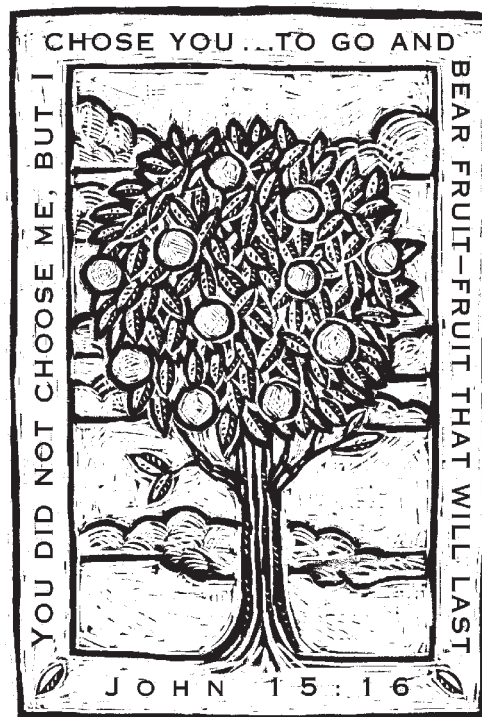


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NUMBER 4
MAY 1997

The Lutheran Educator



The WELS Education Journal



The Lutheran Educator

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

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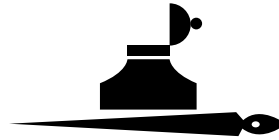
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Teachers: “Share the Promise”

Throughout this school year, the members of WELS have been encouraged to “Share the Promise.” This theme has been seen, heard, and used by many of us. How blessed we are with opportunities to “Share the Promise.”

The meaning of this theme is readily understood by the children we teach. Children at an early age are taught to share. They share their parents with siblings. They share toys with playmates. Even food is shared with those dining with them at the table. As children learn Bible lessons, hymns, memory passages, and prayers, they also soon become aware of what is meant by “promises” of God ... promises of love, caring, forgiveness, and heaven. We have the privilege of teaching these promises and then enabling students by instruction, example, and encouragement to share the promises which they have learned.

The opportunities to share the wonderful promises of God are many indeed. As this school year nears its end, we can reflect back upon such opportunities as the children’s Christmas service, mission projects, singing songs and hymns in church, Christian art projects, excursions into the community, communications sent, and interaction right in the classroom.

“Sharing the Promise” also goes far beyond our classroom. Have you ever tried to calculate how many children may have learned the precious promises of God from you in your classroom? Your students are the vehicles by which the promises of God are shared. They carry the message of God’s Word from generation to generation in their families, far beyond our reach and far beyond the days of our lives. Some of our students may become future pastors and teachers spreading the promises of God far beyond their families. For many of our students, college, employment, and marriage will necessitate moving. They will have new opportunities to share the promises which they have learned from their parents and teachers. One can hardly fathom the importance and impact of the Bible lessons which we teach to Christ’s “little ones.”

Yet, our teaching is not the only way in which we are able to share God’s Word. We too can reach beyond our classroom to our families, our friends, neighbors, the community in which we live, and wherever the events of our lives take us. We may have opportunities to speak to assemblies, to write articles to be published, to supervise student teachers, to broadcast by radio or TV, and to relay messages by telephone and modern communications systems. We need to be alert to these doors of opportunity as they open for us. We must always be ready and eager to proclaim the promise of Christ in John 11:25,26: “... I am the resurrection and the life... whoever lives and believes in me will never die....” Sharing such promises of God is indeed a privilege for us and a blessing to all who hear it, for they are promises which we can always count on.

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Our Daily Struggle with Sin

Geoffrey A. Kieta



EVERY Christian, every day has to face a grim reality. Although he sincerely believes in the full and free forgiveness of his sins, he hasn't stopped sinning. In fact, if he's honest with himself and with God, he has to admit that he hasn't even come close to leading a God-pleasing life. That can be a real disappointment for us. When we look into the mirror and have to admit that our lives don't glorify our Father in heaven, we may experience a "ping-pong" effect. We may find ourselves zigzagging back and forth between shrugging our weakness off, and, on the other hand, wondering if we really have any faith at all. We are struggling with our weakness. Sins of weakness plague every Christian and every Christian needs the proper application of Law and gospel in his struggle with sin.

What is a sin of weakness?

In any discussion of sins of weakness, it is necessary to define what a sin of weakness is and to distinguish that category of sins from deliberate or willful sinning. The key distinction is made for us in Ephesians 2:1-2,4-5: "As for you,

you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.... But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions...."

The key distinction is between being spiritually dead and alive. Simply put, only Christians can commit the sins of weakness. Unbelievers are "dead in transgressions and sin" so they sin willfully and gladly (Pieper I:565). But a Christian's situation is completely different. He is a "new creation." He lives "according to the Spirit" (Ro 8:4). But that doesn't mean that he is perfect. Paul speaks in Romans seven about the inner struggle that every Christian faces. He speaks of the "sinful nature" in which "nothing good lives" (v.18). Yet he says in chapter eight that the Christian is "controlled not by the sinful nature, but by the Spirit" (v.9). The Christian has two forces at work within him at the same time.

Before we examine sins of weakness as such, it is useful to remind ourselves

of the sources of sin that feed that struggle. Pieper says, “The true seat of sin in man ... is man’s soul” (I:534). Not surprisingly, he lists the devil, the world, and our inherent original sin as the causes of the sin that lives within us (I:533-4). In another sense, he expands

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*Only Christians
can commit the sins
of weakness.*

”

upon original sin and lists “special causes the Scripture mentions”: ignorance (1 Tm 1:13), violent emotions (for example Mt 14:30), and evil habits (Jer 13:23) (I:559-60).

Pieper suggests at least two different ways of classifying sins in the Christian. He speaks of their effects (mortal, i.e., those sins that destroy faith and thus rob us of our salvation, or venial, i.e., sins that in and of themselves do not immediately destroy our faith) and the degree of participation of the will (voluntary or involuntary) (I:564-5, 568-9). C.F.W. Walther points out that it is not “the manifest enormity” of a Christian’s sin that destroys his faith (i.e., makes it a mortal sin), but rather he points to the “attitude of the heart.” He distinguishes between being “suddenly overtaken by sin” and persisting against one’s own conscience (220). A sin of

weakness, then, is a sin that a Christian falls into, rather than one which he willfully and knowingly undertakes. It is something that he struggles against, or that catches him unawares. A sin that a Christian plans and does purposely shouldn’t be considered in this category. Indeed, when a believer lets “sin reign” (Ro 6:12) in his life, he will cease to be a Christian (Pieper I:569). In a similar vein, even a sin of weakness can destroy a Christian’s faith if he allows that sin to reign over his mortal body—if he ceases his daily struggle with it and just gives in (Walther 221).

We need to keep this in mind in our dealing with specific sins of specific sinners. A Christian caught by a sin of weakness needs a different treatment than an unrepentant sinner. By its very nature, a sin of weakness very often is dealt with in the mind of the sincere Christian by a stern preaching of God’s Law and strong feelings of guilt. What that Christian needs is the gospel, not the Law, because he is already preaching the Law to himself.

But a Christian need not despair. God has provided for our weakness, just as he provided for our reconciliation. Paul says, “For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace” (Ro 6:14). We have God’s promise that we have been set free from sin (6:18). This does not mean that we will sin no more; rather it means that every time we stumble and fall, we are repentant in its true sense—we are truly sorry that we have sinned and we trust that Christ has paid for yet another shortcoming on our part (Walther 328).

