

VOLUME 40  
NUMBER 4  
MAY 2000

# The Lutheran Educator

The WELS Education Journal

 *How  
beautiful on the  
mountains are  
the feet of those  
who bring  
good news.*

*Isaiah 52:7*



# The Lutheran Educator

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

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## ARTICLES

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- Volunteer Tutors in Reading:  
Recruitment and Training of  
Volunteers** 101  
*Delores E. Heiden*
- Meeting the Needs of Physically  
Disabled Students** 108  
*Dale E. Markgraf*
- Strong Roots for Tender Shoots** 112  
*Gerald F. Kastens*
- Befriending Connie** 115  
*Ramona Czer*
- The Conference** 122  
*Rachel Mendell*

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## DEPARTMENTS

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- As We See It***  
Obstacles or Opportunities 99
- Reviews*** 125

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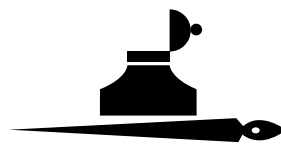
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## Obstacles or Opportunities

*Forward In Christ* Is there a WELS school that does not incorporate this statement as the heart and soul of its existence? Moving forward implies following Christ's command to "make disciples." Vast changes have occurred in WELS education during the past one hundred fifty years. Formal education has expanded to include early childhood and high schools. But how interested are we in moving forward? Or are we satisfied with the status quo? Comments I recently heard, such as, "We don't want to attract that type of clientele at our school," or "If we open our doors to 'outsiders,' we'll lose our Christian perspective" make me wonder how Christians with this attitude can move forward to proclaim the gospel. Educators meet a variety of differences in the families they serve. We see and struggle with parenting behaviors, varied socio-economic levels, and unstable family structures. Are we as Christian educators interested in reaching out to the diverse population we see in our communities? Do we view differences as obstacles or opportunities to win souls for Christ?

In order to educate a child, teachers must understand the values and cultures of the parent. We say this, we know this, but how well do we carry it out? Human nature encourages us to stay within our comfort zone. It is difficult to reach out to someone different from myself. What do I say? Where do I begin? Knowing yourself, your beliefs, understanding your family background and attitudes is a starting point. There are many different ways to promote interactions between teachers and families. Interpersonal relationships must be cultivated along with an effective exchange of school information. Creating a positive relationship with others will help people view you as someone they can trust and respect. Take the time to have meaningful conversations with parents. Be open to learning from children and their families about their traditions. Find ways to include these traditions in your curriculum. Finally, anticipate excellence from each child. Value each child as competent and encourage him to use his God-given abilities.

Our Savior gives us many examples to follow, instances where he reached out to someone outside the "comfort zone" of others. Dining with Matthew, the tax collector, caused the Pharisees to question the disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Scripture tells us that the disciples "were surprised to find Jesus talking with a woman." No one questioned why or what as Jesus was talking with the woman at the well of Samaria. Let us follow Christ's example, reaching out to others, as we move forward in our ministries following his command to "go and make disciples."

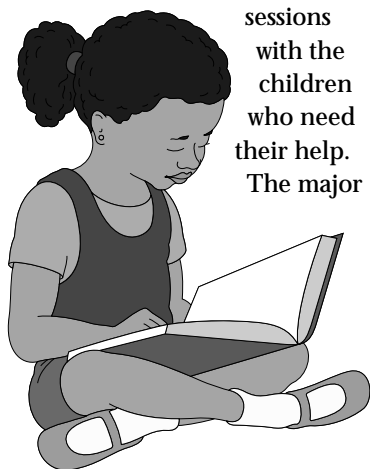
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# Volunteer Tutors in Reading: Recruitment and Training of Volunteers

Delores E. Heiden

In the past decade we have learned a great deal about how to forestall failure in reading. While the best help for a struggling reader comes from a highly-trained professional educator, we also know that parents and other volunteers can achieve remarkable results with young children, provided the tutors receive appropriate information. I have witnessed the gains that children can make as readers under the tutelage of volunteers—young mothers, retirees, college students—people from many walks of life. The key to success lies in providing these individuals with the training they require to conduct worth-

while reading sessions with the children who need their help. The major



issue with tutors, of course, has always been that of adequate training. In far too many instances, ill-prepared tutors have worked with the neediest children, the very ones who require the most knowledgeable and skillful instruction. In some settings, the best readers get help and attention from the professional educator in the classroom, and the poorest readers get most of their needed help and attention from a teacher's aide or volunteer who may not be providing adequate instruction. And yet, those who are our poorest readers need excellent instruction tailored to their needs if they are ever going to make real progress in reading. While volunteer tutoring should never take the place of classroom reading instruction, a well-designed supplemental program of tutoring can help delayed or struggling readers make substantial gains in reading achievement.

During the fall of 1998, I was granted a one-semester faculty development leave from my position as reading professor in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, and I became a full-time volunteer in reading at First Evangelical Lutheran School of La Crosse, in my home congregation. While I was working at the school, a

team of volunteer tutors in reading was recruited and provided with training to tutor struggling readers in grades 1-5. An article entitled "Volunteer Tutors in Reading: Taking the First Steps," which describes the start-up of this program, appeared in the February 2000 issue of *The Lutheran Educator*. The purpose of this second article is to continue the story of how the volunteer tutoring program at First Lutheran was established. The recruitment and training of the volunteer tutors will be described in these pages.

