fruit of faith that I prayed would be observed.

Finally, as families were brought into the circle of Gospel ministry, church membership would also increase.

As I considered these goals of my field project, I looked to the plan I developed for the graduate course Leadership for Change, “Completing the Circle of Gospel Ministry within the Early Childhood at Emanuel” (Dobberstein, 2018). This plan included the other called and lay leaders within the congregation. We have had leadership change since the beginning of that paper. I again wanted to work toward a partnership in ministry mentality. The outcome from this paper was a joint effort of some called positions (early childhood director, principal, pastors, staff ministers) in shepherding our young families as demonstrated in the shared document, “Previous Strategic Plans Framework” (see Appendix B). With this joint effort, God willing, our team would be able to monitor the involvement of all leadership parties with the families of our ECLC. The document would record the activities of each called position and allowed for accountability of completing the activities and recording the outcomes when completed.

Chapter II: Literature Review

There is much discussion regarding different techniques and events that can bring families into the church to create a warm, inviting, mission-focused facility (Commission on Lutheran Schools, 2015; Telling the Next Generation, n.d.). We have heard about Trunk or Treats, Christmas for Kids, or Vacation Bible Schools. Potluck meals, Facebook posts, and community involvement are often highlighted as key elements in successful outreach for ECLCs. Excellent education, high early childhood standards, and following state and local guidelines for early childhood teaching are advertised as wonderful encouragers for parents to enroll their little ones (Balza, 2011).

Yet, the statistics are not ringing the joyful tones of success. According to statistics from the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools, in 2016/2017, of the parents and students who had a connection with an ECLC: 372 children were baptized, 67 adults were baptized, 701 adults attended a Bible Information Class, and 302 adults were confirmed. Praise the Lord for these great blessings! However, this is only a fraction of the families that were in our ECLCs every day. Those statistics came from only twenty-seven percent of early childhood ministries in the synod (WELS Early Childhood Ministry Statistics, 2016-2017).

The limited visual results or earthly outcomes lead us to look for what more needs to be done in order to connect families with Jesus. Relationships are vital in the connection process. Intentionally communicating takes a great deal of relationship building (Wietzke, 2012).

Strong school cultures have better motivated teachers. Highly motivated teachers have greater success in terms of student performance and student outcomes.

School principals (other leaders) seeking to improve student performance should focus on improving the school's culture by getting the relationships right between themselves, their teachers, students and parents (Gruenert, 2008, p. 77-78).

Be intentional. These words have resonated with me throughout this research process. There is much talk about "Telling the Next Generation" and "harvest strategies" (Telling the Next Generation, n.d.). The word intentional needs to direct how families are engaged in our early childhood ministries and connected to Jesus. In order to engage families and connect them to Jesus, each early childhood ministry must intentionally lead with a Christ-like leadership, intentionally create a positive culture (Bloom, 2014), and intentionally communicate with their families (Freudenburg & Lawrence, 1998).

Leading with a Christ-like leadership intentionally means including the parents and others who have a stake in the ministry. Christ-like leadership will be collective leadership, "the sum of influence exercised on school decisions by those educators, parents and students associated with the school" (Walstrom, et. al, 2010, p. 8). In this service to Christ, early childhood ministries must remember how Christ served with a servant heart. He allowed many to lead around him, and he empowered others to spread the Good News so that more might know His name. With this being said, leaders must intentionally work toward actually having parents, congregational members and others involved, not just being open to the idea (Leyer, n.d.).

Engaging families means intentionally creating a positive culture (Gruenert, 2008). As representatives of our Lord, we strive to do all we are able to bring those who do not know him in our doors. We certainly cannot "sell" Jesus because only the Holy Spirit gives that gift. We are here to make the package of the gift as appealing as

possible. A positive school climate is that wrapping paper. This is the reason we are where we are, doing what we do. We want everything to be centered around Jesus and what He has done for us (Olson, 1992). By keeping Jesus as the center of our school, the climate will be positive. When we see Jesus' great work of salvation, we cannot help but have a positive outlook. As it says in Proverbs chapter fifteen verse thirteen, "A happy heart makes the face cheerful!" With this positive outlook, parents and students are drawn to us. When they are drawn to us, they are drawn to the Lord which opens the door for us to intentionally communicate his message (Holman, 2007).