Kieta

The term “sins of weakness” can really only apply to the believer because it implies a sin against which a believer struggles daily—a sin that he truly repents of and is absolved for—but which returns time and again to haunt him. It is important in our day not to limit this type of sin to chemical dependency or something similar. Any sin could fall into this category—it doesn’t have to be a “gross sin.” Even a “petty sin” repeated often enough can torment a believer’s conscience and could lead him away from Christ if given free reign. In an era when sexual gratification is readily available and even encouraged by our society, many of our young people may be susceptible to this type of sin of weakness. Likewise, the erosion of the nuclear family, the multiplication of split shifts and weekend jobs, the ever-increasing emphasis on money and entertainment in our society bombard every Christian with temptations to sins of weakness—things they know are wrong, but which trip them up time and again.

The snare for the Christian lies in the simple realization that, although he knows and believes in what Christ has done for him, he continues to sin. The more he understands how God wants him to live, the more sharply he is reminded of how far astray from that will he has really gone. In a sense, the closer he gets to God, the more clearly his conscience sees what God demands and the more severely it torments him (Gockel 48). A good example of a conscience that was struck by the enormity of his own sin is David. The man “after the LORD’s own heart” (1Sa 13:14)

clearly understood just how far his actions had removed him from God (cf. Ps 51).

This kind of understanding is only possible in the heart of a believer. It is sharpened by the Christian’s day-to-day experience of God’s grace in his life. Anyone can feel the hammer of God’s Law. But a person who trains himself to distinguish good and evil by constant use of God’s Word, gains an experiential knowledge of God’s grace (Heb 5:14). But at the same time, he gains an ever-increasing understanding of God’s Law, and an ever-stronger desire to live according to that Law. In itself this is a most salutary thing. However, as the Christian’s conscience becomes more sensitive to the reality of God’s Law, the possibility of applying that Law without the gospel continuously grows. Without the gospel, there can only be spiritual agony.

On the other hand, a Christian must “continue to work out [his] salvation with fear and trembling” (Php 2:12). Because he has a sinful nature, any Christian can lose sight of God’s law and become callused to his own sin. His conscience grows weaker and duller; he commits sins of weakness, but he isn’t roused to contrition. He isn’t engaged in a constant use of the Means of Grace. Such a person is in danger of spiritual death (Walther 195,211; Pieper I:537). Such a person needs to be reminded that God reveals his will for us in the Scripture and especially in the Law. He needs to repent—to be struck with the consequences of his actions and to embrace the Savior’s righteousness (Pieper I:79). In this

sense, even a “venial” sin can become a “mortal” sin. In our day, this is an ever-increasing danger. This too must always be borne in mind when we deal with Christians and their sins.

Even the mature Christian must constantly wrestle with Satan. Satan has a great ally in the conscience of the Christian. He can constantly murmur in the believer’s ear that his sinful thoughts, words, and actions are evi-

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dence that he truly has no faith—that he really must stand before God on the basis of his own works. If Satan can convince us that we’ve already lost the faith, he wins. When we despair, we abandon God’s grace (Walther 200). Likewise, the devil wins if we conclude that the struggle is too difficult and we give up. Thus, we let sin reign over us and we avoid the “prick” of the Law

because it is too distasteful. The result is a faith that grows weaker and weaker until sin truly strangles the faith that once lived in our hearts.

Dangerous human conclusions

Before turning to God’s remedy for our weaknesses, a detour is in order. When a Christian is wrestling with his conscience and his own failings, he is mightily tempted toward some false and destructive notions. These notions proceed from a variety of sources, but they all lead away from the objective promises of God. They all complicate the problem for a Christian by reinforcing his sense of guilt and dissatisfaction.

The first idea that we need to deal with is the modern concept of “peace of mind.” Modern society holds up peace of mind as the goal for an individual to attain. If you have peace of mind, you can deal with the whirlwind of confusion that whips around you. Much of the Christian church has formally bought into this idea. Worse, a great many individual Christians are looking for some sort of peace of mind and are dissatisfied when their faith doesn’t supply it. That’s the problem. The peace they are looking for is not the peace that Christianity offers. Christianity offers peace with God: the simple message of reconciliation—our sins have been forgiven. Then Christianity offers the corollary: comfort for the broken hearted. The ability to trust that the God who loved you so much that he died for you will also guide and direct your life with your ulti-

Kieta

mate and greatest good in store. God will bring you to heaven.

Peace with God is a far cry from the peace of mind that the world is clamoring for (and never quite finding). For

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Peace with God is a far cry from the peace of mind that the world is clamoring for.

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the Christian, the issue is especially confounded by his own spirituality. If someone is spiritually dead, how much spiritual anguish is he capable of? It takes someone of faith to cry out with St. Paul, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Ro 7:24). While it is absolutely true and even natural for the unbeliever who is struck by the full force of God’s Law to despair, it is ironic that the people who have the most reason to experience true shalom, true wholeness that comes from being right with God and experiencing the new creation of the gospel in their heart—these are the people most susceptible to the agony of a guilty conscience. Our subscription to the world’s notion of peace of mind can only lead us to question whether or not we are getting anything out of our

faith (Gockel 5,13).

In a similar fashion, Christians often imagine that they must truly feel forgiven. They think that until the “joy of the gospel” floods their hearts, they really aren’t forgiven. The corollary then is that they haven’t really suffered enough to feel forgiven. So they drive themselves to feel really penitent. They wrestle with God in prayer until they somehow “win” some kind of release from their guilt. At best, this is a psychological trick. At worst, it is syncretism or synergism—depending on your own feeling of penitence to win salvation for you (Walther 180,184). This is not to imply that a Christian doesn’t feel the joy of the gospel in his heart. But he feels it because he believes, and not vice versa (Walther 200-1).

A variation on the need to feel forgiven is the person who constantly “beats himself up” spiritually. Because he doesn’t constantly apply Christ’s work to his life, he constantly feels guilty. Because he tells himself how bad he is, on a practical level, he denies God’s grace. He may even go so far as to be extremely faithful in attending church or participating in spiritual activities because he “needs” to feel better, but, all too often, his focus will really not be on the Law and gospel present, but rather on the outward trappings. Such a person may take an unhealthy interest in preserving certain worship forms or in assuring that things are done in exactly the same way, because he seeks his peace in the doing of these things, and not in the message that these activities are intended to convey.

When a Christian allows these false

ideas to influence his thinking, he is sped down a road that leads to despair. But these notions would be relatively harmless, if the believer weren't already

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If we say that our sins are outside of Christ's atonement, then we are reducing Christ to a fake Savior.

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tormented by the Law. Even though he may not be trying to work his way into heaven, the believer still comes face to face with passages that say, “Go and sin no more.” The Law is stern, even to a believer. God has not relaxed his requirements, and the true Christian knows that. He also knows that as a real person, he falls short of those requirements again and again. He begins to tell himself that his repentance isn't real. His Old Man does everything it can to distract him from his repentance—or to make him think it isn't real if it isn't felt deeply enough. A Christian may read, “The man who says ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1Jn 2:4). He has to admit that although he claims to know Christ, he doesn't always do as Christ commanded. He barely notices the passage, “But

if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One” (1Jn 2:1b). This Christian is driving himself into despair. He is convincing himself that he is outside of the covenant of grace. He begins to disregard the fact that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world (1Jn 2:2).

Luther called such a person a *gemalter Sunder* (literally “a painted sinner,” i.e., a facsimile of a sinner) who makes Christ a *gemalten Heiland* (“a painted Savior”—a facsimile of a Savior). Luther's point is simple. If we say that our sins are outside of Christ's atonement, then we are reducing Christ to a fake Savior, a Savior only of petty sins and sinners. We diminish the work Christ came to do when we place ourselves outside of his grace (Luther X:1729-30).