### **Recruiting the volunteer tutors**

We began looking for volunteers in spring of 1998, so that they could be prepared to start tutoring in the fall. Initially, most of our tutors came from our newly-organized Parent-Teacher Organization. The PTO, in its own first year at the time, provided the perfect forum in which we could describe the nature of the tutoring program, and call for volunteers. To our great delight, three people stepped forward immediately. Volunteers were also recruited through our school's weekly newsletter, the church bulletin, our local OWLS, and Mother's Club. News of the program also spread by word of mouth, and through contacts made by the classroom teachers. The OWLS program yielded three wonderful volunteers, including a husband and wife from a sister congregation.

The first step was an organizational/informational meeting for the tutors in late summer. A wide variety of impor-

tant issues was discussed, ranging from the need for confidentiality about the children with whom the tutors would be working to practical concerns about scheduling space and managing materials. The tutors were told that they would not be helping the children with homework, as that is not the focus of the program. Instead, their work would center on instruction in reading and writing strategies, and they would receive information and training in conducting the tutoring lessons. Each tutor was given a folder which contained information on the structure of a tutoring lesson and the lesson plan format. The tutors were told that they would be provided with brief lesson plans for each day's tutoring, and that they would fill in details on the plan about what the child was doing, and exchange notes with me about their work on a regular basis. We discussed effective procedures such as the use of extended wait time and carefully-selected prompts to help a child problem-solve on text. Next, the prospective tutors were walked through the format of a typical lesson, and a videotape was shown of an actual tutoring session. The tutors were given a demonstration of a talk-through ("picture walk") of a book prior to the first read, and then they practiced doing talk-throughs with each other.

Once we had the tutors' schedules, we matched each child with a tutor who could work with him or her for 3-5 times each week. The children had already been identified through a number of assessments, both formal and informal, and by teacher recommendation, and

Heiden

parental permission had been secured for the children to participate in the tutoring program. We tried to match more needy children with tutors who would be able to work with them every day. We believed that a minimum of three times per week would be necessary for a child to make adequate progress.

By October of 1998 the tutoring program had begun in earnest with six volunteer tutors; it eventually grew to include 13 tutors, and served 14 children in grades 1-5. Not all 13 were tutoring at the same time; the college students couldn't continue in the second semester because of their class loads, and some of the tutors didn't start until after Christmas.

### **Scheduling**

We had to pay close attention to details and work with the individual classroom teacher. Scheduling was an important issue. We tried to take children out of the classroom when they would miss the least amount of instructional time. In some rooms this meant during free reading time, library time, or a time when the teacher or other volunteer was reading aloud to the class; in other classrooms, it was during a study period. We never pulled children out of PE or a recess, because the children might have been upset to miss those activities, and we feared it could have had a negative impact upon the tutoring sessions. But sometimes we had to compromise, given the times when the tutors were able to come in. If it was unavoidable that a

child was taken out of part of a class period, the classroom teachers worked to make sure that (a) children were kept current with any new concepts they missed and (b) that children did not have to do make-up work for the time when they were absent from the classroom.

Everyone needed to have a copy of the weekly tutoring schedule, from the principal and all the teachers and tutors to the school secretary. Scheduling around special programs and rehearsals could be difficult at times. If a special event came up unexpectedly, we needed to contact the tutor to tell him or her not to come in. If children were absent, or had to leave school when they became ill, we had to contact the tutors as quickly as possible to save them needless trips. A chart of the weekly tutoring schedule with children's names/grades and tutors' names/phone numbers was posted in the school office. The school secretary was of tremendous help in making phone calls to tutors as soon as she saw that children were absent on tutoring days.

### **Materials and tutoring areas**

It seems that space is always at a premium in any school building, but the principal arranged for the tutoring to take place in the basement faculty work room, which turned out to be a very good location—we had lots of space, and a copy machine was close at hand. Large room dividers were set up in a "T" formation to create two tutoring areas so that a couple of children could be

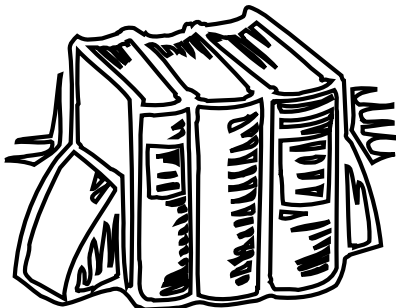
tutored at the same time. In each area there was a large steel bookshelf, a child's desk and chair, and a chair for the tutor. Nearby there were several bookshelves with sets of leveled books for the tutoring program in grades 1-2.

Later in that first year an iMac computer and printer, Alpha-Smart keyboards and many more books and supplies were made available through Title I monies. The supplies which the tutors used on a daily basis included small dry erase boards, magnetic letters on cookie sheets, large plastic baggies for sending books home each night, and other usual kinds of school materials such as pencils, paper and scissors.

