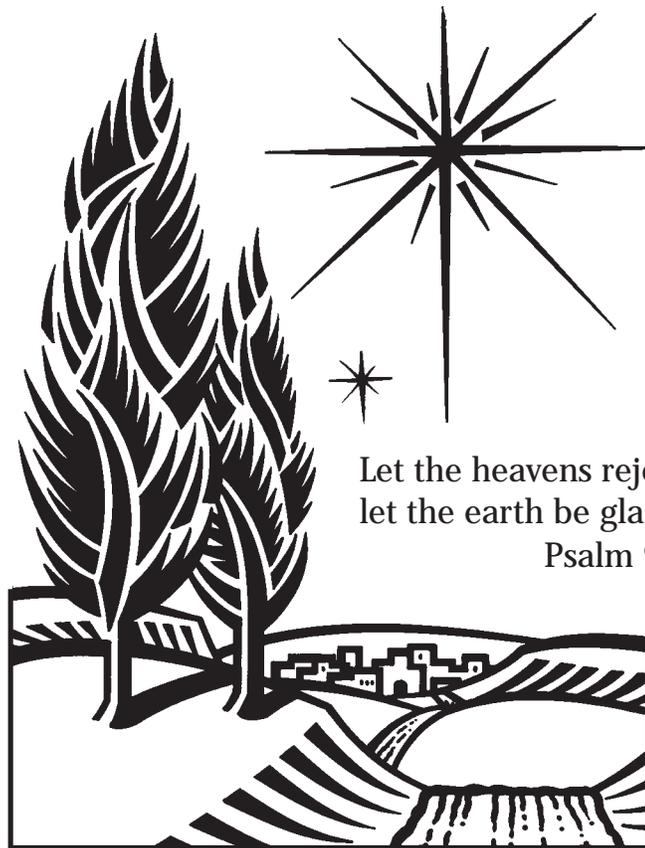


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DECEMBER 1996

The Lutheran Educator



The WELS Education Journal



Let the heavens rejoice;
let the earth be glad.

Psalm 96:11

The Lutheran Educator

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

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Cartoon Theology

Oliver Cromwell once told an artist to paint him with “roughnesses, pimples, warts, and everything as you see me.” In many instances the artists of the Reformation did just that with their subjects. At the end of his life Luther looks careworn, bloated and wrinkled with age. Hans Asper’s painting of Ulrich Zwingli shows a man whose set jaw suggests determination and whose downcast eyes suggest either disdain or disapproval. Calvin looks stern and uncompromising in most drawings or paintings. No doubt the artists were drawing and painting people exactly as they saw them. It’s a good thing. It gives insights into the character and theology of these people that mere words cannot.

The cartoons and caricatures of the 16th century serve a similar purpose. Giving Pope Leo the appearance of a lion and John Eck that of a pig is not just a play on the meaning of their names, but reveals that artists dared to say more with their art than others could safely say orally or in written form. A caricature of Tetzels sale of indulgences shows peasants in tattered and patched clothing offering more money than they surely can afford for what they don’t realize is simply a gimmick to make money for the Church.

Tetzel is seen on a braying donkey jingling a tambourine-like instrument to call people’s attention to what he has to offer. The money-chest in the middle of the picture seems inordinately large and fancy and is triple-locked, suggesting that it holds the vast sums of money the church collected through the sale of indulgences.

Just as did the caricatures and cartoons of the Reformation era, so today comics in the daily newspaper, political cartoons, and cartoons in church magazines reveal a great deal about human nature, human relationships, and (in the latter case at least) church doctrines and procedures.

Those who serve in the church do well to read them, not just for their entertainment value, but that they might better understand the people they serve and the problems they face. Cartoons can offer some valuable insights into human characteristics and behaviors and even theological matters.

So far as we know Jesus did not make use of cartoons in teaching. He regularly made use of word pictures, however. His parables were such, and a case can be made for saying that his miracles were word pictures in concrete. That suggests that Jesus would wholeheartedly have endorsed the use of cartoons during the Reformation and today as well. The one caveat he would no doubt issue is that such cartoons always be used in love and that they serve the cause of the gospel.

MJL

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

John R. Freese

Seven Habits of High Effective People

This best-seller is not necessarily an educational reference. It is instead a book about what the author calls “character ethic” and basic principles of effective living such as integrity, humility, and courage. The seven basic points can easily be connected with scriptural truths that would be of benefit when considering how best to address parental concerns.

1. Be proactive

This means we anticipate possible concerns and act to eliminate or reduce them. In keeping with our divine calls, we assist parents in the Christian education of their children by being prepared, maintaining Christian discipline, establishing a pattern of communicating early and often with parents in regard to commendations and concerns, modeling a sanctified life in word and deed. We choose our course of action in consultation with those in authority over us (principal, pastor, board, congregation, God). We never wait for a parent to hear about an incident from a child’s perspective; we talk



to parents first. The reader may wish to pause and check the following references for positive and negative examples of proactive concern: Psalm 1, Proverbs 4, 1 Corinthians 2, 1 Timothy 4

2. Begin with the end in mind

The end, or the goal, in our work is clearly known. We know that heaven has been won for us on the basis of what Jesus Christ has done. Through him we have eternal life, and out of love for him we can not help but live for him and tell others about him. This goal will then determine what we emphasize and practice in our schools and classrooms on a daily basis. Again, think of positive and negative examples

from Scripture: Genesis 1-3, Job 19:23-27, Psalm 46, Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 15

3. *First things first*

Concentrate on the priorities, not “urgent” irritations. How much of our day is spent in addressing annoying and superficially “important” interruptions? As a result, we do not get to our real priorities, we become irritated, and we have allowed Satan, the world, and our sinful flesh to distract us from what we are supposed to be doing. By emphasizing Christ in our lives, the Holy Spirit allows us to transcend petty issues. Instead of focusing on irritations, we rejoice in salvation (and so do our school families). Reflect on these examples from Scripture: Luke 10:38-42, Luke 12:13-21, Galatians 5.

4. *Think win/win*

Covey defines win/win as a “frame of heart and mind that constantly seeks mutual benefits.” In an ideal parent-teacher discussion, if both parties are living sanctified lives, this is natural. This is what President Gurgel refers to in his article, “Great Expectations.” Everybody wins because under Christ members and called workers care about each other and in love act accordingly.

Under this point, we as called workers fail if in trying to win the approval of men we abandon what God requires. We can think “win/win” all day long and try to live in peace with all men, but if a parent raises an issue that is in fact sinful, our duty is to proclaim the Word of God. We are to apply the Law, emphasize that this is God’s standard and not just something we arbitrarily

and capriciously made up, and then pray that God moves the heart of the sinner to repent. This is not easy, but this is what we have been called to do and God has promised that he will be with us in this vital work.

Equally important, if the Law is applied in love to sinful actions we as teachers have taken, it is incumbent upon us to hear that message and with the power of the Holy Spirit repent and change that action. Scriptural examples: Genesis 4, Exodus 5-12, Psalm 133, Daniel 1, Matthew 18.

5. *Seek first to understand, then to be understood*

This point is a key element in communication, and one of the reasons why concerns rise to the level of conflict. Covey stresses listening closely to what someone is saying, realizing that it is not a matter of winning or losing a point, but rather learning how a person is feeling or hurting and then offering a response.