God's solution

By now it should be obvious what the solution is. The solution is God's solution. It is Law and gospel. If a Christian is truly becoming indifferent to God's will, then he needs to hear the Law. If a person is truly struggling with his sin and under the delusions of our time, then he needs to hear the wonderful, objective promises of God. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). He needs to be reminded that Jeremiah called the coming Savior “the LORD our Righteousness” (23:6). That means that when God looks at us, he doesn't see our sins any-

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more, he sees Christ. A person who thinks that his sins are outside of God's grace needs to be reminded of what he first believed. He was originally accepted because of Christ, our Righteousness. Paul says that he would rather be found in Christ "not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith" (Php 3:8,9). Our sins of weakness, our lack of peace of mind, our failure to really feel saved have nothing to do with our status before God. What does matter is that Christ "bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds we are healed" (1Pe 2:24) (Gockel 136-7).

To that end, God has given us "the ministry of reconciliation" (2Co 5:18). God knows that we are subject to sins of weakness and to feelings of guilt and even despair. Gockel says, "In fact, that is what a Christian pastor is for—to speak the word of *pardon* in the name of Christ" (47; emphasis in the original). God has given us the fulltime ministry to proclaim Law and gospel. God has also charged every Christian to rebuke and to comfort his brother when he sins (Mt 18:15,16). It is not God's will that we despair over our sins.

Every Christian must deal with sins of weakness. But we must deal with them through the proper distinction of Law and gospel. We may find ourself struggling our whole life long to overcome our weaknesses. We may never succeed, but—rightly understood—the important thing is that we struggle, not in the

sense that diminishes God's Law by saying "As long as you try hard, God is satisfied with that." Rather in the scriptural sense that each day, we must sincerely repent of our sins. We must examine ourselves in the light of the Law and expose what is sinful within us. But we must also immediately cling in faith to the gospel promise that our sins are paid for. In light of that free and full forgiveness, we turn and amend our sinful lives. It is essential that we correctly undertake both steps. If we apply only Law, we can only despair. If we apply only gospel, we can only become lax and secure in our sin. But if we struggle daily to overcome our sin, we have God's promise that he will purify us from all sin (1Jn 1:9), if not in this life, then in heaven. After all, the final cure for our sins of weakness is dying. In heaven, we will be free.

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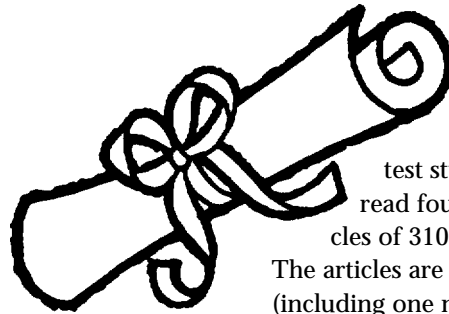
Pastor Geoffrey Kieta serves as missionary in Bogota, Columbia.

The Minnesota Graduation Standards

Paul L. Willems

MINNESOTA, along with several other states, has decided to develop graduation standards to insure quality education in its public schools. These standards are to be thought of in the context of medieval soldiers going into battle. Although the soldiers might lose sight of their leaders in the confusion of the fight, the standards—tall poles on which brightly colored pennants flew—provided direction and indicated what ground had been captured (SciMath of MN).

Minnesota has developed two sets of standards for its students. They define what students should know, understand, and be able to do before they graduate from high school. The Basic Standard can be compared to a safety net for students, insuring the three Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) will be attained before a student receives a high school diploma. The rules for reading and mathematics were adopted by the Minnesota Board of Education on March 11, 1996, and have the force of law for the class of 2000 and thereafter (Minnesota Rules). In the reading



test students are asked to read four general interest articles of 3100 to 3400 words each.

The articles are nonfiction prose (including one narrative selection) in Standard English, similar to articles found in newspapers and high circulation magazines. Students must then answer ten questions on each article (forty total questions) of the reading test, of which 75% are on literal comprehension (main idea, supporting details and words and phrases contextually defined) and 25% are in inferential comprehension (author's perspective, drawing conclusions and distinguishing fact from opinion) (MN Basic Standard Practice Test in Reading).

In the mathematics test students are asked to solve real life problems in which they work with whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and integers. Calculators may be used. The mathematics test items include estimating, measurement, probability, geometric shapes, reading graphs, tables, charts and maps to analyze data, ordering and determining equivalence and using percents, ratios, rates, and proportions (MN Basic Standard Practice Test in Mathematics). Practice tests have been

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made available by the state for discussion purposes, in parent-teacher meetings, for use in curriculum planning, and for student practice. Both the reading and the mathematics tests are untimed. The class of 2000 must pass with 70%, the class of 2001 with 75%, and the class of 2002 and thereafter with 80% (MN BST: Reading and Mathematics Test Manual). The proposed writing test is to be implemented with the class of 2001 during their sophomore year. It asks students to compose a message in English for an adult reader. The message should have a clear central idea, a coherent focus, organization (a beginning, a middle, and an end), detailed support or elaboration of ideas, and involve correct use of mechanics. This test is also untimed, but 120 minutes are recommended. No word processors or dictionaries may be used by the students while writing this test. Space may be provided in the test booklet for prewriting (e.g. outline, mind map, first draft, etc.), but prewriting will not be scored. The writing test is scored holistically with scores of "4" and "3" designating passing and scores of "2" or "1" indicating not passing (MN Basic Standards of Written Composition Handbook). All these tests will be scored by an independent testing firm.

The High Standard, or ten Profiles of Learning or Areas of Learning, consists of embedded task management skills and content standards. To receive a public high school diploma, students need to complete work in all parts of at least eighteen categories of the Profiles of Learning with at least a developmental level of achievement. A student is

exempted from this requirement if an IEP, 504, or LEP plan specifically designates otherwise. As a student moves through the primary, intermediate, and middle grades, a chart called the Profile of Achievement records the student's progress on Performance Package activities which address the Profiles of Learning. The quality of student work is scored on a scale of one to four, with four being the highest score. A score of "3" or "4" indicates a "Standard level" of performance. A score of "1" or "2" is recorded as the student performing at the "Developmental level." Pre-high school work is referred to as "preparatory standard" work and is not recorded on the high school transcript (High Standards/Profile of Learning).

The task management skills are skills considered important by employers, post secondary representatives, and parents and should be observable within an average class period. Students are rated as consistently, sometimes, or rarely demonstrating these behaviors. The five task management skills are resource management (e.g., cares for materials), time management (e.g., meets deadlines), persistence (e.g., strives for accuracy), team work (e.g., collaborates), and respect for others.

The ten Learning Areas or Profiles of Learning toward which high school students are to work for proficiency include the arts, mathematics, science, languages (optional), comprehension, inquiry, interaction, decision making, and management.

Standards and assessments should be implemented in the primary, intermediate, and middle levels as well as at least

eighteen of the sixty-two content standards must be implemented for high school graduation. Six additional elective categories are recommended by the State Board of Education for a total of twenty four content standards for each student with at least development level before they graduate from high school. The complete list of content standards and levels are available state board of education publications.

The sixty-two high school level content standards along with the five task management skills describe what students need to know and be able to do to achieve the Five Comprehensive Goals. Students are expected to function effectively as purposeful thinkers, effective communicators, self-directed learners, productive group participants, and responsible citizens. The state has developed Performance Packages which provide more detail and suggest what students may be asked to do to demonstrate their proficiency in the Profiles of Learning.