The positive outlook drawing in families was echoed in Maria Gines' thesis (Gines, 2017). Her research goal was to find what makes an ECLC a place that demonstrates markers of faith. She personally visited six ECLCs for observation and interview, and she collected data from these six sites. Three sites demonstrated a higher percentage of the markers of faith. These successful sites used intentional and prominent outreach ministry strategies to connect the parents and children to Jesus and the associated church. Personal connections and Gospel invitations by the early childhood director and teachers were key communications opening the door for the Holy Spirit to work. Pastors, congregational members and others in the church were present and very active within the top three ECLCs. The baseline sites, the three sites that demonstrated lower percentages of the markers of faith, practiced incidental evangelism. The early childhood directors and teachers felt uncomfortable making the invitation. Pastors and others in the church were absent. The sites that had the low percentage of faith markers did not create a warm and inviting, mission-focused facility, intentionalize a personal

relationship with children and caregivers, implement a comprehensive harvest strategy, or shamelessly encourage a relationship with Jesus Christ.

While working toward enacting the early childhood techniques and implementing the go-to events is important, it is not, in the end, what will connect families to Jesus and our churches. Gines (2017) draws the distinct difference between the introductory work and the work of connecting families to Jesus.

While having good educational practices and clean and maintained facilities are important for enrolling students, and wall decorations are important for communicating a Christian culture, these, in and of themselves, are insufficient to connect the Gospel to the lives of children and parents. In his essay, *Of Snakes and Doves: Using Our Heads and Following Christ's Heart in Evangelism*, Daniel Leyrer emphasizes the draw of a Christian school environment where the parents feel safe in placing their children in the school's care, especially an ECLC, "The growth of the number of early childhood schools in our church body is testimony to something evangelists have known for years. Nothing attracts the unchurched to our churches more than quality care and education for their children" and from this, it gives the congregation and school family "the opportunity to place the gospel on young hearts." These factors instead are the first steps of getting families in the doors of a school and church so that the congregation and school have the opportunities to reach out to these families and it gives the Holy Spirit the opportunity and time to work in the hearts (p. 6).

In conclusion, the literature demonstrates the need to create a warm and inviting, mission-focused facility, intentionalize a personal relationship with children and

caregivers, implement a comprehensive harvest strategy, and shamelessly encourage a relationship with Jesus Christ. From the public sector focusing on positive culture to a WELS early childhood director researching markers of faith, each concludes that these factors are important in order to better serve students.

Chapter III: Implementation

Procedures

I completed this field project in my own setting at Emanuel Lutheran School in New London, WI. I began by gathering consent from our families and staff, asking for their assistance in my work. I worked with the entire ECLC staff, pastoral staff, principal, and youth and family staff minister of Emanuel to execute the goals of the field project. I completed this field project from January 20 through March 13, 2020. We focused on early childhood families and their connection to Jesus. During this field project, my goals were to enact the recommendations from Maria Gines (Gines, 2017). While some of the recommendations were already in progress, my goal was to strategically enact the four recommendations:

1. Create a warm and inviting, mission-focused facility.
2. Intentionalize a personal relationship with children and caregivers.
3. Implement a comprehensive harvest strategy.
4. Shamelessly encourage a relationship with Jesus Christ.

These recommendations were the focus of what I enacted to further shepherd these young families.