The leveled books primarily consisted of titles from the Wright Group and Rigby publishers which were leveled according to the Reading Recovery system. Levels from 1 to 20 represent a gradient of text difficulty from the start of grade one to the start of grade two. We placed round "garage-sale" stickers on the back of each book, over the ISBN number, and wrote the level of the book there. We also put the total number of words in the book on the sticker, for use in calculating accuracy rates in oral reading after taking a running record. The books were stored in file boxes and arranged according to level for easy access by the tutors.

### **Planning the tutoring lessons**

In grades one and two, the lessons were structured after the model used in many early intervention programs (Clay, 1993; Jett-Simpson & Greenewald, 1996) in



which one-on-one tutoring is conducted in daily half-hour sessions. The five major components of this tutoring structure are as follows: A. Fluency word work; B. Warm-up Book; C. Letter Identification (later, "Make and Break"); D. Writing; E. Talk-through and First Read of New Book

In addition to demonstrations and videotaped examples of how to conduct each portion of the tutoring, volunteers were provided step-by-step instructions to refer to as they began to work with the children (see Appendix). In that handout for tutors, the instructions serve to explain the work that goes on in each of the five components of the tutoring session.

The tutoring program for the children near the end of grade two and on up through grade five focused on extended oral and silent reading of trade books and extended writing of stories in simply-made paper booklets or on the computer. In grades two through five the tutors also regularly conducted "Making Words" lessons, after the process created by Pat Cunningham.

As the tutors arrived prior to the start of their sessions, they would pick up their folders and pull out the new lesson

plans that had been prepared for them. For tutors of first graders, the fluency word and the titles of the books for warm-up, running record, and new book were noted on the plan, and suggestions were given about which letters or phonograms to work with. The little books that were to be used had been placed in the pockets of the folders. Plans for tutors of older children might only include the title of the next recommended book to use, and which Making Words lesson to work on.

As time passed, and the tutors became more comfortable with the lesson structure, the prepared lesson plans were phased out and the tutors selected the books themselves and chose the words and phonograms to work with. The tutors came to know the children they were working with very well, and were able to make good choices about which things the children were ready for and needed to know.

Two of the most significant things which tutors needed to learn were (a) use of extended wait time to encourage independent reader behaviors, and (b) selecting appropriate prompts to coach children to use their newly-learned strategies on text. For an excellent discussion of the use of prompts in coaching children to problem-solve during reading, see the book by Fountas and Pinnell, *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children* (1998). Follow-up tutoring meetings focused on these two important concepts, through live demonstration and videotaped examples of tutors coaching young readers. Notes on lesson plans also served to

reinforce these concepts.

A volunteer tutoring program requires a good deal of advance planning and organization, to be sure, but such programs can make a very real difference for delayed and struggling readers in our schools. Attention must be paid to training the tutors and giving them a lesson structure in which to work, and having someone to go to when questions arise. Such extra efforts will be met with hours and hours of dedicated service, all for the benefit of young children and their development as readers and writers.

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## Appendix

*Planning to Work With a Child:*

*Notes to Help You Get Started (for first grade and early second grade)*

Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Lesson #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Tutor: \_\_\_\_\_

*Fluency word:* \_\_\_\_\_ write this sight word on a marker board for the child

1. Say the word for the child (don't ask him or her to "sound it out"--this is a word to memorize). Use it in a sentence orally.
2. Have the child say the word.
3. Have the child write the word on the marker board, say it, and draw a line under it. Repeat 3-4 times.
4. Erase the word completely. Have the child write the word without looking at a model.

*Warm Up book:* \_\_\_\_\_

Once a child can easily read a book that he or she has already read for you two or three times, and can read it quite well, send the book home in a baggie marked with the child's name, along with a sheet that lists book titles, for parents to initial and return.

*Letter Identification:* \_\_\_\_\_ (or, "Make and Break")

Play around with just one or two letters the child has trouble with. Talk about the name of the letter and the sound the letter makes. Help the child think of words that have that sound at the beginning of the word only. Write the words in a list so the child can see the letter at the front of the word, and say the words with you. For "Make and Break," use magnetic letters to show the child a "chunk" or pattern of letters that frequently occurs in words, such as *-ack*. Tell the child the sound of the chunk, and show him or her what happens when one or two letters are placed in front of *-ack*, such as *b, bl, J, M, p, s, t, st, or Z*. Have the child make new words by changing the letters in front of the chunk and have him or her read the new words.



*Writing and Cut-Up Sentence:* \_\_\_\_\_

1. Help the child think of a simple, one-sentence message to write on a piece of paper (you can gather his or her daily writings into a little book—kids love 'em—see "Making Little Books" below). It can be on any topic—just keep it short.
2. Child writes a sentence; first see what the child can write by him or herself.
3. You print the corrected sentence on a sentence strip.
4. Give the child a scissors and have him or her cut up the sentence you wrote on the paper strip by cutting between each word.
5. Scramble the sentence by mixing the word pieces around.
6. Have the child rearrange the words in correct order and read the sentence aloud. Be sure beginning readers point to each word.
7. Put the sentence pieces in an envelope which you have labeled with the correct sentence, the child's name, and the date; the envelope goes home.
8. Finally, record the sentence on your lesson plan at D. Writing: \_\_\_\_\_ (cut-up sentence) so that we have a record of what was written.