Each of the Minnesota public schools is required to indicate on their student transcripts how well students performed on the Minnesota standards. The Basic Standard will note the following for each of the three tests as defined by law: Pass—state level; Pass—individual level (students with LEP, IEP, or 504 plans); Pass—translate (for the mathematics test only); Exempt (student with fewer than three years in an English speaking school); and not passed.

The intent of the Minnesota Graduation Standards is to impact the school curriculum and instruction so that all

schools develop a deliberate written curriculum which is taught in the school, rather than merely adopting new text books. Instruments of evaluation can then be chosen to show that the curriculum was realized. In this way the curriculum is focused on the learner and not the teacher. The schools can expect students to develop skills through the Basic Standard, acquire knowledge and skills through the High Standard, and improve their attitudes through the task management skills as they work toward achieving the five Comprehensive Goals of becoming purposeful thinkers, effective communicators, self-directed learners, productive group participants, and responsible citizens through the Minnesota Graduation Standards.

The author offers no conclusion on the use of these standards in the elementary and secondary schools of the WELS.

FURTHER READING

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

Discovering God's Creation



A Guidebook
to Hands-on
Science

Edited by
Paul Boehlke
Roger Klockziem
John Paulsen

Martin Luther College has published a new science resource for Lutheran elementary and secondary schools. Edited by Paul Boehlke of Wisconsin Lutheran College and Roger Klockziem and John Paulsen of Martin Luther College, *Discovering God's Creation* is a collection of hands-on science lessons in the following areas: How a Scientist Works (8 lessons), Physics (52 lessons), Biology (66 lessons), and Chemistry (24 lessons). The lessons were contributed by some 31 elementary and secondary teachers in Wisconsin Synod Lutheran schools. The book also contains a detailed set of instructions on science safety, introductory essays on science, a list of science resources and science goals for Lutheran schools.

The individual lessons include background information and clearly written procedures for the activity. The lessons also provide safety information, suggestions for involving the student's family, extending the activity beyond the lesson, and a Christian application or reflection. The lessons are illustrated with detailed diagrams and many lessons have activity sheets for the students. The hands-on activities explore the basic workings and principles of science, showing students what scientists do and how they see the world. This book is a must for Lutheran elementary and secondary schools.

Discovering God's Creation can be ordered from the Science Department at Martin Luther College, 1995 Luther Court, New Ulm, Minnesota 56073. The price is \$40.00 which includes shipping.

“Art as I See It”

Rachel Tacke



I HAVE a real problem with holidays. Each time one approaches I get a very anxious feeling. The problem? Art projects. I want my students to make something they will be proud to bring home, but at the same time, I don't want to sacrifice their creative artistic expression for a cute craft. I have come to terms with my anxieties by dividing the art in my classroom into three categories.

First is the “direction following, listening exercise” that produces the rows of smiling snowmen that vary by the twinkle in their eyes. This type of art falls into the craft category and fits best in my curriculum under, you guessed it, “Direction Following and Listening Skills.” Tracing, cutting, and gluing receive a lot of practice. Sources for this type of art are profuse. The results are predictable and successful.

The second category is a step-by-step teaching process. Each step involves directly teaching how to use the art media. In the following Swimmy project I use watercolors. I teach and demonstrate



how to use the tip of a brush, how to load a brush with color, how to clean the brush between different colors, how to paint the whole paper with water for a wet-into-wet technique, and how properly to clean and store a brush. After the teaching has been done there is little to do except watch the results. Even cleaning up is easy because the students have been taught the proper care of the materials. The art produced with this process is uniquely individual and usually leads to the desire for the third process.

The third category is the all-consuming process an artist goes through to create. During the “Free Choice” part of my preschool day I have seen many recognizable trees, rainbows, and flowers slowly disappear as more paint is applied. Finally there is nothing left on the paper but a large, wet, brown spot. What started as a picture changed to a process. Somewhere in the middle came learning about blending colors, brush strokes, and the simple satisfaction of putting paint on paper. This is the pure form of art that I try to promote in my class-

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room. As you observe this kind of art you can see individual growth through these experiences. Large brown paintings progress to beautifully controlled,

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*Every child is an
artist. The problem is
how to remain an
artist once he grows
up.*” -Pablo Picasso
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planned pieces of art. Recognizable forms return.

But how many large brown paintings can be sent home? Actually, quite a few. Along with this unstructured art I also make a point of helping the parents understand the process. Early in the year I add a long article in our class newsletter about the process these artists go through, along with some suggested reactions they can give. Unfortunately the idea that “art has to look right” stifles a lot of creativity.

I learned a long time ago that cheap materials will not produce fantastic results. If you want your students to be fascinated by the way a “wet-into-wet wash” looks in watercolors, you have to use a paper that allows the colors to explode on the paper. So, use real watercolor paper. If you want your students to be able to paint small birds in

the branches of their trees, you need to let them use paint that isn't so thin that it runs to the nearest exit. Small brushes make much better birds than the round, stunted turkey-basters in many classrooms. When I am not sure if I can get a good result, I try it out myself. Are my expectations too high? Are my materials appropriate?

Sources for this type of art are at your fingertips. Every time you open a children's picture book you have a sampling of fine art. Samples of watercolors, pencil crayons, paper making, pastels, collages, paper folding, even clay abound in the well-loved pages of their favorite stories. Study the pictures. Read books like *Talking With Artists* to find out the processes used by the illustrators. Let your own creativity flow. You might find yourself lost in time with the simple satisfaction of producing artwork.

I give directions to produce crafts. I provide quality materials and teach children how to use them. But most important to me, I bask in the joy of watching artistic creativity flourish underneath large brown paintings.

RESOURCES

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Rachel Tacke is currently teaching art classes at Evergreen Lutheran High School in Kent, Washington.

An art lesson example

This art project is used when we read the book *Swimmy* by Leo Lionni.

Materials needed:

Day 1: 5" x 7" watercolor paper (90 lb. student grade works well); masking tape; watercolors; soft, round watercolor brushes; containers of water

Day 2: potatoes, knife

paint or ink (acrylics or speedball ink work best)

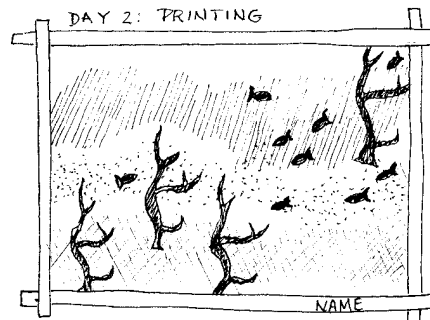
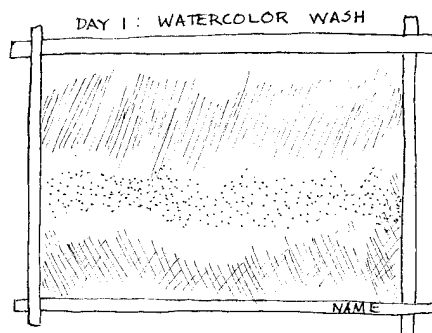
trays or plates (to spread each color of ink for printing)

Procedure:

Tape each watercolor paper to the table on all four sides. After teaching and demonstrating, let the children paint their papers with clean water. The papers should be wet with no puddles of water. Next, have them load their brush with a color of their choice and paint it in a horizontal, wavy, stripe across the page. This process should be repeated with different colors. Watch as the colors move around on the page making new shapes and hues. This paper should be allowed to dry before the next step. This can be done by leaving it on the table, or when mostly dry, carefully peeling it and taping it on the chalkboard.