In our work, sometimes we hear more than we would wish when addressing a parental concern. Some of our families are truly hurting and we can routinely hear some of their hurts in their concerns. Parents fixated with the social relationships of their child may well be experiencing that exact type of hurt in their own lives, and they desperately want to see their children spared that pain. Parents on either end of the spectrum in regard to their child’s achievement, either obsessed with it or totally indifferent to it, may be struggling with their own accomplishments or lack thereof. Understanding parents’ perceptions may

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allow us more effectively to apply the Word of God not just to a situation in their child's life, but also to the parents' lives.

Again it bears mentioning that our goal is not just to understand or to be understood as an end in itself. Our goal is to win souls and strengthen souls. Finally, if a person clings to a sinful position, our attitude is not to just understand it and accept it, but to understand it and apply God's Word in love. Scriptural examples: Acts 17:16-34, Romans 14, Galatians 2, 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

6. *Synergize*

Covey uses the phrase creative cooperation to explain this concept. The idea is that by working together we can come up with alternatives better than what any one person could have developed on his or her own.

Synergism obviously does not apply to justification, but it does apply to the education of a child. Parents and teachers will each have perspectives, experiences, and skills from God to best reach a child. Cooperation is required so that what is taught in church and in school is not "undone" at home. A pamphlet entitled Parental Partnerships in Education (Ziebell), along with other such handouts, may help reinforce home-school relationships. It is important to emphasize that teachers are called to assist parents in their primary responsibility for the spiritual training of their children, not usurp it unto themselves. Scriptural examples: Nehemiah 2, Mark 10:13-16, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus.

7. *Sharpen the saw*

This means to take time out from the constant pressure of responsibility and recharge physically, spiritually, mentally, and socially. The world certainly buys into this concept, sometimes to the point of excess. Our society is consumed with how a person looks, and with exercise, recreation, therapy, and

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*Our biggest mistake
in dealing with
parental concerns is
taking the gift of
prayer for granted.*

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entertainment. The fact is, however, Covey is correct in the basic principle. If we are too tired, we become irritable and are more likely to make foolish, even sinful, decisions. Exercise is important for a healthy body and mind. Proper diet is not just something mom reminded us of years ago, or in her last letter. It is important for good health. We need friends, and a person who isolates himself or herself loses perspective, good judgment, and good counsel. Scriptural references: Genesis 2:2-3, Proverbs 27:9, Matthew 9:10, 1 Timothy 5:23.

These seven habits, especially when connected with scriptural examples and

God's promises, are important, but in order to be truly effective one more habit is vital.

8. Frequent conversation with our Lord

Covey gives scant reference to spiritual recharging in his list of seven effective habits. He does mention it, but many things can qualify for "spiritual renewal" in his definition of character ethic.

As Christians, we have the only answer to conflict and stress. Our God, the same who has assured us that with him nothing is impossible, has also promised to hear our prayers and to be by our side in this world's struggles. Our biggest mistake in dealing with parental concerns is taking this gift for granted.

Through prayer, we can pour out our souls to our Lord. He knows our hurts, our fears, our frustrations. Christ has lived through our experiences of addressing concerns. We have a Savior who knows the power of Satan and our incredible frailty. He promises to answer our prayers for our ultimate good. He promises that the Holy Spirit will even take our sighs and groans to the throne of the Father and plead for us on our behalf. A gift like this puts an after-school meeting with Mrs. Smith or the next board meeting with Mr. Jones in proper perspective.



In regard to this gift of prayer, do we remember to pray to God on behalf of those having a concern with us? We should! Pray often for the child or the parent with whom there may be concerns or conflict. God can and does change hearts, even our own if need be. Pray for mutual forgiveness. Pray for peace. Pray for positive working relationships so that God's Kingdom may be strengthened, not hindered.

This communication with God is not a one-way connection. God also speaks to us in his Word, and we benefit from what he reveals to us. This includes not only public worship, although, unfortunately, teachers and parents also have to be reminded about church attendance. It applies not only to Bible Class, although, again, parents and teachers sometimes have to be reminded of that. First and foremost the opportunity to hear God speaking to us applies to personal Bible reading and study. This eighth, and most important, habit of a truly effective person is frequent conversation with our Lord.

Possible suggestions

There are specific, concrete suggestions for effectively addressing parental concerns. Most of these, quite honestly, are things that can be and should be done before a concern ever arises. Starting our professional work with parents as an attitude and outgrowth of ministry can help prevent concerns from becoming conflicts.

First, set the ground rules. Following Covey's first point, be proactive. Clearly and routinely list policies, expectations,

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and rationale in the school handbook, home visits, and parent-teacher consultations. Detail them as a series in the school's weekly newsletter (also detail the school's operating philosophy and objectives).

Second, have a small number of such ground rules. These should be developed within your own faculty and board of education, but some possibilities could include

- Do not discuss concerns with the children, other parents, other teachers, the outside community;
- Set up an "appeal" system (teacher; teacher and principal; teacher, principal, pastor; teacher, principal, pastor, board of education). Establish the board of education as the final arbiter of school related parental concerns;
- Never bring up concerns, even privately with the other party, at worship services or Bible class. These are exclusive times for worship, study, and spiritual rest from the pressures of the world, not for potentially distracting or even distressing business. No one should ever even remotely dread attending church for the fear of what they may get "hit up with" there;
- Forgive hurts, and forget hurts;
- These ground rules apply equally to parents and called workers.

Third, DeBruyn's structure for parent-teacher consultations can be valuable; however, add scriptural foundations. Starting and ending such consultations with prayer would be best. Remain calm. "A gentle answer turns away wrath" (Pr 15:1). Providing docu-



mentation to demonstrate points would be very helpful. When sinful attitudes are expressed, calmly refute them from the Law and stay focused on the sin. Emphasize that this is not some personal opinion or power play; this is God's Word. When there is repentance, immediately and unconditionally proclaim the gospel and complete forgiveness of sins through Christ.

Conclusion

No one ever served the Lord in this world of sin and did not receive concerns, or outright hostility, in regard to his or her work. Often it comes from sinful neighbors (Cain and his descendants, Egyptians, Philistines, Babylonians, Romans), but sometimes it also comes from those who claim to be fellow believers and are in fact fellow believers. These situations may hurt the most, but Christ advised his followers to expect such treatment.

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own.... Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. They will treat you this way because of my name All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out

of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God (Jn 15:18-16:2).

It is important to remember what Jesus noted “killing” and “murder” entail—not just the loss of physical life, but anger, contempt, and name calling that implies the lack of saving faith (Mt 5:21-22).

We are not to encourage such resistance because of sins or foolishness on our part, nor should we retreat behind our callings and feel that every concern expressed is an insult or an assault upon us. We are not infallible. We too daily sin much and need forgiveness from God and from those we have been called to serve. We will not appear to be weak in the eyes of our fellow believers when we repent of sin and ask forgiveness for things we have done wrong.

Keep in mind that if we are insulted and harassed for doing what is right, we have reason to rejoice. Christ himself tells us:

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Mt 5:11-12).

Finally, in spite of whatever concerns we may be facing at the moment, remember that the last act has already been written. Each one of us, along with all the heroes of faith—Abel, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, Mary, up to and including the

last baby born into the Kingdom of God the second before Christ’s triumphant return, have an eternal future with him who bore all pain for us. Our own eyes shall see, and our own ears shall hear, Christ looking at us and saying: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world” (Mt 25:34).