To create a warm and inviting, mission-focused facility, I gathered my ECLC staff together after Christmas break, January 3rd, to reiterate the purpose of our ECLC. We are at Emanuel, New London to serve the Lord and reach the students and their families with his word. With that focus, I reminded the staff to take every opportunity to be welcoming and friendly within the building and out. With every opportunity to naturally bring up the child's faith, invite the family to church, or talk about Jesus time at

school. I explained that these intentional actions build into personal relationships. I also reached out to the other staff members mentioned on January 3rd as well. I had a similar reminder and request for them. Finally, I took these reminders to heart myself. I strive to be warm and easy to talk to when at school and in the community all the time. However, from this January 3rd going forward, this was an intentional effort to seek out those opportunities. These actions naturally helped build relationships between all the staff and the children and families.

In order to intentionalize personal relationships, there were several personal relationships to review. To begin, I reflected on my relationship with the families. Through this personal reflection, I realized that there were two families that were not well connected to me. I did not feel as though I knew them well or had a meaningful conversation with them. My goal was to build those relationships specifically over the quarter. I would do this by intentionally looking for the parents at drop off and pick up. I would plan conversation starters or questions. I would also plan reports on daily behavior to gain another reason to speak to the parents.

Another set of relationships to review was that of the ECLC staff and the families. Each staff member, depending on the hours worked, has a different level of contact with families in order for that family to have another point of contact. In our discussion on January 3rd, we decided on families that each staff member could focus. The focus was to create or extend a relationship with the family or families.

The last set of relationships to intentionalize were that of pastor, principal, and youth and staff minister and the ECLC families. I worked to enact my plan from my Leadership for Change paper, "Completing the Circle of Gospel Ministry within the

Early Childhood at Emanuel.” We have had leadership change since the beginning of that process. Therefore, the Strategic Plans that were established several years ago, found in Appendix B, needed collaboration and revision. To create collaboration, I worked toward a partnership in ministry mentality by meeting with the pastors, principal, and youth and family staff minister to collaborate on revision of the strategic plans.

My plan was to encourage action items and use Appendix A to record our action items, person of ownership/accountability, and timeline of completion. As we met, this plan was altered. It morphed into a study of a paper by John Steinbrenner, “Outreach That Any Congregation Calling Itself ‘Evangelical Lutheran’ Will Do.” The study was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and closures of our school and church.

Another goal of meeting was to work together to finalize our harvest strategy. Each of our pastors, principal, staff minister, and myself would have defined roles in the process of meeting and acclimating our young families. As our meetings morphed into a study of outreach, I realized that this process was going to be much longer than anticipated. As one of our pastors stated, we need to design a harvest strategy before we can implement one. Our study showed us that we have more work to do in designing the harvest strategy before it will be implemented.

The final goal of shamelessly encouraging Jesus was a continual reminder to our early childhood staff, pastors, staff minister, principal, and myself. Shamelessly encouraging Jesus would include inviting to church and Bible study on multiple occasions in a natural way, inviting to JAM! Time, referencing the Jesus time lessons and offering materials to assist families at home just to name a few specifically. JAM Time! is an event for small children and their grown-up to have devotion, sing and play in a

Jesus focused environment. Individual situations dictated what to say, who to say it to, and how to say it. The COVID-19 pandemic created unforeseen opportunities to shamelessly encourage a relationship with Jesus. This became the goal with the most opportunity to have action.

Artifacts

Throughout the field project, I kept a reflection journal based on my experiences. This journal was a handwritten piece where I recorded what happened, who it happened for or with, my understanding of why it happened, and other pertinent information. I also kept a digital calendar to record the dates and times of meetings and publications. My email archive recorded the connections with families and interactions with the other stakeholders. Due to the very personal nature of a journal and calendar and to maintain the highest level of confidentiality, the journal and calendar will not be shared in full. However, much of what is recorded in the coming paragraphs is gleaned from this journal and the calendar.

I monitored the church attendance from the students in my class. To determine net gain or loss in attendance, my plan was to compare second-quarter results with the third-quarter results. This plan was interrupted by the pandemic. I was able to record the second quarter church attendance. Due to the closure of school right at the end of the third quarter, formal records were not entered. I requested church attendance from our ECLC families during the school closure. I received eight responses out of forty-nine students, not giving me enough information to compare. This was complicated by online/radio/DVD church services which created access issues for families. Due to the pandemic, I removed church attendance as a faith marker for this project.