The next class, cut a potato in half and carefully "draw" the outline of the object you want to print with the tip of your knife. I let the class decide what I should draw. Next, cut away the extra potato around the object. For *Swimmy* I like to use half the potato for a fish and half for some seaweed. I demonstrate how to press the potato first in the paint, then on scratch paper to use excess paint, then on my underwater background. The same potato stamp can be used for different colors of paint. There are other ways to make stamps for printing, some of which the children can make themselves. This could be the first project leading to more watercolor techniques or printing techniques. When the children know how to use the materials, they will come up with more of their own ideas too.

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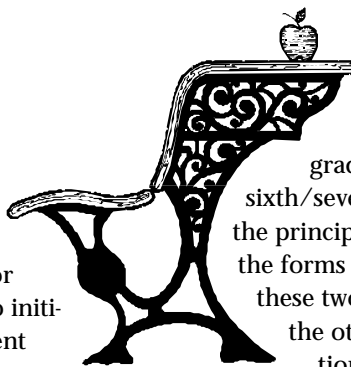


Gains and Losses in WELS Lutheran Elementary Schools

John R. Isch

Background

In the fall of 1990 the Board for Parish Education (Commission for Parish Schools) resolved to initiate a study of the enrollment decreases in WELS elementary schools. The CPS constructed a Gain/Loss Form to be included with the fall enrollment forms completed by the principal of each Lutheran elementary school in WELS. The form asked for the following data: the second and the sixth grade enrollments the previous fall, the number of children who did not enter the third or seventh grade classes but who were enrolled in the second and sixth grades the previous year (losses), the number of children enrolled in the third and seventh grades in the current year but who were not enrolled in the second and sixth grades of the previous year (gains), the type of student in the gain or loss (congregation child, other WELS/ELS child, other Christian church enrollment, unchurched enrollment), and a brief written phrase giving the reason that the child entered or left the school. The study used these two



grades (second/third and sixth/seventh) as a convenience to the principals who had to complete the forms and because it was believed these two grades fairly represented the other grades with the exception of kindergarten and grade one.

For each school returning the form, therefore, there would be data on the number and type of student who enrolled or withdrew from the Lutheran elementary school between grades two and three and between grades six and seven and the reason for the enrollment or withdrawal. The study began in 1993 and continued to the fall of 1996. The data for the four years 1993 to 1996 (inclusive) are the basis for this report.

Completed reports were returned from 289 schools in 1993 (79% of schools operating in that year), 293 schools in 1994 (81%), 287 schools in 1995 (79%), and 289 schools in 1996 (80%). The data for 16 schools were not used because they either closed or opened between 1993 and 1996 or because they did not include a third or seventh grade in those years. Three

schools did not send in any returns for the four years of this study. The final database included 344 schools and probably represents fairly what was happening in our schools in grades

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Our schools lost one out of six students between grade one and grade eight.
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three and seven during the years 1993 to 1996.

Combined with the gain/loss numbers from the schools were two other sets of data: Data from the statistical report of the congregation, completed by the pastor at the end of the calendar year, and data from the fall enrollment reports completed by the principal.

Results by school

In 1990 an attempt was made to predict future enrollments in our Lutheran elementary schools based on enrollment gains and losses in the previous 16 years. Those predictions were quite close to what actually happened in our schools. The numbers over-predicted the enrollments in grades one to four and underpredicted in grades five through eight. The actual grade to grade enrollment decreases in the six years since those predictions average

2.7% per year. The overall enrollment decline between first and eighth grade was 16.3%. Thus our schools lost one out of six students between grade one and grade eight.

Such predictions of future enrollments based on current trends are difficult. Many things can affect the enrollments of our schools, including school openings and closing. Another major factor is the growth of preschools in WELS. Our Lutheran schools in general have maintained their overall enrollment levels (despite the 2.7% loss rate) because of the substantial increases in preschools and preschool enrollments.

In addition, better than half the children in preschools are not from families who are members of the sponsoring congregation. In slightly oversimplified terms, our schools are holding their enrollments or are not declining in enrollments as fast because non-member children are coming into our preschools.

District comparisons

Districts with schools having the greatest percentage gains in grades three and seven also tend to have the greater percentage of losses. It would appear that these enrollment changes reflect a mobile population, particularly in those districts (Arizona-California, North Atlantic, Pacific Northwest, South Atlantic, and South Central) where the U.S. population is also shifting. The Western Wisconsin and Northern Wisconsin Districts have smaller percentage gains and losses which may indicate a more settled,

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small town population. The smaller percentages may also result from a larger second and sixth grade base. The large schools of the synod tend to be in the Wisconsin districts. When a large school with a second grade enrollment of twenty loses one student, it has a 5% loss. When a small school with a second grade enrollment of two loses one student, it has a 50% loss. Thus the Wisconsin districts have smaller loss and gain percentages. The district breakdown may also demonstrate an observation made in a different study (Berg) that congregations with large gains in membership tend to experience large losses through the back door.

Congregational factors

As the introduction described, this database was constructed to include congregational information. There was an assumption that factors in a congregation have an impact—both positive and negative—on school enrollment. It was believed, for example, that a congregation with a high number of adults entering through transfers or adult confirmations would be paralleled by a gain in school enrollment. Unfortunately, none of these predictions was supported by the data. There was one congregation variable which shows a small but consistent relationship to school gains and losses: the percent of communicants who attend a Bible class. As this percentage increases there tends to be a corresponding percentage increase in school enrollment gains, but it is only a small relationship.

These results in general were a bit puzzling. It almost seems that gains and losses in a Lutheran elementary school are unrelated to what is happening in the congregation that sponsors and supports that school. Even those variables between which one would expect a relationship fail to show such relationship. This particular set of analyses came up pretty much as a dry hole.

School variables

The variables in this set of analyses were those specifically related to the school. They included such things as the percentage of the congregation's children enrolled in school, the amount of tuition charged members and non-members, the pupil-teacher ratio, and the cost per child of operating the school. All these data are included on the fall report completed by the principal.

None of these comparisons, however, turned up anything noteworthy. There were a few weak relationships such as per-pupil costs and losses in grade seven (as per-pupil costs rise so also do the seventh grade losses).

Sometimes non-findings can be interesting; here they are just puzzling. One wishes to find characteristics of schools or congregations which are related to enrollment gains or losses. One wishes to find these relationships in order to understand better why schools gain or lose students. Perhaps this lack of relationship among the numbers in this data set is a healthy antidote to an obsession with numbers: sometimes numbers don't say anything.

There is also an eccentricity in the gains and losses in the schools in this four-year study. There are a few schools which show consistent gains or losses over the four years. But most schools have no such pattern. In one year they gain a few, then they lose a lot, the following year they gain a lot, then they lose. There were also some rural and small-town schools which neither gained nor lost students in grades three and seven. This lack of pattern is one likely explanation of lack of relationship among the variables. Statistical analysis is predicated on patterns which supposedly exist in data; randomness gives no results. Our schools had a net loss over the four years, but it was in ones and twos across the system with no discernible pattern.

six/seven. The principal was to use four classifications or types of students: a congregation child, other WELS/ELS child, other Christian child, and unchurched. These categories are the ones used on most school reports and principals are generally consistent in their reporting because the basis is the membership of the child's parents. If a child's parents are members of the congregation which owns and operates the school, he or she is classified as a member of the congregation. If the child is a member of a sister WELS or ELS (Evangelical Lutheran Synod) congregation, the child is classified as other WELS/ELS. If the child holds membership in some other Christian church, such as ELCA or Methodist, the child is

Results by students

The second database in this study consists of the students who entered or left the Lutheran elementary school during the four years of this study. Unlike the first database which listed individual schools (344 schools for four years), this database lists the individual students, 3770 of them. For each child who entered or left our schools between second and third and between six and seventh grades, the principal was asked for two pieces of information: the type of student and the reason the child entered or left the school.