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Sunday School Is Everybody's Business

Gerald F. Kastens

"I wish those Sunday school teachers would take better care of my classroom. Every Monday morning it is the same old thing. Before I start the week, I have to straighten up my desk, pick up and put things away, and then clean the chalk board. If those kids would just attend our school, we wouldn't have to mess with this Sunday school business. After all, can't these families see that five days is better than just an hour on Sunday morning?"

"Mrs. Johnson, those Sunday school kids did it again. Someone was in my desk and messed around with my things."

"Did you hear the latest? Pastor suggested that it would be nice if the Lutheran elementary school teachers would help out once in a while with Sunday school. Can you believe it? With all that we have to do, and now Sunday school too. It wasn't in my call!"

These imaginary conversations may not be quite so imaginary. During my years as a Lutheran elementary school teacher and principal, I have heard teachers and students make similar comments. During my early years of ministry, I even thought the same way.

However, one day it occurred to me

how wrong I was. There really is no place for competition between the Sunday school and Lutheran elementary school. Polarization and disregard are not options. My experience has taught me that a strong Sunday school program complements the Lutheran elementary school. When parents experience the benefits of Christian education for their children, it is only natural that they turn to the Lutheran elementary school. Sunday school is an avenue through which parents can learn that more is better than less.

The welfare of the Sunday school is everybody's business. The mission of the Sunday school is the same one that Christ gave to his Church. Sunday school provides the only opportunity that some children have to hear God's Word regularly. Sunday schools are also one of the most effective avenues that a congregation has for outreach. Nurture and outreach, that's the business of the church. From church council down through the person in the pew, a strong viable Sunday school program ought to be everyone's concern.

The obvious implication is that Lutheran elementary school teachers and principals have a vested interest in the welfare of the Sunday school. Not only should they be cheerleaders for the program, but they also have an obli-

gation to be involved. By this time I can already hear teachers beginning to protest "But, we're busy. After all, there are papers to correct, basketball games to be played, synod forms to complete, and lesson plans to prepare!"

Lutheran elementary school teachers are busy. Their work is challenging.

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There really is no place for competition between the Sunday school and Lutheran elementary school.

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WELS teachers are also the best trained Christian educators anywhere. How can we refuse to use that training and expertise in helping with the important business of nurture and outreach? If we find ourselves too busy to support Sunday school, perhaps we are too busy and need to reprioritize our ministry. If we are reluctant to support the Sunday school then it is time to search our hearts.

It's not that Lutheran elementary teachers should be expected to become Sunday school teachers, though for some that may be appropriate.

Lutheran elementary school teachers can provide leadership, mentoring, and the kind of cooperation that assists the

Sunday school in becoming the strongest possible nurturing agency.

To accomplish this may mean that the board of Christian education has to be restructured in order to create a separate board or committee for the Sunday school. Boards which combine all of children and teen ministries together tend to be dominated by the business of the Lutheran elementary school. Meetings allow for hasty reports and provide little time for problem solving and long range planning. Sunday school, vacation Bible school, and youth ministry tend to be less organized and lacking in support.

The concern and support of both the pastor and principal are vital for the success of a Sunday school. The pastor/principal team that takes an active interest in the Sunday school helps Sunday school teachers in whatever way they can. Parents appreciate seeing their called workers present when their children gather for Sunday school. And the members will appreciate that both are interested in all of the educational opportunities in the church.

Sunday schools need leadership and organization. Teachers can encourage the congregation to call and salary the Sunday school superintendent's position. The superintendent is the key person on the Sunday school staff. The time has come to demonstrate the importance of the position by supporting it financially. When a congregation calls and financially supports the office of Sunday school superintendent, it is demonstrating a commitment to the nurture of all children.

If congregations are to understand

Kastens

that they also have a responsibility to support financially and to equip Sunday school classrooms, they must have adequate funding in the budget. Charging parents for the Sunday school material used by their children is a questionable practice in light of the mission of the Sunday school. Taking the costs from the children's mission collection is even more questionable. Even in our time of budget stringencies, it only takes a little extra "change" to prevent short changing the Sunday school children.

Sunday schools and Lutheran elementary schools are partners in Christian education, not competitors. This partnership can be cultivated by sharing teaching resources, sharing inservice experiences, teaching children and by giving mutual assistance. I find it difficult to understand why two sets of everything are needed to teach Bible lessons to children. Sharing maps, charts, learning resources, and inservice activities is not only good stewardship but it will assist the volunteer Sunday school teacher to be a better teacher. LES teachers can also mentor untrained volunteers in the areas of classroom control, how to present a lesson, readiness activities, questioning techniques, and the like. A partnership that brings the Sunday only children and families into frequent personal contact with the Lutheran elementary school and its teachers will draw some into the day school.

The potential for developing a partnership will be greatly enhanced with the implementation of the Christ-Light Coordinated Religion Curriculum. At that time congregations can coordinate

what will be taught throughout its agencies and thus avoid unnecessary repetition and duplication. The new WELS curriculum will also accommodate

WELS Sunday Schools

441,779 children are enrolled in WELS Sunday schools.

The Minnesota District has the largest Sunday school enrollment (7,032).

Nearly 60% of WELS youth attend Sunday schools.

Over 1/3 of WELS congregations operate both Lutheran elementary schools and Sunday schools (361).

There are 5,916 volunteer Sunday school teachers in the WELS.

those congregations who want to encourage children to attend Sunday school as well as Lutheran elementary school.

People need to work together to reduce a polarity in their youth programs in their congregations. Congregations need to look for ways to bring Sunday school and LES families together. It is time to stop separating and dividing families. Rather, all of the children and their families can be brought together for activities such as the Children's Christmas Eve Service, Ascension services, and confirmation class. Congregations can also look for ways to involve all children working together in service projects and outreach activities. They can encourage the Lutheran elementary children to attend Sunday school, especially during the summer. Finally, they can schedule family activities and parenting classes for

everyone in the congregation.

When teaching ministers view themselves as partners with the Lutheran Sunday school, all the children get the best Christian education possible. It is like a mobile that hangs from a ceiling in a classroom. When you touch part of

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When teaching ministers view themselves as partners with the Lutheran Sunday school, all the children get the best Christian education possible.

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the mobile, the whole thing moves. When teachers touch the lives of children in Sunday school with God's Word and his love, they affect the entire family. Get a child excited about Jesus, and that child will in turn get his parents excited.

Sunday school offers as little as 40 hours of instruction a year. Lutheran elementary school teachers spend about 1,050 hours a year with their stu-

dents. It is obvious that the hour of Sunday school once a week can't hold a candle to the hours of instruction each week in the Lutheran elementary school. For parents to appreciate the blessings of full time Christian training, they must first experience quality Christian education. The place for that is the Sunday school. The next step is a logical one.

Finally, our primary motive isn't to come up with a strategy that will guarantee 100% enrollment in our Lutheran elementary school. Rather, our concern is the eternal welfare of all children inside and outside our congregation. For that reason, Sunday school is the business of Lutheran elementary school teachers. No, Sunday schools are everyone's business. Pray for them, support them financially, support them with your time, support them with your talents. Endorse them in your church and community. After all, Jesus said, "Let the children come."