*Making Little Books:* (optional activity)

The child's writing can be collected in an ongoing booklet which is constructed very simply—construction paper covers, blank typing paper pages, all stapled together. Keep the books short—only 6-8 pages long. Child may decorate the cover. You may use stickers or pictures to help the child think of things to write about. Once you and the child decide the book is long enough, and the child can read every page, the book can be sent home. Please make a copy of each page of the book for our files, and put a date on it, so we can see the child's writing development over time.

*Introducing a New Book:* \_\_\_\_\_ Level \_\_\_\_\_

First, do a Talk-through or "picture walk" of the new book: Tell the child the title of the book, and the name of the author. Ask the child to look at the picture on the cover, and predict what the book might be about. Open the book and walk the child through each page, talking about the pictures. Don't let the child make any attempt to read the print yet—only focus on pictures. If you notice a word on the page that you think the child might have trouble with, try to weave it into your conversation,



and then ask the child, "Can you find the word \_\_\_\_\_ on this page?" Use the language of the book as much as possible in your conversation with the child.

*First Read of New Book:*

After the picture walk, hand the book to the child and ask him or her to read the book to you. Here's where the child has to really go to work. The child is supported during the first read by the tutor; but be very careful not to help too soon—give lots of wait time—count up to 30 if you have to! Use prompts that will help the child think about meaning, pictures, beginning letter sounds and "chunks" or letter patterns in words. If all else fails, tell the child the word. If a child is successful in figuring out a hard word, ask him or her to tell you *how* he or she figured it out. Say, "How did you know that word was \_\_\_\_\_?" Praise the child for good tries.

*Closing/Sending Materials Home:*

Select a book to take home that the child *can read* successfully. Send home the parent slip for signing, the book, the cut-up sentence in an envelope, all together in a baggie labeled with the child's name.

*Record-Keeping:*

Finally, jot some notes in your green tutoring folder about how today's session went. Consider the child's attitude and demeanor. Was he or she positive and willing to work? Excited and happy about the things you were doing? Did he or she appear tired? Unwilling? Disinterested? Were behaviors appropriate or inappropriate at times? If so, what did the child do that was not appropriate behavior? Was the child able to follow directions? What was difficult for the child? Did the new book appear to be at the right level to pose a challenge (but not a frustration) for the child? What breakthroughs or new learning did the child achieve today? In regard to tutoring: What did you do well? What is a struggle for you? What question(s) do you have for me? How can I help?

Don't be dismayed if things don't work out according to the plan every day. It takes a while to get used to the routine. Get as much done as you can, and let me know what questions you have.



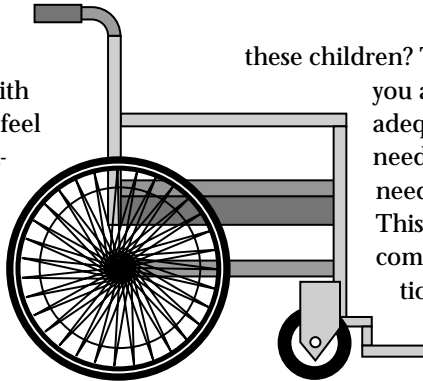
# Meeting the Needs of Physically Disabled Students

Dale E. Markgraf

**C**an your school enroll children with physical disabilities and feel comfortable with accepting the responsibility for their education? That is a question that the faculty of St. Paul's Lutheran School, New Ulm, answered several times in recent years. We gave a positive answer to Erin, who is profoundly deaf, to Caleb, who is hearing impaired, to Billy, who is a paraplegic, to Abby, paralyzed from her waist down, to Brandon, with only one usable hand, and to Laura and Nathan, both with physical problems that limit their mobility.

These are all bright children, but each one has permanent physical disabilities that impact his or her lives at school. Erin would get little out of school without an interpreter, Caleb needed a classroom amplifier unit, Billy required a 24-hour nurse, Abby needed a full-time aide at school, Brandon needed adaptations to accommodate a one-handed person, and Laura and Nathaniel required wheel chair assistance.

Would your school be able to enroll



these children? The answer is "yes" if you are willing to provide adequately for their physical needs. Providing for those needs involves commitment. This commitment must come from the congregation, the staff, and the parents.

Putting a policy in place is an important, if not necessary, first step for any congregation that is serious about providing Christian education for children with disabilities. St. Paul's congregation in New Ulm adopted a resolution some years ago that showed that seriousness (see below).