I reviewed the enrollment of our Life with God class. The net gain or loss in attendance first semester was compared to second-semester class. The starting dates for the class were unknown, so attempts to encourage attendance were hampered. Once the class was running, the pastor in charge became ill and cancelled classes. When the COVID-19 closures began, the class was suspended. As of this writing, the class has not resumed.

Current students have re-enrolled for the next school year. The data is determined by comparing the current re-enrollment with the year past to observe net gain or loss of return. The Enrollment Table in Appendix C demonstrates the rate of return. The re-enrollment of a student at Emanuel was the benchmark, not necessarily into the next grade. The rate of return for 3P for the school year 18/19 was 41%. The rate of return for 3P for the school year 19/20 was 83%. The 4K rate of return in 18/19 was 92% versus 90% in 19/20 demonstrating virtually no change. This data would lead me to believe that the goals of creating a warm and inviting, mission-focused atmosphere had a higher degree of impact on the 3P families compared to the 4K families. The larger increase in the 3P comparison over the 4K comparison could also represent more member families in 3P in 19/20, the ECLC reputation becoming more established, or that I became more effective in communicating with non-members.

Another data point from the observation of re-enrollment became New to Emanuel Lutheran School Students. The 3P New to Emanuel Lutheran School Students for the school year 18/19 was 30, 19/20 26, and 20/21 28. This data point demonstrates that the 3P year gains large numbers of New to Emanuel Lutheran School Students and the data point was nearly static. The 4K New to Emanuel Lutheran School Student for

the school year 18/19 was 10, 19/20 6, and 20/21 5. This data point demonstrates that the 4K year gains smaller numbers of New to Emanuel Lutheran School Students, and the data point was nearly static.

A third data point that came out from the enrollment data was the total number of students combined in 4K and 3P per school year. The total number of students in the ECLC for 18/19 was 58, 19/20 was 50, and 20/21 at this writing is 61. This demonstrates a change from year to year in enrollment. The increase from 19/20 to 20/21 may be due to the increase in an effort to encourage the warm and inviting, mission-focused facility. Parents were encouraged at every opportunity to invite others to enroll their children for 3P or 4K for the 20/21 school year.

I planned to use the Strategic Plans Framework (See Appendix A) to monitor progress in the team ministry. I thought this would allow me to monitor progress and encourage investment among all of our staff stakeholders. The staff stakeholders included in the strategic plans framework were our three pastors, youth and family staff minister, principal, and myself. The strategy morphed into a study of outreach. We focused on the paper, "Outreach That Any Congregation Calling Itself 'Evangelical Lutheran' Will Do" by John Steinbrenner, 2011. Through this paper we were able, as a team, to reflect on what outreach is to each of us and how we can come to an agreement of what the work will look like. The team of the pastors, staff minister, principal, and I discussed outreach over four meetings. Through these meetings, we were able to continue the discussion of outreach at Emanuel in New London, Wisconsin. Each of us had a different perspective shaped by our individual experiences. During our discussion at the final meeting, the discussion turned to the question from the Steinbrenner paper on

page 3, “Is my pride too drunk to listen?” The author goes in depth from a pastor’s perspective of how his pride can blur his sight of ministry. “Yes, I am a WELS pastor. But my sinful nature is as susceptible to the sins of pride and arrogance as anyone else’s - as a called leader, maybe more so” (Steinbrenner, 2011). This area of the paper spurred a very involved discussion. The questions posed by the author led the group to discuss the idea of gender roles. Through these discussions, the team began to make headway to creating consensus on the harvest strategy. Our scheduled time came to a close a week before the field project closed due to spring break. The group requested that week not have a meeting.