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Humanness in a Supervisory Capacity: You Are a Person Also, Mr. Principal

Larry S. Collyard



new idea or a better appreciation or understanding of the role of a principal, this discussion will have been a success.

The human aspect of supervision

Every job has a title. That title usually attempts to give a general description of the job. The title of “supervisor” does this also. Sometimes because of a title, the job has a wrong or self-defeating connotation. For example, the jobs of a janitor or a garbage collector are fine, decent occupations and quite important. But because of their close association with things often thought of as demeaning (grimy dirt and smelly trash), they are not ranked high by career seekers. Sometimes these jobs are even disguised in flowery titles such as “maintenance engineer” and “sanitation manager” in an attempt to avoid a negative perception.

The same situation occurs in administration and leadership occupations. Instead of calling him the bossman, chief, foreman, or some other title that may carry a bad connotation, the leader is called a director, coordinator, or supervisor. However, these titles, too, can have an unfavorable perception. A director sounds too harsh or confining—someone who wields a baton or

Introduction

The way fellow-teachers, parents, students, and others perceive a principal has a critical effect on his productiveness. That effect could be negative or positive. If he is perceived as cold and aloof, it will show in negative attitudes toward him and his ideas. If he is perceived as friendly and sympathetic, it will show more positively.

There are serious pitfalls into which a principal can fall if he or those around him forget that principals are people working with people and they fail to act that way. It is hoped that the thought stimulated by this article may enhance your work for the Lord as a teacher and/or principal. You may not find any new earth-shaking answers to deep enduring problems. But if you find one

cattle prod. The term “coordinator” may give the impression of being like a brain which controls all, and without whom nothing could work smoothly.

The term “supervisor,” if taken literally, connotes a seeing above, or overseeing. Someone, then, who is a super-

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*A supervisor who
 only plays at being
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 exposed.*
 ”

visor is looked on as being, or acting as if he is, above everyone else—superior, “super.” If this idea is allowed to proceed, it can make the subordinates (another poor title) negative to the leader’s ideas, or it could give the leader a false feeling of superiority, and his subsequent pride could endanger his relationship with his staff.

Whatever the job, whatever the title, it is most important that barriers such as those mentioned above be broken down so that a group of people can work well together. It is especially important when those people are doing the Lord’s work, the saving of souls.

Changing a job title or description

isn’t going to help unless there is also a change in attitudes. The supervisor must consider his first priority—that of effecting a genuine “humanness” into his relationships with others. Without such human feelings, there is no way his ideas will be accepted nor can he be effective and successful.

An educational supervisor may claim that he can be as human as the job demands. But the attitudes of genuine humanness cannot be turned on and off as one desires. A supervisor who only plays at being human may make it for a while, but soon his sham will be exposed. Those with whom he works will see through his hypocrisy and his job will be much more difficult.

Humanness in a supervisory capacity must grow out of humanness in everyday Christian living. Sincerity, openness, and honesty must be a way of life—a whole life philosophy. Of course, it is understood that the supervisor cannot please everyone all the time. But a genuine concern for the feelings of people can go far in helping the supervisor through those difficult situations with students, parents, teachers, and pastors. If these people see that he truly cares for their ideas, feelings, and opinions, the final decision to be made will be one in which they are more likely to concur, even if it isn’t exactly what they had in mind. Dr. Walter Scott, a former professor in the graduate school of education at Michigan State University, said it this way: “Caring for others, accepting others’ strengths and weaknesses as well as admitting your own—that is what humanness in a supervisory capacity is all about.”

Collyard

The Bible and human relations

Since our background and purpose is based in the teachings of the Bible, we are compelled to go to it to see what God, through the Bible writers, has to say about human relations. Human relations begin in God's new relationship with us. God took us as we were—lost, rebellious, perverse, and hateful toward God and our fellowmen. He made a new relationship with us through the life and death of his Son, Jesus Christ. Now we are new creatures who love him who first loved us and we reflect God's love to persons in our lives. When a supervisor lives by this Christian principle of interpersonal relations, he will be successful as a person and a leader.

Among the different ideas concerning human feelings in Scripture, three are quite applicable to our topic—Anger, Love, and Pride. These feelings could play an extremely large part in working with people and learning to care more for them.

A supervisor would do well to listen to the advice in the Word concerning getting angry, holding grudges, or losing ones "cool":

- A quick-tempered man does foolish things. Proverbs 14:17
- Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, and do not associate with one easily angered. Proverbs 22:24
- A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly. Proverbs 14:29

Rather, if a supervisor wants to make friends and influence people as the say-

ing goes, he'll follow this scriptural advice:

- Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Ephesians 4:31
- A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense. Proverbs 19: 11
- A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1

How well it is to remember this last bit of advice when consulting with teachers, parents, or students over a problem situation!

Scripture also speaks concerning a positive attitude people should have toward one another—love. Christ himself told us we should love one another and our neighbor as ourselves. If more love, kindness, consideration, and compassion were shown in our supervisory relationships, then the idea of humanness or "caring" could be carried to the fullest extent. Of course, such a perfect relationship cannot exist among sinful people. Only Christ himself shows us the perfect example of love. We can, however, learn much to help us in our attempts at caring more for people.

This is what his Word says:

- Keep on loving each other as brothers. Hebrews 13:1
- Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8
- Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 1

Corinthians 13:4-5

- Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Matthew 5:44

Love will prompt us to deal with problems with others in a more positive way, especially if we follow Paul's advice when he says, "As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility,

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A supervisor with an open door can settle many problems before they become crises.

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gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Colossians 3:12-14

Finally, the Bible has much to say about pride and humility. Because the title "supervisor" can imply superiority, a supervisor must guard against a feeling of haughty pride due to his position. Such an attitude could leave the job a cold, inhumane one, void of a true "caring" relationship. It can build a wall between a supervisor and his fellow-workers. Holy Scripture says this

concerning pride and humility:

- Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Romans 12:16
- Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs 16:18
- When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. Proverbs 11:2

Practical suggestions to aid the "people" principle

A listing of sure-fire methods to develop good human relations for an educational supervisor could be given if such a list existed. None does. Some ideas have worked for some people and other ideas have worked for others. There is no one way to go about it. There are, however, some basic principles which apply to all.

First of all, there are principles of openness and honesty when showing consideration for people. Open, sincere behavior will inspire friendship, mutual trust, respect, and warmth toward the leader. A principal needs to learn to share his feelings with those around him and be ready to take time to allow them to share their thoughts and feelings with him. A supervisor with an open door can settle many problems before they become crises.

Second, there is the principle of flexibility. A principal is not a machine working with machines! One fault of a computer is its lack of flexibility. It's just not human! Principals should like to be known for their computer-like efficiency but not for its inhumanity. A

Collyard

principal needs to be ready to admit his own weaknesses and errors and ask for help and advice of fellow-workers or parents. If he is shown a better way of thinking or of doing, he should be willing and able to change.

Third, there is the principle of support which a supervisor should give to the staff in all their endeavors. A show of confidence by a leader can do much to develop self-confidence and diligent efforts by the workers; a little praise accomplishes much for good human relations.

A fourth principle in developing good human relations is that of involvement. Consensus decision-making aids in developing staff rapport much more than does dictatorial policy setting. Getting each member of the staff involved and working as a team in determining directions in order to reach school objectives is crucial to wholesome staff morale.