*Resolution on Children with Special Needs*  
*Whereas*, children with special needs, such as those with mental or physical disabilities, are redeemed children of God and precious in His sight, and  
*Whereas*, these children have spiritual, mental, and physical needs, and  
*Whereas*, they are included in Christ's command to "teach all nations," and  
*Whereas*, it is the responsibility of the church to assist parents in providing Christian education for their children, and

Whereas, St. Paul's Lutheran Church has established St. Paul's Lutheran Elementary School, a pre-kindergarten program, a vacation Bible school, a Sunday school, and a Jesus Cares School to provide for the education of children of various ages and abilities, and

Whereas, good stewardship requires that the congregation make wise use of its resources,

*Be it resolved,*

A. That the parents of children with special needs be invited to meet with the principal and pastor to discuss their desires as they pertain to the

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*The congregation is probably the biggest player in the decision as to whether or not the child with a disability can attend your school.*

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Christian education of their child, and the special needs which the child has, and

B. That the Board for Child Discipleship in consultation with the principal, pastor, and faculty recommend to the parents plan of Christian edu-

cation for their child that would take into consideration the needs of the child as well as the resources of the congregation, and

C. That should funds be needed for this educational plan which would be over and above the normal budgeted amount for a child's Christian education, the Board be responsible for preparing a financial plan to be presented to the Church Council for action.

St. Paul's believe that this policy takes a responsible approach to serving children with disabilities. It gives some rather specific directions, and at the same time, it provides a good deal of flexibility. The policy suggests alternatives to the Lutheran elementary school such as Sunday school or vacation Bible school. It has proven to be very helpful for those responsible for making decisions about accepting physically disabled children into our school.

#### **Congregational responsibilities**

In a sense, the congregation is probably the biggest player in the decision as to whether or not the child with a disability can attend your school. Whatever educational plan is agreed on, whether it be full time in the Lutheran elementary school, religious instruction through the Sunday school, vacation Bible school, or one-on-one religion classes with the pastor, the congregation will ultimately be responsible for meeting the needs of that special child. These needs may well touch the

church's finances as it did at St. Paul's.

Each child with a physical or sensory disability has unique physical needs. If they are not met, it is unlikely that you will be able to enroll the child in your school. There might be capital improvements that are needed. These could be building a ramp or installing an elevator to make your building handicapped accessible. You may need to remodel a restroom to make it roomy enough for a wheel chair. There may be incidental expenses such as purchasing a school desk designed especially for the handicapped student or a one-handed keyboard designed for use with a computer. There may be ongoing expenses such as salary for an aide or an interpreter for the deaf.

#### **Faculty responsibilities**

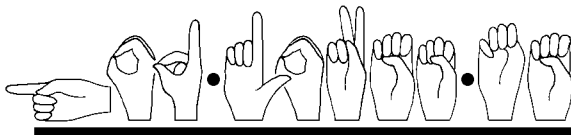
The faculty will also play a big roll in the decision on whether or not to enroll a physically disabled child. Having such a student in the school will most likely mean additional work for the staff. Both the principal and teachers have an obligation to gain an understanding of the student and his or her needs. This may involve reading and meeting with the parents and with various professionals who have worked with the child in previously. Schedules may need to be set up for handicapped busing. Times and places for therapists and counselors to

carry out their work at the school with the handicapped student may have to be scheduled. The principal will need to budget for expenses related to the handicapped student and may need to investigate the possibility of qualifying for grants and aid for equipment and services. Disability awareness training may need to be arranged for both teachers and students.

Teachers must be willing to give of their time to assist the children with disabilities in their classrooms. They may need to shift to a different classroom because it is more handicapped friendly. Assignments sometimes have to be adjusted. A teacher may need to be creative. For example, how would you teach a child who is in a wheel chair and who is only able to move his head? What will you expect of him or her in terms of assignments? How will he do the art project or participate in physical education?

The teacher may need to research ways to teach the special needs student, and discuss ideas with professionals who work with children with physical disabilities.

Teachers may also need to accept the fact that a full time aide, nurse, or interpreter, another adult in the room might accompany the child with a disability every day. Yes, having a special-needs student in school takes staff commitment.



### Parental responsibilities

Finally, parents play a key role in whether or not you can enroll a child with a physical or sensory disability. It is easy for a principal or teacher to say, "Yes, we can do it," when the parents of the disabled child have as their priority a Christian education in the Lutheran

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*If you have the commitment of the congregation, the willingness of school staff, and the support of the parents, your school can provide for the needs of these children.*  
”

elementary school. But perhaps your school isn't as handicapped friendly as it might be. Most likely your teachers have no specific training for dealing with the physically disabled. When you have supportive parents who are willing to overlook some of the handicap features that might be found in a public setting, you can hardly lose. They will go the extra mile to help you in whatever way is needed to make the educational

experience a successful one for their child.

Inclusion is more than a trend; in public education it is a legal requirement. What will be our response to children who are physically or sensory disabled? Can our schools provide for the needs of such children? Our schools can if you have the commitment of the congregation, the willingness of school staff, and the support of the parents. May God bless our efforts for the sake of the physically disabled children in our congregations.

### TEACHER RESOURCES

*Each One Uniquely Gifted by God* A disability awareness curriculum produced by Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc. Watertown, Wisconsin.