Over the four years of this study 1023 students left second/third grade and 1104 students left grade

TABLE 1
Gains: Reasons and Percents

	<i>Reason</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Sister congregation without school		42	2.6
Transfer in—WELS church		427	26.0
Transfer in—another school		284	17.3
Recruited from congregation		32	1.9
Retained in grade		35	2.1
Returning		43	2.6
Wanted Christian education		105	6.4
Change in school staff		2	.1
Recruited by member		11	.7
Family moved in		104	6.3
Mission prospect		298	18.1
New member		105	6.4
Custody		17	1.0
Adoption		1	.1
Tuition student		6	.4
Adoption/foster child		6	.4
Home schooled		32	1.9
Other family member enrolled		11	.7
No reason given		29	1.8
Accelerated grade placement		9	.5
Difficulties in other school		10	.6
Unhappy with public school		35	2.1
Total		1643	

TABLE 2
Losses: Reasons and Percents

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Change faith/catholic	5	.2
Doctrinal differences/problems	15	.7
Family left church	16	.8
Family moved (out)	554	26.1
New church school	13	.6
Other Christian school	21	1.0
Left WELS	15	.7
Church discipline	9	.4
Transferred churches	274	12.9
Transferred out	42	2.0
Transferred to WELS without tuition	1	.0
Custody problem	23	1.1
Family problem	14	.7
Financial reasons	91	4.3
Foster child moved	3	.1
Home schooling	46	2.2
Membership refused/not accepted	8	.4
Tuition raised/charged	28	1.3
Dissatisfied	11	.5
Lack of church attendance	3	.1
Divorce	5	.2
Junior high preference	50	2.4
Rebelled against religious training	3	.1
Single student class	2	.1
Sports	12	.6
Transportation	47	2.2
Unable to handle work	2	.1
Unhappy with school	18	.8
Went to public school	203	9.5
Discipline problem	8	.4
Dismissed/removed	2	.1
No tuition students	3	.1
Discontinued grade	2	.1
Small class size	5	.2
Teacher problem	2	.1
Accelerated grade placement	4	.2
Retained in grade	56	2.6
Asked not to return	22	1.0
Conflict with other students	6	.3
Dismissed	1	.0
Expelled	15	.7
Needed special education	58	2.7
Problems in class	6	.3
Withdrawn	351	16.5
No reason given	41	1.9
Didn't enroll	3	.1
Total	2127	

classified as "other Christian." If the child's parents or the child are not members of any church or are members of a non-Christian church, the child is classified as "mission" or "unchurched."

Most gains and losses in our schools were from the members of the congregation. There are, however, differences between the proportions in gains and losses. For example, in these two grades our schools lose more children of congregation members than they gain, but they gain more non-member children than they lose.

The principals were asked to describe why the child entered or left the school. When the surveys were compiled, some of the reasons were combined when it was clear that the reasons were similar or identical. While there was some judgment involved, the categories were not collapsed so as to obscure the answers. Tables 1 and 2 show all the reasons and the number and percent for each gain or loss. There are differences between third grade gains and seventh grade gains, but they are small. A greater proportion of gains in the third grade are from within the congregation while the gains in seventh grade come equally from within the congregation and from outside the congregation. For example, a greater percentage of children classified as

mission prospects enroll in seventh grade than in third grade. Overall, there are more children enrolling in third grade (53% of all gains) than in seventh grade (47%).

The differences between the two grades in losses are also not great. It appears that non-WELS children are more likely to come into the LES in the upper grades and they are also less likely to withdraw from school in the upper grades than they are in the lower grades.

Nearly two out of five (38%) students

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Our schools lose nearly 90% of the unchurched and other Christian children who enrolled in grades three and seven.

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who enrolled in the two grades in this four-year study came from unchurched or other Christian church backgrounds. One out of four (25%) who withdrew were from such backgrounds. (The reader should note, however, that those lost from the third and seventh grades of a Lutheran elementary school are not necessarily the same students who were gained in those grades.) Our schools keep more than they lose but they still lose nearly 90% of the

unchurched and other Christian children who enrolled in grades three and seven. There were 621 children from these two backgrounds who enrolled and 533 who withdrew. Although the losses among unchurched children and children belonging to other Christian schools are great, the losses of children who are members of the sponsoring congregation are even greater.

About 40% of the gains in third and seventh grades were members of the congregation. This 40% of the gains who are from the congregation represents the proportion of those enrolling in grades three and seven. Clearly, more of the congregation children enroll in the beginning grades of the school (grades K-2) than in grades three and seven. Two out of three losses from these grades are children of members of the congregation.

Children from sister WELS/ELS congregations are enrolling in greater proportions than they are leaving. This suggests that the enrollment drops in upper grades would be even larger were it not for cooperative arrangements our Lutheran schools have made with congregations which don't have schools.

Our schools have probably not realized the potential for outreach that some predicted for them. The new enrollment in third and seventh grades has a considerable proportion of nonmembers (better than one in three). Our schools lose less than we gain, but the proportion of nonmembers in our schools still remains at a modest 10%, a number which has shown a small growth over the past 12 years.

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Summary

Passive recruitment probably characterizes our schools' efforts in enrolling children. Transfers from other congregations, returning students, enrollments from sister congregations, and families which move in make up more than half the new enrollments (55%). On the positive side, one out of three new enrollees appears to have come to our Lutheran schools as a mission prospect or by some kind of active recruitment.

The reasons given for losses do not give any support to the contention that our schools are lacking in services or facilities. A junior high preference with its more specialized curriculum was a reason given for only 2% of the withdrawals. Special education was noted by 3% of those who withdrew. Sports programs were less than one percent. Only financial reasons at 4% of the explanations for withdrawal might be worth noting. The reader might also note that our schools gain (1.9%) almost as much as they lose (2.2%) to home schoolers.

But a disproportionate share of our enrollment losses are children whose parents are members of the congregation. For every two children of the congregation which we enroll after the second grade, we seem to lose three children of members. This does not mean that our schools are losing the same children who enroll after second grade, but it does appear that as our members' children progress through the grades, more are likely to withdraw. Less than half (46%) the members who withdrew their children did so because the family

physically moved away. Our school seem to be losing members for a multitude of reasons rather than for one or two compelling reasons. Our enrollment losses are nicked and dimed away.

A Lutheran elementary school would do well to examine its retention rate, particularly of children of congregation members. Congregation members have the greatest stake in the school. They support the school financially, they call the teachers, and they determine the curriculum and the facilities. It is their school, yet substantial numbers are leaving it for a multitude of reasons. Someone should ask whether all the reasons are good and what a school can do to convince the parents that some

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Less than half the members who withdrew their children did so because the family physically moved away.

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reasons are not good.

This next observation will be sensitive to some, but the dropout rate may be increasing in the upper grades because there are problems in these grades: curriculum problems, discipline problems, teaching problems. We tend

to focus a great deal on the importance of early childhood education; the time may have come to balance our focus.

Even for those members who move out of the community, there may be more effective follow-up. Obviously, many of these parents are not enrolling their children in a WELS school after the move. It seems that principals could assist members who move by directing them to Lutheran schools in the community to which the family is moving. They could also increase their efforts to inform these schools of the incoming family so principals and teachers at these schools can contact the prospects.