The final principle to be considered is the most important of all. It is that of communication. If one really cares for people and what they think, it is essential to communicate with them to get to know them—their thoughts, ideas, and actions. All available channels of communication must be kept open. This is where the open-door policy comes in again. A supervisor must be readily accessible everyday, and, when possible, every hour. Hiding away behind some big desk in a corner room with the door closed will create a physical and psychological barrier in human relationships.

This communication must also be two-directional. Some supervisors fail

to communicate effectively without realizing it. They put out memos, newsletters, and teacher-, parent-, and student-handbooks. They feel proud that they are communicating well. They've only gone half way, however. True communication must be two-way. There must be a communication in which both sides give and take.

The above principles suggested as aids for better human relationships for the educational supervisor are pointed primarily toward the principal and his staff of fellow-teachers. But one can easily see that they will also enhance the relationship of the principal and students, principal and parents, teacher and students, teacher and parents, or any other human relationship.

Good leaders are extremely important to our schools. Whether or not an administrator is successful depends much on his ability to handle other people and their problems. It is my hope that by following the ideas presented here, we will be able to do our share to develop more humanness in our work as supervisors. God's kingdom work will be advanced as his people, including those responsible for the supervision of others, grow in God's grace and in their lives of sanctifications.

Larry Collyard is principal and teacher at St. John's Lutheran School, Watertown, Wisconsin.

Once Around the Block

Sarah M. Westphal

IT ONLY TOOK FOUR of us to topple the Tower of Pisa, to sink the Titanic, and to level the Washington monument: four people, a 60 minute chunk of uninterrupted time, a roomy corner, and a shelf-full of blocks.



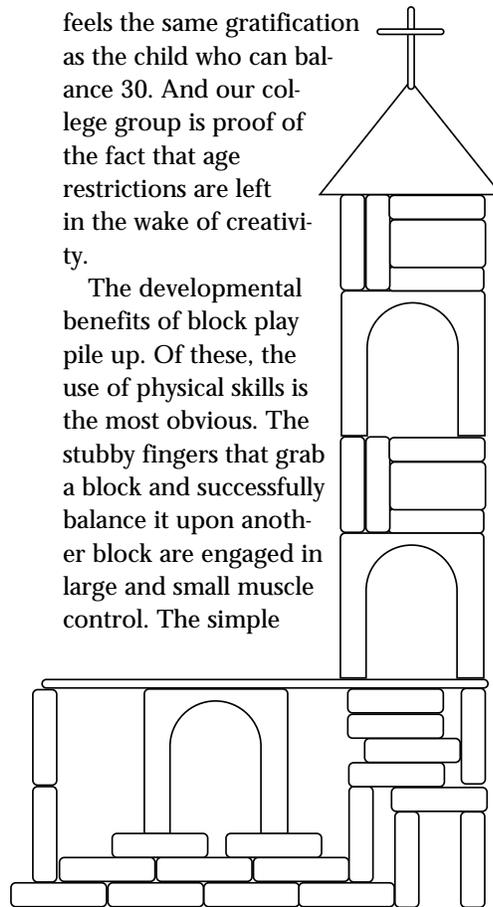
Our assignment in 1093 Teaching Kindergarten and Primary Grades was to build a block structure as a group. It was a task which we admittedly approached with some skepticism, as befits dignified students of 20-or-so years of life. But it wasn't dignity that chanted, "Building Blocks, Building Blocks, what shall we build?" Nor was there much dignity in the cheer that rose when an unsatisfactory structure was reduced to rubble with a resounding crash. And it was certainly a deliciously undignified thrill that we felt when our structure was complete. The jumble of blocks had become a crouching sphinx in the corner of the classroom, and *we had made it all by ourselves*.

Blocks have cluttered classroom shelves for years but their significance stacks ever higher in educators' eyes today. Play is now widely recognized as being educational, and block play in particular leads in this recognition

because it involves the whole child. Those simple wooden blocks can stimulate learning in physical, social, and emotional areas of development.

The beauty of blocks is their appeal and benefit to children at any developmental level or age. The child who is able to stack three blocks feels the same gratification as the child who can balance 30. And our college group is proof of the fact that age restrictions are left in the wake of creativity.

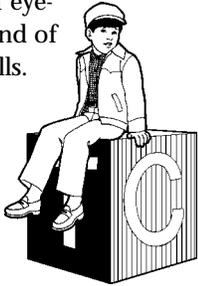
The developmental benefits of block play pile up. Of these, the use of physical skills is the most obvious. The stubby fingers that grab a block and successfully balance it upon another block are engaged in large and small muscle control. The simple



Westphal

maneuver is a feat of eye-hand coordination and of visual perception skills.

Those same little hands push the blocks into groups by size and shape. The child who sits amid a jumble of blocks is in a realm of cognitive development. Watch her hands push blocks together according to size and shape. Listen to her running commentary as she verbalizes decisions or describes the structure to an onlooker. One careless move, and balance is overcome by gravity to the child's sheer delight.



Now take a closer look. This child has just experienced mathematical skills such as sorting, classifying, and problem solving. Her language and vocabulary development have been reinforced. She has experimented with the scientific concepts of cause and effect, gravity and balance. The most meticulously planned activity couldn't offer a better door to such a wide variety of intellectual skills.

Socially, block play opens other doors to sharing, communication, and cooperation. Add another child to the block area and it may sound like bedlam and look like trouble. Seize this opportunity. With adult guidance the children's social skills can be set in action, and the energy they spend in conflict can be swung in the direction of negotiation and compromise. Children will learn to divide their blocks and space and to share ideas with one another. As they work togeth-

er on construction or in dramatic play their cooperative skills will be refined. Aside from all these benefits, block play provides a healthy emotional outlet and inspires artistic expression.

The implications of block play are clear. Don't underestimate the value of the simple block. Invest in a set, section off a corner of your classroom. Set time aside for children to dream up a structure, and for them to move it from rubble to substance to rubble again. And be aware. Things are happening when hands grab blocks and build. An observant teacher will recognize these opportunities to guide developmental growth with an encouraging word here and a meaningful question there.

And the reward? The child who looks up from his completed structure, oblivious to the many skills he has just practiced, and who proudly says, "Look! I made it all by myself"—just like we college students did.

Sarah Westphal is a five-year STEP (Secondary Teacher Education Program/English) student at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota. She is in her final year.

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*Don't underestimate
the value of the
simple block.*
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Parents as Advocates for the Exceptional Child

Alan M. Spurgin

EVER SINCE THE INITIAL legislation, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 (PL94-142), an ever-increasing emphasis has been given to the parents to drive the special education of their child. PL101-476, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), puts into law the concept of parents as primary advocates. Parents are expected to take the initiative and participate in developing an educational program that is best for their child. This is a daunting task for many parents. Even educators who sit through child study team meetings may feel awkward with the jargon of the experts and the criteria necessary for the child to secure special services. But that should not be a deterrent in getting the child with special learning requirements the help he or she needs to utilize the gifts of God to the fullest in a setting that is conducive to the child's learning style.

In determining the best fit in helping the child with special learning needs, the emphasis must be on the child. A parent, who intuitively knows his or her own child the best, must take the initiative in guaranteeing this best fit. But there are challenges in being a child's advocate. Raising a child with special needs is an emotionally draining, life-

long task. In addition, a parent may be reluctant to become involved in the child's education because of memories of the parent's own failures in school. The parent also may feel embarrassed or guilty walking into schools or may

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In determining the best fit in helping the child with special learning needs, the emphasis must be on the child.