After having these meetings, we realized that we need to build consensus in a harvest strategy before we can itemize methods and create accountability. Items I would encourage for our strategic plans framework are Pastor/Staff Minister Rotation for Greeting at Pick-up/Drop-off, intentionalize contact opportunities at EC & Whole school events, read or do a devotion in the classroom, scheduled walkthroughs, interview for the families with a pastor prior to starting point, and pastor meal event with all new families. We will need to do more work to come to consensus on the strategy and methods before the framework can be created. As of this writing, the meetings have not resumed. During spring break, which is when the last meeting was to be held, the closures for COVID-19 began.

Finally, my goal of shamelessly encouraging a relationship with Jesus Christ became the goal with the most opportunity to have action. “Shamelessly” became a word of action for me. It permeated me through and through and gave me zeal as I had not had previously. After every class period at pick up, without fear or trepidation, I shared with

the families a recap of our Jesus lesson and a tip of how to talk to their little one about the lesson, song, or application to their lives. Every day I became more amazed at how this flowed more easily for me. The families received this with smiles and then even questions of how to incorporate the lesson more at home. This then flowed into my written correspondence with the families. My newsletters and emails contained the Lord's name more than ever. I worked hard to remove the worry from my mind of being "cheesy" or "over the top" in my references to our great God. When I did worry that it may seem "cheesy" or "over the top," I continued to share the name of our Lord and his great works. I became so excited at how easy this became the more I added references to the Lord, gave him credit for everything, or worked in encouragement in the Lord. I encouraged the staff to practice more as well. This was particularly evident once the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Before the closures began, the fear and anxiety of COVID-19 began to surround all of us, the families of our ECLC and myself. I had this urge that I needed to do more. I began writing devotional thoughts and ideas, sharing Bible passages, and asking the families to share Bible passages with me through our newsletter platform. The week of spring break, there would normally have been no newsletter emailed out due to the vacation. I sent a newsletter home on Monday. It was Biblical support and encouragement. I did not know if the families needed this, but I knew I did. The families responded with their own encouraging emails, Bible passages, and support. I sent a newsletter on Wednesday and Friday, and the response was the same. This solidified my resolve that "shamelessly encouraging a relationship with Jesus" was not only spiritually beneficial for the families, it was spiritually beneficial for me!

The response from my families was amazing. I was serving forty-nine families throughout the COVID-19 closure. Every family connected with me at least twice through the nine weeks of distance learning. Forty-seven of the 49 families connected with me at least every other week. Thirty-nine of the 49 families connected with me every week, many of them multiple times a week. These regular check-ins were spiritual and personal and often both.

After I initiated the spiritual support in full force, the families were compelled to support me spiritually as well. These connections were more than just the work that was to be completed. The connections were reflections on God's grace, mercy and love. The connections included personal updates of personal welfare from families to teacher and teacher to families. Without personal face-to-face interaction, these connections came to include pictures, videos, and phone calls. While the distance learning was a challenge not having Jesus' little lambs and their families in person, the closure of school was such a blessing to me in learning how to be "shameless for Jesus"!

Chapter IV: Reflective Essay

Introduction

Through this field project, I worked to enact the goals of creating a warm and inviting, mission-focused facility, intentionalizing a personal relationship with children and caregivers, implementing a comprehensive harvest strategy, and shamelessly encouraging a relationship with Jesus Christ. While working to enact these goals, I found that I needed to focus on what I could contribute and work on, and encourage the items and ideas that were out of my control. I was reminded that the Lord is in control, and he will guide his church.

Conclusions

Create a warm and inviting, mission-focused facility.

Create was the word that Gines used in her paper. As we began to work together, we realized that the goal could be changed to *document* and *add* to accurately reflect what was happening at Emanuel, New London. We realized that we were not at the foundational level with this goal. A warm and inviting, mission-focused facility had begun long before we, the called stakeholders, had even been born. Emanuel, New London has a long history of welcoming the community into its midst and looking to spiritually and physically support people in the community and beyond. As we looked around, we saw a beautiful campus that is adorned with spiritual markers, Bible verses, and filled with Christians working to shine Jesus' love. As we changed the wording of the goal to *document* and *add*, we worked to document what was already being done. We found this to be important in order to recognize the work of those who have gone before us, encourage those who are working now, and define where we need to go from here.