*Ephphatha Newsletter* Published by the WELS Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

*Pacer Center* A family advocacy center for parents of children with special needs. [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)

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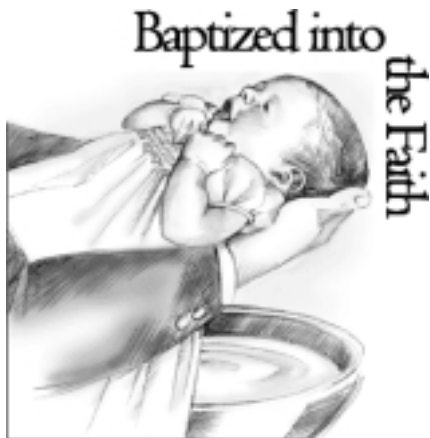
## Strong Roots for Tender Shoots

Gerald F. Kastens

**H**ave you ever watched a plant grow from a seed to maturity? What a wonder it is to observe a kernel of corn germinate and poke a tender shoot through the moist, warm ground in the spring of the year. With sufficient rain, sunshine, fertilizer,

and care of the soil the young plant grows and develops—stalk, leaves, cobs, and silk. Ask any gardener and they'll tell you that large perfectly shaped ears of corn don't just happen. It takes nurture and the right growing conditions for a kernel of corn to sprout, develop strong roots, and grow strong.

In some ways, this is just as true when it comes to raising young children. Each child is a unique and wonderful gift from a gracious heavenly Father. They are "planted" or enter God's kingdom through Baptism. The gift of faith is clearly God's work, no one else's. But God has given parents (Pr 22:6) and the church (Mt 28:20) the task of sharing and nurturing faith. At no other stage of life is this work more crucial than during the first years of a child's life. Everyday home activities become the



foundation for later development.

Prayers, songs of praise, and Bible stories taught to a growing youngster provide the roots for spiritual development of a young child.

Parents are a child's first teachers. Along with the diapering and the

burping and the cooing is the responsibility of nurturing faith. What happens during those early years in part does determine lifelong attitudes and dispositions. Helping parents to instill in their child a prayerful habit and frame of mind—a disposition of praise—of trust—of hope—of confidence in God's promises is also the business of the church. The writer of the book of Proverbs says it so well: "Train a child in the way he should go."

"The way he should go" implies a strong foundation—strong roots. Our vision for the family includes young children rooted and growing strong in the Lord.

It's no secret that many of our Christian homes lack confidence and the resources to nurture the tender shoots that God entrusts to them. That's

why Christian congregations must step up and provide assistance in the form of in-the-home parenting resources.

#### Other Ideas for Using a Cradle Roll Program

When a child turns four, many congregations contact parents to encourage them to enroll their child in Sunday school and Lutheran elementary school. It is also a way to make certain that every child is enrolled in a program of Christian nurture. It provides a way to prevent children from falling through the cracks.

Each of the items can be purchased separately. Use the pamphlets and books for a parenting program held in a member home. Each of the *Tips and Truths* tracts can easily serve as the basis for a parenting lesson.

Any of the items can be marked and distributed to unchurched families with children. The message we want to communicate is, "We care about families."

Don't overlook the value of placing these materials in public places like the laundromat and dentist office. Include information about your church and children's programming on the inside cover.

Publishing House to provide a curriculum that will help parents cultivate their child's growing faith. Each of the components is designed to reach into the homes with the Word. The curriculum provides parents with encouragement and resources to train and nourish the faith of children (prebirth to age four). Twice each year parents receive from their congregation age-appropriate information about being a Christian parent and resources for teaching children songs, prayers, and Bible stories. Each congregation is encouraged to organize this initiative by selecting individuals to deliver the material to parents.

The best way to get the materials to parents is in person at their homes. Recruit reliable people who are willing to help with this important area of family ministry. Mature Christian parents or grandparents could make home visitations to create a strong bond between the church and the home. For the long haul, the benefits of this initiative far outweigh the effort. The next best way is to deliver the materials to the parents in church. Another good way is through parenting classes. The least effective approach is to send everything through the mail or stuff it into a church mailbox.

*Strong Roots for Tender Shoots* offers the following items in each packet:

- Prebirth tract: This tract encourages parents-to-be to nourish their own faith so that they are equipped to

Circumstances have changed and the emphasis has to be on helping parents. Establishing a cradle roll or parenting program may be the single most important thing a congregation can do to help today's parents.

*Strong Roots for Tender Shoots* was developed by the Commission on Youth Discipleship and Northwestern

nurture their child's faith.

- *Tips and Truths*: These nine tracts are to be delivered to parents, beginning with the birth of their child and continuing at six-month intervals until the child is four years old. The tracts provide encouragement, prayers,

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*Establishing a cradle roll or parenting program may be the single most important thing a congregation can do to help today's parents.*

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activities, Christian songs, and lists of resources for parents.

- Children's books: Seven books are provided for each child. Some are Bible storybooks. All are based on the truths of Scripture, sharing God's message of law and gospel with parents and children.
- Refrigerator magnets: These serve as visual reminders for parents. One reminds them that children are a gift from God. The other encourages them to call upon the Lord in times of trouble.

Regularly schedule and offer the accompanying Baptism Bible study. Many of today's Christian parents do

not fully appreciate the importance of Baptism. Some parents believe that Baptism is a magical process; they view the sacrament as an "immunization" that guarantees faith nurturing for several years. *Spiritual Rebirth—How to Enjoy and Live the Blessings of Baptism* was written to teach parents about the importance of Baptism and the Christian nurture of children. The three-lesson course by Professor Richard Gurgel is short enough to encourage participation. It is designed so that volunteers in the home as well as the church can teach it. The last lesson is an ideal way to launch your parenting effort as you tell parents, "Guess what? Your congregation is willing to assist you by providing material and encouragement to help you nurture your child's faith."