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feel that school does not value the parent's judgment (Vandergrift). This is where the Lutheran elementary school teacher can serve as mentor for the parent. The teacher must encourage the parent or guardian to become involved in the child's education. To be able to do so, the teacher must possess sufficient information about special education to help the parent become more

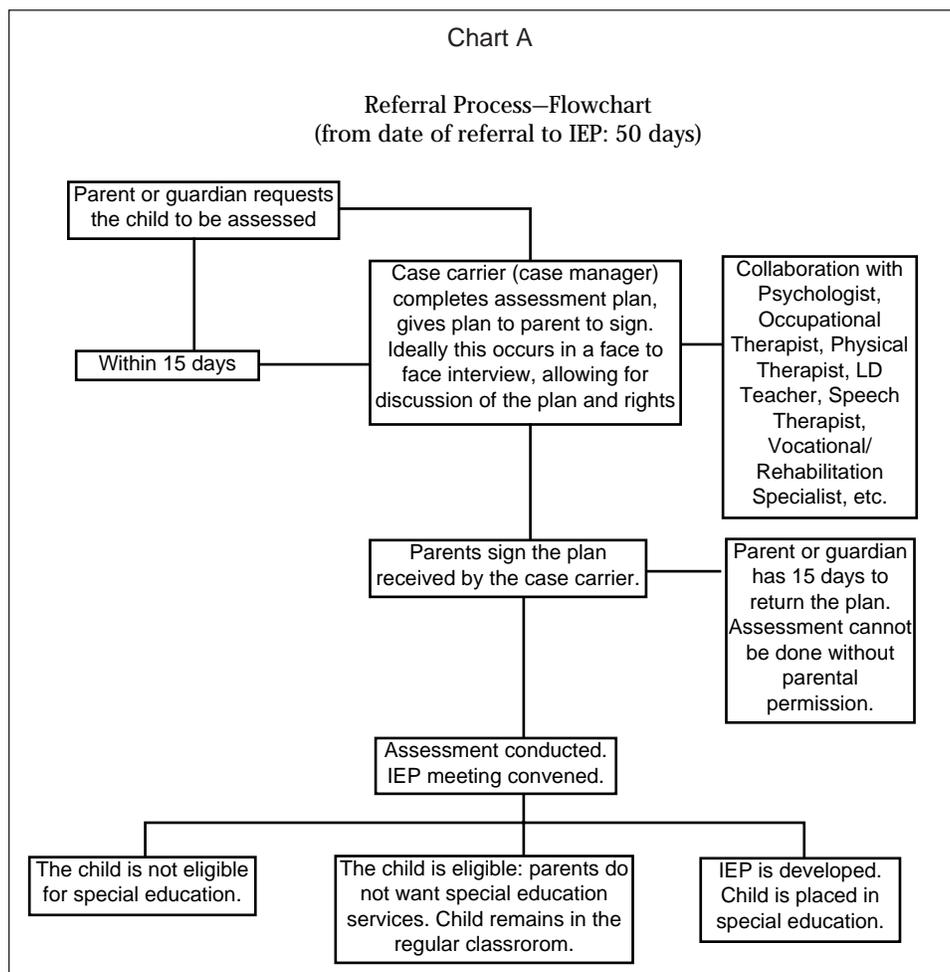
Spurgin

knowledgeable about what is best for the child.

Parents themselves need to become educated so they are able to make sound judgments that will positively affect their child's life. A parent needs to learn how to work with the special education system as it stands today, be aware of the resources that are available to help their child, and know parental rights based on special education legislation.

The system

The way the system is set up in today's schools stipulates that each child is entitled to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). This education is to take place in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), which in most cases is the regular classroom. To try to accomplish these law-driven directives, a system was set up to ensure the child has both FAPE and LRE. If a parent, after consultation with



the classroom teacher and others, feels there is sufficient evidence to seek help for the child, the parent may request that the child be evaluated. The procedure for that referral for evaluation is shown in Chart A.

As shown in the flow chart, the parent is necessarily involved in the system and can make suggestions or stop the

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The parent's first concern will be to seek the Lord's guidance for the child and success for the evaluation procedure.
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evaluation in each step in the process. The following recommendations should be given to the parent as he or she goes through the process. Naturally, the parent's first concern will be to seek the Lord's guidance for the child and success for the evaluation procedure.

- Don't sign anything; take all documents home, read them carefully, get expert advice, and know what you are signing.
- Write questions to be answered by the Child Study Team about your

concerns for your child.

- Find out who is doing the evaluation and why the evaluation is necessary.
- Prepare your own goals and objectives that you would like to see in the Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- Negotiate options in the plan (IEP) to help the child.
- Take another person with you to all meetings to take notes and be your second set of eyes and ears.
- Bring your own agenda with your priorities. List the child's abilities, and learning style. Set your goals for services you feel your child needs.

The resources

In addition to being knowledgeable about the system, the parent also needs to be aware of the resources that can be brought to bear to help the child. The first resource person, as indicated before, is the classroom teacher. Next to the parent, the teacher has the most contact with the child on a daily basis. The pediatrician is another primary resource person who can help the child. The child's pediatrician does a medical evaluation to determine if the child has a physical problem and is usually the one to determine if the child has an attention deficiency such as Attention Deficit Disorder. Other resources and services that can be brought to bear in determining the best fit for the child can be school psychologist, speech therapist, special education teacher, learning disabilities teacher, occupational therapist, physical therapist, clinical psychiatrist, vocational/rehabilitation specialist, transportation specialist, and computer specialist. A

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parent needs to know both who and how to access these services to help the exceptional child. Whatever personnel or agencies become involved, a collaborative effort is essential to ensure the best fit for the child.

The rights

Finally, a parent needs to know parental rights for securing services for the child. The laws (PL94-142 and PL101-457) are very favorable and generous on behalf of the parent so that due process is maintained. The parent may request a second opinion (at the parent's own expense) to determine if the plan for educating the child is the best. If another plan appears to be the best fit for the child, the parents may write a letter to express this. After writing the letter, the following typically occurs:

- a settlement conference is set up for mediation
- lawyers are secured by both parties
- a court hearing is set up—the judge may determine the best plan for the child
- child protection and advocacy may be involved
- legal aid resources may be provided

At any point along this path an agreement may be reached and the child will receive the services he or she needs to be successful in school and life.

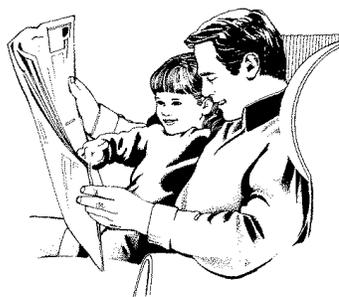
Educational research has for years demonstrated that parental involvement is a key to success in school (Cavazos). This is especially true for the parents of children with special needs. A parent has to take the lead in being

an advocate for the exceptional child. The parent needs to be bold and step into the realm of special education with the confidence that he or she knows the child the best. The parent will have a say in determining the best fit for the child's special education, an education which is special not just because it suits the learning needs of the child, but which most importantly contributes to the child's spiritual development.

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Alan Spurgin is professor of education at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.