The add portion became the road map for the future. This was the challenging part because adding to anyone's work or mindset needs educating. We began to educate the ECLC staff and the staff stakeholders in methods that would encourage that feeling of warmth and mission focus in our families.

Intentionalize a personal relationship with children and caregivers.

This goal was a very personal reflection for each person that was tasked with intentionalizing a personal relationship. As I stated, I began with myself. The two families that I found I needed to build a relationship with were challenges. As I reflect, this is why I had not already built a stronger relationship with them as we began the third quarter. These two families shared several characteristics. They were both very private, handling complex family dynamics, and dual working parents. When families are very private, this poses a challenge for the teachers because it is so much more difficult to glean information that allows for personal insight. Extreme privacy from a family builds a wall of exclusion. The families only wanted to be open with school matters.

Each family was in the midst of a complex family dynamic. I only learned this after what felt like extreme investigative work! Each family had unique health challenges and blessings that were a surprise. Both situations needed to be handled in their very private way before the school family would be included. Both families had dual working parents. While I identified and worked through these three issues, I was able to build a relationship with each family to the point that I felt it was equitable with the rest of the families in the class. God blessed my efforts by allowing me to see increased church attendance for one family and both families decided to re-enroll their students for the 20/21 school year.

I also worked with the ECLC staff at building relationships with the families at a more personal level. Several of the staff demonstrated understanding. One staff member began personally contacting families to encourage attendance at JAM time! or other events. Two other staff members made personal visits during the COVID-19 distance learning to demonstrate their love and concern.

I worked with the staff stakeholders (pastors, youth and family staff minister, and principal). I encouraged visits to the children and their families at drop off and pick up or high fives in the hall as they pass. I did not recognize an increase in visits or relationships built.

Implement a comprehensive harvest strategy.

This goal was going to be the area where I needed support the most. I knew I would need the staff stakeholders to work with me in order to accomplish the goal. I did not anticipate how lengthy or involved this process would be. As we began our work together, we decided we were at a much more foundational level than implementing a comprehensive harvest strategy. In working together in our meetings, we realized that we needed to build consensus on what our comprehensive harvest strategy would look like, how we would implement the strategy, and where accountability would be built in. We changed this goal to design a harvest strategy.

This was the most difficult goal for me. I worked to educate the pastors, staff minister and principal on the importance of a harvest strategy and the link to early childhood families. The education occurred during the meetings throughout the field project. From those meetings, the pastors decided that one pastor will be the outreach pastor, and he will be my dedicated contact person. I still observe a resistance from the

pastors, staff minister, and principal. Action items are not in place at the time of this writing. I recognize that I need to do more to educate the pastors, staff minister and principal so that they might recognize they are needed to connect our families to the church. I need to do a better job of demonstrating my need for support and involvement in the design and implementation of the harvest strategy in order to complete the circle of Gospel ministry.

Shamelessly encourage a relationship with Jesus Christ.

This whole goal was a personal reflection. Each day I would look for ways that I would better be able to reflect the love of our Jesus. This goal also demonstrated the most action. I was able to reflect shamelessly in daily announcements at pick up and drop off, parent interactions, publications - newsletters, emails, and letters home - and my interactions with the ECLC staff and the staff stakeholders. As I reflect on these separate situations, I feel that daily announcements at pick up and drop off, parent interactions, and publications - newsletters, emails, and letters home - saw the largest amount of effort and results. I feel as though this was an area the Lord really grabbed my attention and focused my work. Interactions with the ECLC staff and the staff stakeholders need improvement. I need to remember that even though they are already connected into Jesus and that circle is complete, the circle always needs to be strengthened. Our personal relationships and our relationships with the Lord always need to be a priority, otherwise, with the work of the devil, they will become weaker. I want to make this realization a priority as I move forward.