Our faculties and congregation members cannot assume that the quality of Christian education speaks for itself. They must carry the message to those most concerned with the education of children, the parents. Parents today have many choices. Public schools are adapting and changing as the public demands results; many public schools have risen to that challenge and have improved their performance. Our Lutheran schools have to be more aggressive in recruiting and retaining students.

Schools may also wish to consider the loss among children whose parents are not of our fellowship. Most congregations have some kind of adult instruction policy for unchurched parents. There does not appear to be any indication in this data that such policies increase withdrawal rates of unchurched children. Without compromising the doctrinal basis of the school, faculties might examine whether there are policies or practices within the

school which make it difficult to assimilate the children of unchurched parents. For those parents who are members of other Christian churches, the issue is more complicated. These children are generally enrolled on a tuition, space-available basis. Schools may be less concerned with the loss of these children because in some cases their enrollment may be limited. Still, losing nine out of ten children of parents not in our fellowship is worth discussing.

The greatest retention success is with those children who are members of sister congregations that likely have no school. At least in filling empty desks, the school could pursue more vigorously this source of students.

Our schools are losing students at a rate which this writer feels is unhealthy. One could dismiss these findings as an indication of the growing secularization of society: School enrollments are just following declines in stewardship, church attendance, and Bible class participation so it's no big deal. Wringing hands and walking away is neither good policy nor good doctrine. The Lord expects us to do better with the Lutheran school, one of the best means he has given us to nurture children.

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Special Needs Inclusion: Is it Best For All?

Patricia S. Noeldner

IT SEEMS that since special education has emerged in the school systems, people have interpreted its mandate in a variety of ways. Each state, and every public school district, has its own concept of what providing services to children with special needs is all about.

Where does this disparity come from? Let's start with the laws that provide for special education. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states that "No otherwise qualified handicapped individual...shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal assistance." This law is called the "Bill of Rights for Handicapped Children." In 1975, "The Education for all Handicapped Children Act," Public Law 94-142, (hereafter P.L. 94-142), was passed. It states that schools must provide the most appropriate public education, free to parents, at age three, or as soon after as the student is identified as needing a special program through age twenty-one. It requires that an instructional plan is outlined in a document called an Individual Education Plan (I.E.P) and that this plan is reviewed annually. Included components are biographical information, a list of the child's current functioning in academic areas, specific areas of need, long-term goals to meet those needs, short-term

objectives to meet the goals, and a method of evaluation to determine progress. The I.E.P must state if additional services are needed for the child to benefit from instruction such as speech therapy, occupational or physical therapy, among others. Finally, the I.E.P must indicate what type of educational setting will best provide the specialized plan for education.

P.L. 94-142 clearly states that the child who receives special services must, "to the maximum extent appropriate, be educated with non-handicapped children, in a setting closest to the child's home, where that child would attend if not handicapped." Typically, school districts have provided services in two basic ways: a resource setting, where the child receives instruction from a special education teacher in a separate classroom for less than 50% of the school hours or in a self-contained setting, where the student spends more than 50% of the school hours with the special education teacher in a separate classroom. Since 1975, this has been the foundation of special education.

In 1990, P. L. 101-476, "The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act," (I.D.E.A.) was passed. This law reauthorized P.L. 94-142 and emphasized that the education of children with special needs must take place in the least restrictive environment, which means in a school that has the neces-

sary services, is closest to the home district, and with non-disabled students as much as possible without having an adverse effect on academic success. In response, school districts have taken a creative approach to providing the most appropriate placement for each student. Thus, we have seen the introduction of a variety of instructional models such as collaborative teaching, increased mainstreaming, and inclusion.

The focus of this article is inclusion as an educational setting for students with special needs. Inclusion refers to educating all students in the regular classroom. It involves bringing support services to the child, rather than moving the child to a separate instructional setting. This can be accomplished by providing training and technical assistance to the teacher so the I.E.P goals can be implemented within the regular classroom with consultative support from special education teachers. Another delivery system is to employ trained personnel within the regular classroom to adapt the curriculum and provide any accommodations needed for the student to succeed within that setting.

Inclusion is controversial. Some parents want their disabled students in regular classrooms, others do not. Some students feel more comfortable included in the regular classroom, while others are more comfortable in a special classroom with fewer students. Some districts report saving money by implementing inclusive services; at the same time, others have spent more because of inclusion. Some teachers claim that

having the special students in their room creates more planning and more work, while others state that having the support services benefits the classroom as a whole. Educators have discussed which type of special services provide the best education for all children and whether the school, district, or state should adopt a policy to promote inclusion. No one service delivery option is best for all; that is why we have special education and an individual plan to elaborate on the unique needs of each special student. Without a doubt, inclusion is a controversial topic, but in spite of this, many public school systems have taken a full-inclusion approach to providing special services.

What does that mean for our Lutheran schools? It means that our students should come back to us if we can educate them and provide services that will give them the academic success they deserve. The public school system is obligated to provide services within their setting. However, parochial schools need to collaborate with the public school in providing a joint education for students with special needs.

How do we prepare for inclusion? First of all, we need to become familiar with the laws, rules and regulations pertaining to special education within your state. Education is not federally mandated; special education is. This means that each state develops a school code to govern education and to enforce the special education mandates. Each school district then provides a set of policies to implement the state code.

Parochial schools need to take the first step and develop a relationship

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with the public school district. Find out the name of the special education coordinator or the superintendent and contact them. Request information regarding current policies on the referral process, assessment, and types of special services provided for students who live within the district. Keep in mind, your school may need to contact several school districts because the school district where the child resides is the one responsible for providing any services.

Lutheran school principals and boards of education should encourage their teachers to attend workshops and training opportunities to learn more about instructional methods for students with special needs. If the relationship with the public school district is amiable, principals can request that Lutheran teachers be allowed to attend the public school in-service training for special education staff members to ensure consistency of services. Lutheran principals can ask if their teachers can visit classrooms within the local public school and become familiar with the services provided.

When the time comes that a student is in need of special services, the doors have been opened to develop a collaborative instructional setting where the child attends the parochial school and the teacher works with the special education teacher from the public school setting to implement the I.E.P goals. Realize that, in most cases, the teacher will need to travel to the public school to consult with the special education teacher, as a school district will not take time from other students to serve one student in a parochial setting. If you

have a teacher on your staff who holds a degree in special education, he or she could become the case manager for the I.E.P and collaborate with the regular teaching staff.

It should be noted that the regular teacher should not alter the curriculum for all students to meet the needs of the student with an I.E.P. The curriculum for the grade level is set but the work that the student with special needs is required to complete is adapted or accommodated. The following is an example of an adapted assignment: While the class takes the 25 question social studies test, the student with special needs is asked five questions on the key points of the chapter. Generally, the special educator is responsible for adapting assignments to meet the needs of the student. The following is an example of an accommodation: While the class will complete 30 multiplication problems, the student with special needs completes 15.

Some students need a small group instructional setting. Some children will learn more from their peers in the regular classroom and thrive in that setting. The key to success for all special students is to develop a close relationship with each and devise a program that meets their individual needs in whatever setting is best.

Patricia Noeldner graduated from Dr. Martin Luther College in 1980. She taught at Bethany Lutheran in Manitowoc, Wisconsin from 1980-1984. Currently, Mrs. Noeldner is a principal and special education coordinator for Lebanon Community Unit School District #9. She lives in Lebanon, IL with her husband and two sons.



What is Solitude?