DEAR TEACHERS,

They make me want to scream, the cicadas' late summer voices, so I've come inside to write to you instead. Their calls remind me of the sound in our house a few evenings ago, after the first day of school—shrill energy throbbing from five personalities all at once. The air shivered with their excitement and stories, and I strained to keep my hands from covering my ears. "Now slow down; first you, then you," I said but with a laugh in my voice to keep them talking. It's too easy, isn't it, to say the wrong thing, something impatient or critical, that will suddenly silence their cicada songs. "Okay, I get it; I'm leaving," they'll mumble and fade away to their rooms.

But that isn't what I want, not silence and rote obedience at the expense of hearing the overflow of their creative spirits. For they are creative, just as I believe all people are creative, even young people who have been brow-beaten into imaginative submission and passive thinking by school systems that don't value creativity and individuality.

Created Creative

Ramona M. Czer

You value it, I know, but sometimes our Christian schools are so used to doing things a certain way—and overvalue, I believe, discipline, quiet, and constraint—that we don't realize the effect on those passionate young personalities hungry to be listened to.

Long ago Oswald Chambers wrote, "The starvation of the imagination is one of the most fruitful sources of exhaustion and sapping in a worker's life.... Imagination is the greatest gift God has given us and it ought to be devoted entirely to Him." God created us with the capacity to create, to make something original, whether it be a love note written in code, a ditty sung to the rhythm of the lurching school bus, a new dance step perfected in the basement, or a nifty way to wear makeup so the teacher won't notice. Kids can't help being creative. It oozes out of them almost every moment of the day, sometimes, I bet, in ways that make your head throb like the cicadas do mine. But those children who won't stop doodling in the margins of their papers, those who stare out the windows, and those who pun on your directions with a wit you wish they'd use more productively, those are often the ones most capable of creating astounding works right away if encouraged.

So how do we encourage creativity? These are a few ideas that have worked for me with my children or my students or for other teachers I've observed or

Czer

read about:

We need to allow students to talk more, listening intently and writing down their responses far more than we talk ourselves. When we read back their words, noting how powerful and full of voice their expressions are, they're inspired to try harder for original ideas and language choices.

We need to ask often for out-of-class offerings, stuff produced just for the joy of it. A writer's or artist's drawer where they can slip us their work unnoticed will help the shy or self-conscious ones submit. It's important to look at such offerings privately, concentrating on what they're communicating not on how well it imitates "literature" or "art" or fits into forms or conventions, and then to return it to them the next day, if possible with sincere thanks and encouragement to see more. Be sure to reserve your most ardent praise for pieces that are really individual, even if imperfect or unfinished. Ask to share such offerings with others, perhaps on a wall or in a publication. Nothing gets the flow of self-initiated creative works going so well as honest appreciation.

We should create too (with our children or after school) and then share our expressions. Sure, you'll feel vulnerable and inept—I always do—but by sensing both our commitment and discomfort, we become models of passion and bravery to our observers.

Stealing moments (hours?) from history, science, math, and Bible lessons for creative speculations—what if things had been different, what might that time have felt like—and activities, helps students see art as a reaction to learn-

ing rather than a sterile act apart from knowledge. Which is how most art through the ages has been produced, right? I suspect one of the things that makes it hardest for children to be creative (verbally and in other ways) is the tight, unforgiving schedule of some teachers. "We must, we must keep going at all cost," the timetable hisses, but at a high cost indeed.

We should never allow conventional imitations, no matter how neat or "pretty," to receive the highest praise. Children long for approval and will soon get the idea that staying in the lines and robotic production isn't what's really good. Once they feel the euphoria of expressing their own voices and being lauded for it, they'll be hooked. Their first tries at something individual may be crude, messy, but take them seriously and they'll abandon forever those polished, safe offerings they always thought we wanted.

When we must evaluate their work, we should let our hearts seep all over the page first, not our red pens. Through the arts, children grow and develop, becoming consciously more aware, for Christian children, of God's spirit within them. Then, eager to spill what they've learned out to others, to you, in its still imperfect state—aren't they brave?—imagine what happens when we hand them something covered with surface-level corrections and no grappling whatsoever with what they meant? I've learned that if we comment far more on what they have expressed than on how they have expressed it, they'll accept our suggestions with greater equanimity.

In fact, if we hold off mentioning surface irregularities until it's time to present their works to a real audience, they welcome such help. Tell them in an off-hand, humorous way that they don't want their underwear showing in public, do they? Explain that grammar, spelling, and punctuation rules are conventions—which means they can and will change—and that they were invented to give a regularity to a manuscript so that readers aren't distracted from concentrating on an author's meaning by inconsistencies. Being able to spell or punctuate perfectly does not mean you are smarter or more holy, nor that you will be successful later in life, although many people good at conventions wish that it did. However, people do form impressions quickly—so we artists should give them as few reasons to reject us as we can.

To underscore this common sense and low key approach to surface problems, we might allow them to forestall all worries about copy editing until the very last draft, or most effectively, a draft that will be published in some way. Then we can be good-naturedly ruthless—the work must be perfect. By sending it back to them over and over and explaining why, or for older students allowing them to find the errors, we underscore the importance of clean work at the appropriate time. We might also reveal to them the secret that everyone makes these errors—even teachers, brilliant professors, and paid writers—so such things are definitely not what “writing” is all about.

Finally, we need to admit to children what works of art, literature, and music

we love most, and which ones we dislike too. Art portrays emotion, so rather than play safe and complacent, we should admit our own feelings. By sharing what our creative spirits are enlarged by, and by trusting our intuition to explain why, we subtly teach children how to discover their individuality as well.

Hughes Mearns admitted in his inspiring and landmark book *Creative Power: The Education of Youth* in the Creative Arts that his main job as an educator was to “summon the individual spirit; I try to give it its chance to grow in strength, although the process is worrisome and fraught with peril. That powerful rebel within us which never really succumbs to circumstance, that creator, who may fashion miracles out of the dust of the earth, that, I often fancy,... God created....”

But I'm tired now of sitting at this keyboard so perhaps I'll go stretch my legs outside, cicadas or not. I remember reading somewhere that it takes from two to five years for a cicada to develop from egg to adulthood, and that once mature, the males use their buzzing sounds to attract females. They mate, the female lays her eggs, and then at the end of that one season the adults die. A long, long childhood followed by their chance for one brief intense debut on the stage of summer. Something tells me I have more to learn about being a patient, appreciative audience.

A Mother

Ramona Czer teaches at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota.

Where's the Applause?