Next Steps

Moving forward in my ministry, I have goals to continue working. With the information that I have gathered, I will continue a warm, inviting, mission-focused facility. This was a goal in process and will continue to be in process. This is a goal that needs to stay a priority or the progress will be lost. The same holds true for intentionalizing personal relationships with children and caregivers. Time and energy needs to be used in order to continue having quality interactions and relationships with those who enter our ECLC. An area of growth that needs to continue at Emanuel, New London is that of designing and implementing a comprehensive harvest strategy. My work needs to be the education and demonstration of the need for support from staff stakeholders - pastors, staff ministers, and principal - by the early childhood director, children, and families. I believe as we continue to grow as a team, we will all be willing to shamelessly encourage a relationship with Jesus. Our faith cannot help but speak of him!

I would recommend an area of further study could be a development of professional development or continuing education for staff stakeholders - pastors, staff ministers, and principals - and interactions with early childhood families. As we worked through our meetings, it became evident that the pastors, staff minister, and principal were uncomfortable with the expectation of interaction with very small children and their families. One of the staff stakeholders admitted that this type of interaction is not something he would willingly choose for an evening or weekend activity. Others stated that time was holding them back from making these connections. Perhaps with further professional development, time could be managed in a way that would allow for more

time to dedicate to the small children and families coming into our ECLCs. Continuing education could possibly serve as a means of honing or developing skills that would create the desire to serve these families in this way.

Through this field project and my previous years of experience, I have learned that I need to focus on the things of which I am in control, specifically “relationships” and “shamelessly encouraging a relationship with Jesus.” Those are the areas where I might make the most substantial impact. I recommend that ECLC directors focus on these items which are in their direct control. The things that I cannot control, I must work diligently to educate those who do have direct control and pray for the Lord’s support and blessing. The Lord has these and all things in his hands, and I need to trust in his timing and his plan.

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Appendix B: Previous Strategic Plans Framework

Big Idea / Goal / Desired Outcome	Current Reality	Strategic Plans
<p>Parents and students will recognize and be familiar with Pastors/Staff Minister in order that a positive relationship & foundation is built to foster nurture & outreach opportunities</p>	<p>No intentionalized plan; Hit & miss contact</p>	<p>1) Pastor/Staff Minister Rotation for Greeting at Pick-up/Drop-off 2) Intentionalize contact opportunities at EC & Whole school events 3) Read or do a devotion in the classroom 4) Scheduled walkthroughs 5) Interview with Pastor Schulz prior to starting point 6) Pastor Grill-out (Aug/Sept) with all new families(New Shepherd Families??)</p>
<p>Educate our parents in God’s view of parenting so that Parents are better prepared to raise God-fearing children</p>	<p>Intro Class Parenting with Love & Logic</p>	<p>1) Newsletter Parenting Articles 2) Birth to Five materials equipping parents</p>
<p>The faculty is connected to the pastors professionally and supported in their spiritual life so that the faculty grows spiritually with the pastors</p>	<p>No intentionalized plan</p>	<p>Joint Pastor/Faculty Bible Study / Share time? Assign each pastor to 3 faculty members to touch base with</p>
<p>Parents of small children become familiar with the Pastors/Staff Minister. Outcome-Positive, foundational relationship building to work nurture or outreach.</p>	<p>Informal attendance at JAM</p>	<p>Intentionalized attendance at JAM</p>
<p>Connected approach to family ministry so that all called workers are working together towards common goals.</p>	<p>No unified approach</p>	<p>Feedback on church attendance / family spiritual needs Informally with assigned pastor Process for communicating family needs</p>

Appendix C: Re-enrollment Table

	Enrollment 3P	Returning 3P	Enrollment 4K	Returning 4K	New to the school student 3P	New to the school student 4K
18/19	32	13(41%)	26	24(92%)	30	10
19/20	29	24(83%)	21	19(90%)	26	6
20/21	30		29		28	5