Ramona Czer

Dear Teachers,

The other day I started thinking about the sweet stuff I crave and can't seem to get enough of—and no, I don't mean chocolate. What I ended up with was this piece I now dedicate to all teachers everywhere who long for, fear, and need more of this precious stuff.

What is solitude?

It's a chance to walk barefoot in the finally warm soil of my mind, the earth crumbly and yielding. I'm sure that when seeds of ideas appear, I'll plant them deep, and they'll grow into something. I wonder what.

But when it's been too long, I sit down with solitude and it chills me, like a winter wind or some disease pushing me too close to my own heartbeat. I hear its wild, irregular thumping and think, "I'm dying."

Death loves to invade our solitude, loves to slash his way in like a barking dog with teeth I can't ignore. But solitude can also be like the cat I search the house for. "Kitty, kitty!" I call, my hand eager for her languid fur. When I find her, she stares at me as if to say, "I've

always been here. Welcome."

But sometimes the cat seems boring. All you get from cats you have to give first. A dog, a boisterous, slobbering, every-minute-you-know-you're-alive-when-you're-with-him animal, is my normal life. Doing doing doing, not being being being, like with a cat.

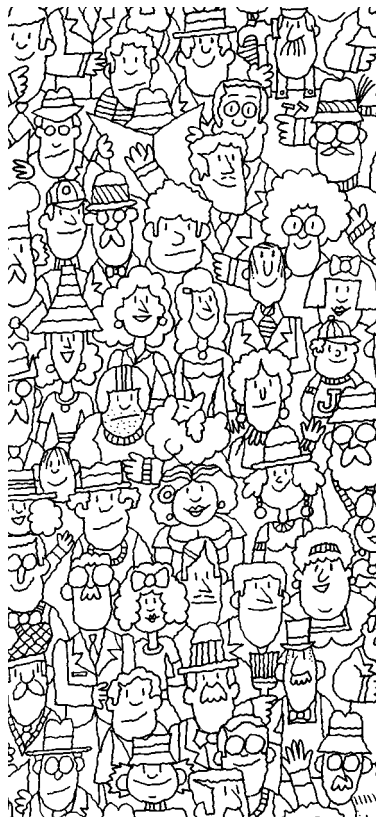
When I'm only doing, I sense a far-away music, stringed and complex. I can't get at its meaning though; I'd have to listen too hard and soak it in many times over, come to respect it. But if I hum it over and over, even inaccurately and unconsciously, one day it's under my skin and simple, like the flow of blood in my veins and arteries, purposeful and rich. I want it to become like a book I've read so many times its message is me, the author and I a set of Siamese twins sharing lungs. But do we ever read like that anymore, come to really know what we know? Quick, on to the next important study, trendy idea, tiptoe and sample. Never adopt anything, take it home and live with it. The idea might be a baby who cries in the night and needs me to feed it with who I am.

We can never converse with the child one day, however, if we never grow the baby first. Ideas take vast amounts of time to grow, whether they're ideas

Czer

about how to better rearrange a classroom or how to plan a course that really matters. They take concentration too, and I think they take God's direction. How can I hear that direction when I'm lulled into passivity by invasive, throbbing music and captivating t.v. programs about people who live and work and dream and never watch TV? Someone's out there tapping on the window pane like soft rain. His whisper is solitude, soft as a mist you hardly believe is there until you finally notice how the air shimmers around you.

Yes, God also speaks to me in churches, crowds, and trumpets in the balcony. He drowns who I am with his power and might. But when I'm alone, he speaks to me differently, showing me the tiny daily ways I flee him, hurt him, and then gently giving me back myself cleansed. It isn't so much that I need to be alone, but that he needs me alone, needs me quieted and waiting, before I'll get any further in learning trust. Waiting is a foreign word today. Pushing, striving, deciding, demanding, but not waiting. It's too passive, too wimpy. But like the patient cat, I can be electric with purpose unseen, the tip of my tail twitching with what I just



learned in solitude. Beware when I'm ready to pounce. These claws have been sharpened with forethought. My fur gleams with the solitary care I've shown it. I'm coiled with unperceived strength.

The woman who fills up her resources in solitude, the teacher who somehow finds daily times of refreshment, will stand taller when others slump with exhaustion.

We'll be the ones with a full jar of ointment to anoint the heads of fellow faculty members. We'll be the servants who have the will to bend over

and wash our students' feet one more time. We'll go back again and again to the well, have our sins exposed, drink the living water of God's Word, and stay awhile in prayer and not sleep. And when we do sleep we'll be like those invisible seeds, quiet in the warm darkness, seemingly passive and content, but growing day by day towards the sun.

Alone but not lonely,

A fellow-teacher

Ramona Czer is on the staff of Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota.

REVIEWS

REVIEWS

Diffily, Deborah and Kathy Morrison, ed. *Family-Friendly Communication for Early Childhood Programs*. Washington, D.C.:National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1996.

Do our families always understand how their young children learn and what they do in an educational setting? The editors of this book have given early childhood teachers and families a big gift. *Family-Friendly Communication for Early Childhood Programs* contains 93 short articles (see sample below) explaining many topics pertaining to young children. The messages are designed to be easily photocopied for handouts, newsletters, family bulletin boards, or adapted for young own program. The topics cover the gamut of early childhood development: play, tolerance and respect, art, reading, writing, listening, music, fine motor development, creativity, books, buttons and zippers, language, rhythm, whole language, math, stress, daydreaming, biting, power struggles, pets, siblings, and divorce. This book is an excellent resource for helping parents understand the developmental needs of their children and the practices in early childhood education programs.

BH

What Is "Developmentally Appropriate Practice"?

You probably have noticed that our classroom has a lot of bustle and noise, that children are up doing things, talking, playing, and exploring. Such a classroom

environment differs from the old grade-school images of a teacher doing a lot of talking at a blackboard while children sit and listen quietly at their desks.

Research and experience tell us that to be effective with young children, teaching practices need to be "developmentally appropriate." What this means is simply that educators need to think first about what young children are like and then create an environment and experiences that are in tune with children's characteristics.

Early childhood, after all, is a time of life quite different from adulthood, and even from the later school years. Children 3-6 learn far better through direct interactive experiences than through just listening to someone talk. They learn extraordinary amounts through play and exploration. And the younger children are, the more what they learn needs to be relevant and interesting on the day they learn it, not just in the context of some future learning.

Based on such knowledge about what children of this age are like, we design our program to fit them. It works a lot better than trying to redesign children!

A developmentally appropriate program like ours is age-appropriate. But that's not all. To make the program a good place for every child, we gear our classroom environment and activities to this community and the families involved. We're eager to learn as much as we can about each child's family, cultural background, past experience, and current circumstances. With this knowledge we work to create a program that fits the children and the families we serve. (From Diffily and Morrison, p. 2.)



Bredekamp, Sue and Carol / Copple, eds. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs, revised edition*. Washington D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1997.

Ten years ago, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* published by the NAEYC, defined early childhood teaching practices in relationship to young children's development. This revised edition continues to define and articulate early childhood programs that are developmentally appropriate for the 90s. In the last decade the early childhood knowledge base has expanded which recognizes the critical importance of appropriate experiences during the child's early years. Some new issues explained in this edition include early childhood

multiage groups, how a child's socio-cultural context influences development and learning, the role of families, children with special needs, and the necessity of assessment practices. These findings are also applicable to our WELS early childhood programs. This revised text is geared for new teachers who need models of correct practices and for seasoned teachers who will read this edition in light of the past ten years. Children do not change, but times do change. In this growing and changing profession, early childhood teachers need to keep learning about and with their young children.

BH



Reviewer: Beverlee Haar