There's no better time than today to begin this parenting initiative.

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*Gerald Kastens is the Administrator for Youth Discipleship of the WELS Board for Parish Services, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*



## Befriending Connie

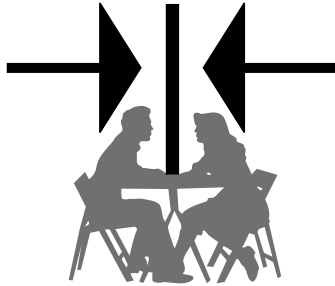
Ramona Czer

Whenever two or three of us are gathered together, Connie's there. She shows up at faculty meetings, choir practices, Ladies Aid, and family gatherings.

She's the one sitting in back with her hands clasped in glee, the one searching faces for signs of her influence, the one wearing that capricious smile of hers. Some call it malice and others, intense curiosity, but either way, she's spooky, and we fear her.

Sure, we could kick her out, bar the door, institute a secret password so she can't just breeze in and ruin things. But the wily imp will get in somehow. She'll hide in angry glances, rise up on squared shoulders, peek out of veiled insults, and swing on flying barbs. Connie is a master at espionage. See? That's her now—behind the glare of our most harmless member, the one we thought we'd pegged for sure.

So who is this Connie-person? We usually call her by her full name—Controversy—and whisper it. Because she's so powerful and omnipresent, in fact, most people confuse her with a darker foe—Sin. I contend she's far different from Sin, although she does resemble him and knows him well. When she's spurned, she's even likely to



open the door for him and mouth our password. Sin rewards her with her heart's desire: free reign among us and a new name, Contentiousness.

But we don't have to push Controversy into Sin's employ, do we? She's malleable and not innately evil. Connie just wants to be appreciated, made to feel useful, like all of us. I say she is not the enemy. I say we hugely undervalue her. I say she'd make a dynamite ally if we just took the time to discover her strengths and to befriend her. If she's going to wheedle her way into our games anyway, if she's the biggest and best player on the block, doesn't it make sense to give her a uniform and teach her the rules?

Imagine this scenario: The church choir director and several prominent members of a talented group of merry warblers believes that each practice should be run purposefully. They do not like chit-chat, clowning around, or lazy note-reading because their Lord deserves the most glorious music they can craft, and this one short hour of practice a week is just too precious to waste.

A smaller but vocal group believes that choir practice should be mostly

fun, that fellowship is more important than perfection. They think God is probably just as pleased with a jolly group that sings with more gusto than finesse as he is with ornate cantatas performed by semi-professionals.

So far the disagreement has been relatively mild, but with a joint Reformation service looming, the director's impatience with goofing off has mounted. Whenever he suggests they come to order or sing a phrase for the third or seventh time, several members look sulky or grumble. The director wishes he could give them an ultimatum: "Sing my way or take the highway. We don't need you!" Except he does. Without them, he'd have to relinquish participating in this service. Strangely, he knows that every one of them is a hard-working and responsible employee-parent. So what makes them turn into squirrely preteens on Tuesday nights?

What should the director do? What should the members who want to prepare pieces worthy of their Lord do? What should the members who want to be treated more like adults and not be harangued so much do? Meanwhile, Connie hides behind her score and licks her lips.

Controversy is always among us. We fool ourselves into thinking she's taken a vacation when we're around good people who smile a lot and say "Thank you." This is just an illusion. She's there. Each one of us has such differing motivations, personalities, and experiences, that it's impossible for us to agree on everything. And should we? If we did, I

suspect that would mean we're not learning much from each other, that we're sacrificing coming to a deeper understanding to "playing nice." Sharing Jesus as our Savior from sin, a Lutheran heritage, and a hymnal has fooled us into thinking Connie is for less-refined folk, not us—aren't we the ones who "live in harmony with one another" (1 Pe 3:8)?

But what is harmony? It's not a group of people matching exact tones. That's a melody, lovely in its own way, but it's not harmony. I believe it takes two, three, or even more voices interweaving, sometimes coming together, but often also lagging behind, overtaking each other, skipping higher or dropping lower, and even wrestling with each other for brief moments of tension and discord before the resolution, in order to create the most beautiful kind of music of all.

All good in theory, right? But doesn't inviting Connie to play just lead to "complaining or arguing," exactly what Philippians 2:14 warns us against? How could she be of much help to our divided choir, for instance? If the director invites the lackadaisical ones to have their say, won't that undercut his authority and lead to more rebellion?

I believe that exactly the opposite could happen. If one Tuesday night about a month before the Reformation service, the director said, "Could you please explain how I could make choir both fun and productive for everyone?" If he truly appeared interested in their perspective, I imagine that the members who come to choir tired from work and

family burdens, longing for a weekly hiatus among Christians that isn't so high-powered and uptight, would offer him some valuable insights. I also believe he should listen to those who support him, to find out how much craft they really want and what sacrifices they're willing to make to achieve excellence. If both sides speak at length, if both sides truly listen, Connie smiles and slips away. She's done her job and gotten what she wanted: all of the different "truths" were heard.