Paul L. Willems

I worked hard last weekend to prepare the very best multimedia lesson yet. I had pictures, a video, charts, and graphs. I made a detailed worksheet. I even invited a guest speaker from the local college to speak to the class. My principal didn't notice. No student said thanks. At the Parent Teacher's Society meeting last night, not one parent expressed any appreciation for my efforts. *Where's the applause?*

I had to meet with the chairman of the Board of Education to discuss a problem one of our teachers is having with a new family. No one wanted to take the teacher's part because she can be so contrary at times. Well, I stood up for her. I went out on a limb and said I would meet with her and help her through this crisis. The chairman didn't stay after the meeting to say, "Thanks." The teacher was very cool to my suggestions, and the involved parents just sat and said nothing. All my work and *where's the applause?*

I know it was a tough decision, but that's what being the principal involves. Our school just can't keep a student who causes trouble at school, refuses to attend church, runs away from home, and now is arrest-



ed the third time in a week for shoplifting. We had to expel him from our school. He was the bad apple that was causing the whole barrel to smell. None of the faculty realizes this decision had to be made. The pastor didn't phone me after our meeting, and the chairman of the school board had little to say after church this morning. I take my responsibilities seriously and make the tough decisions, but *where's the applause?*

As a member of the District Mission Board I stood up and delivered what I thought was a list of excellent reasons to build the campus chapel. I know the dollars are scarce, but we are losing so many of our young people as soon as they leave high school. Something has to be done. The association voted for

the chapel. No other board member stopped to say thanks. Even the college student representatives didn't thank me. I made the sacrifice to serve on this board, I did the necessary research, and now I got the building program off dead center. *Where's the applause?*

I am a WELS pastor. I don't make a lot of money and I'm certainly not a prominent member of the city government or even on an important committee in this community. I gave up a lot to become a pastor. My brother's name appeared in the papers again last week. He's really climbing the ladder in his political party. I heard he's been asked to chair his party's next campaign committee to elect the state governor. No one even asks me to serve on the board at Wisconsin Lutheran College. *Where's the applause?*

These stories may sound trite or even comical, but on a Friday after a long school week or on gray Monday morning in February they might sound very familiar. Those who have been called into full-time church work often wonder if their efforts are worthwhile. They may doubt if their work is appreciated. They look for some positive feedback, and when there is none, they may even have thoughts of resigning from the ministry and getting a "real" job. The disciples had similar thoughts. Peter asked Jesus, "We have left everything to follow you" (Mk 10:28). His implied question was, "Where's the applause, Lord?"

Instead of rebuking the disciples,

Jesus answered, "No one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age ... and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mk 10:29-30). Jesus recognized what they had given up.

We too can become more aware of the need for recognition in the lives of

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*Only God can grant
success to our work.*

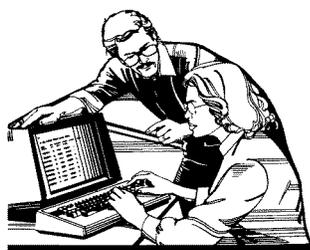
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called workers. Words of appreciation to a teacher, pastor, or principal are in place and welcomed. Words of encouragement from a principal, pastor, board member, or colleague are also welcome. Because of culture and perhaps because of the way we have been raised, WELS workers are not known for their words of congratulation or praise for each other. Some may be even uncomfortable giving or receiving words such as, "Good job," "Thank you for your effort on this project," "Your work is sincerely appreciated." But these words are also the oil that helps maintain healthy and loving relationships among workers. An engineer recently told me, "We value cordial and respectful communications among our employees so much that courses in public relations are required for workers

Willems

who lack these people skills, or what was once known as common courtesy.” Workers in the church can take a tip from this person of the world and practice such skills.

Everyone likes to be given a pat on the back and told that his or her efforts are appreciated or even to be rewarded



in some way for a job well done. We live in an age where self esteem has a high priority. Sometimes when people don't receive the recognition they feel they deserve, they burn out and fall into self-pity. They are not right in doing that, but the response is typical. That very thing happened to Elijah when he whined to the Lord and asked to be taken to heaven because no one appreciated his work and he was the only believer left (1Kgs 19:3-5). Elijah was selfishly and wrongly demanding, "Where's the applause?"

As we consider each of the five situations at the beginning of this article, we may also be able to discover what has become of the applause we feel should be ours. In the first example, is it really our efforts that are required to make our lessons successful? Are we responsible for building the church of Jesus Christ? Does God expect us, or our schools, or our colleges, or the WELS, to build his church? In the book of

Revelation, we see who really is supporting and building up the church. John's vision shows seven lamp stands, which are the churches, and seven stars, the angels, or the called ministers of these churches. The ministers were being held up by Christ (Rev 1:12-16). The ministers were not holding up the churches. No, if the Christian church prospers, if our lessons in the classroom are successful or our sermon moving, it is in spite of us not because of us (Ps 127:1). Only God can grant success to our work. Christ is building his church, using us only as his tools, much like a carpenter uses a saw to cut a special compound miter joint in a kitchen cabinet.

Do you think people do not appreciate what you have done, they do not stand up for you? But consider what Jesus has done for you. Jesus stood up for each of us as Satan accused us before the throne of heaven (1Jn 2:1-2). Again it is Christ's intercession for the church that keeps it in his grace. Yes, again our efforts may be used, but the

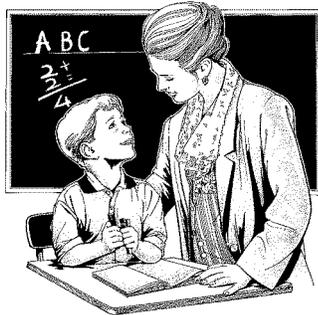


fulfillment of a person's ministry is in the hands of Jesus and his or her own hands.

Can we purify the church? Do our arguments, our persistence really mat-

ter in keeping the doctrine of the church pure and true? We may speak the right words, but it is through the efforts and through the words the Holy Spirit places into our mouths that the work gets done. Jesus said the gates of hell will never prevail against his church. Do we believe Jesus based this statement on a person like Peter, or are we convinced that it was based on Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah that holds the key here? (Mt 16:16-18) In these troubled times Jesus reminds us, even the very elect would be deceived, except for his efforts (Mt 24:24).

When a recent conference wrestled with how to gain more recruits for the



pastoral and teacher ministry studies for the ministerial college in New Ulm, many methods and ideas were set forth. But what do the Scriptures say? Jesus very clearly says, "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Mt 9:38). Again it is God who sends messengers into the classrooms and pulpits of his many congregations. We may call them, but only Jesus can send them.

And so where's the applause? Well

the applause is there. Jesus promises us a reward of a hundred-fold. However, the real applause does not belong to



you or to me. The applause belongs to the Lord of the church, Jesus Christ. The Apostle John clearly stated this fact in Revelation when he wrote, "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise" (Rev 5:12). Yes, at the final day everyone will applaud the efforts of Christ in building his church, in interceding for his church, for purifying his church, for speaking to his church and for sending messengers to his church. There's the applause which we seem to find missing in our ministry.

When Jesus reinstated Peter as an Apostle in his church, he reminded him to "feed my lambs, ... feed my sheep" (Jn 21:15-17). We too are to be reminded that while we may be called to serve, it is the Lord Jesus we are called to serve and his church. We are not called to serve ourselves. We are not called to receive praise or to seek places of honor, for this is what the people of this world value (Lk 9:46-48). Nevertheless, God himself will and does reward us. Although Jesus knew the woman who touched him needed only

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to be cleansed of her sin, he healed her physical ailment too (Lk 8:43-48). Jesus understands human needs and our frail conditions. He loves us and has compassion on us. And so he reminds us, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last” (Jn 15:16). God himself called us to serve him in his kingdom. This wonderful privilege is not given to everyone. The seventy disciples also looked for and received applause for their work. They were delighted to report, “Lord even the demons submit to us in your name” (Lk 10:17). But Jesus reminded them of an even greater reward when he said, “Rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Lk 10:20). At the Last Day Jesus will say to us and to all believers,

“Come you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world” (Mt 25:34). That is high applause for anyone.

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*We call messengers,
but only Jesus can
send them.*

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