Compromise is Connie's niece and much shyer. She rarely visits in all of her glory unless Connie has paved the way for her first. After she arrives, Compromise's delightful and healing presence makes enduring Controversy's whims entirely worth it. Our director, with Compromise on his mind, might even be able to get the jokers to respect his commitment to artistry if choir was extended to one-and-a-half hours, with a fifteen-minute break for snacks and fellowship. Perhaps later he could choose a more "fun" piece and get feedback about how to interpret it. When Connie isn't shut down, she becomes genial and open-minded, rather than stubborn. I've seen this happen over and over in various groups I've been lucky enough to work with.

For the past few years, for example, I've reveled in this exact kind of atmosphere at Bethany Lutheran College. Both BLC's faculty and administration accept Controversy as a natural member of the team. She's allowed to host discussion forums. She floats in cyberspace, adding depth to passionate e-

mail discussions. Not only are we encouraged to have a leisurely relationship with Connie, the administration rarely gives the impression this is only "for appearances." Several times they've gone on record as disagreeing with faculty members, but have always respectfully listened to and allowed them to vote their convictions nonetheless. The mood isn't always peaceful, if "peace" means placidity, but it's also never bitter or full of strife.

This seems to be a godly and wise way to befriend Connie to me. If Christians check and balance each other, they're more likely to get the lay of the whole land and so be able to heed the strong warning in I Corinthians 10:12, "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall."

Befriending Connie takes great humility, however. It takes accepting the idea that our ways, our ideas, could be improved upon (or even debunked). It takes trusting others to be as smart or wise or practical as we are (or more so!). It takes believing that God can work things out for our good even without our pudgy little fingers always mucking about in the recipe.

When I sent an early draft of this article to my sister and typical first-reader, Deb, she shared her own challenges working with controversy in business, community, and spiritual settings.

*Connie, she wrote, is not someone I meet very comfortably I'm afraid ... mostly because I do get too personally attached to my position(s) and then get pulled into wanting to change people's minds and opinions to reflect what I*

*think and believe instead of simply listening to what they think and believe. The few times I have been able to avoid that trap, two things were happening:*

*(1) I'm remembering that just because I listen fully to someone else's opinion, according them the courtesy of enough uninterrupted time to say all they want to say, that doesn't mean I am 'obligated' to embrace their position once they are done. Instead of getting all hopped up emotionally as they make a 'point' and race in to go on record as having a very different position on that point (and thereby interrupting and immediately being 'on the attack' to show my 'superior' evaluation of the situation), I simply put curiosity first and am able to listen more fully.*

*(2) I am being consciously 'open' about the 'outcome' ... in other words I'm willing to examine what other people are actually saying, instead of spending all my internal 'silent' time (while they spout off) deciding what I'll say next to counter or enhance what they've said. These times are usually if I'm looking for God to 'lead' the group to wherever we're supposed to go at that moment, versus the times when I'm trying to act as his "spokesperson" and take the group to where I believe we're supposed to go.*

*Unfortunately, most of the time I don't really want to know what the other person really believes ... not fully. What I want to do is tell them what I believe, and have them 'accept' it, 'applaud' it, and 'do whatever it is I want done' because of it. The minute I have the 'vested' position... watch out! I'll butt heads with every other speaker not*

*aligned directly with my 'position' and get very anxious to add my two bits worth of 'support' to any speaker who is aligned with my 'position' (sometimes even dwarfing their presentation).*

Sound familiar? I love her honesty here because I think if most of us looked at ourselves this unflinchingly, we'd admit we do this also. We may not be as vocal and passionate as Deb often is, but on some issues I bet we've all forced our views and become stubborn and deaf.

If we give Connie a healthy environment where it is not risky for her to be there, she will reward us with an atmosphere of trust, expressiveness, humor, and heightened creativity. If we spurn her, remember that we drive her into Sin's camp, and bad things can happen.

Factions form, leading to gossip and foment, or if factions are squelched, Connie seeps out in passive aggressive behavior. We'll witness back-biting, jealous rivalries, passivity, laziness, frustration, tuning out, and passionate discord over small matters that people can control, such as paint colors and schedules. "Yes" men appear, as well as resentment against both "yes" men and rebels because both seem to operate from selfish motivations.

Few significant changes can happen in such an environment. Because the majority doesn't "own" any changes that are instituted, frustration and disengagement mounts, and the cycle continues. Nice and observant people feel guilty because they sense the pervasively unhappy climate, but hesitate to do anything for fear of seeming rebellious.

Angry and observant people also feel guilty because they know it isn't healthy or productive for them to be so negative, and yet they're the idealists and long to make a difference. Only the unobservant and naïve are truly content, as well as those in power who have an idea that leadership is like being a much wiser parent who rules with an iron fist for the good of all. Someday, they believe, posterity will appreciate how much they did, what courage it took to be the "bad guy," to squash poor Connie out of existence.

After seeing what happens when Connie is considered the enemy, why don't we rush to befriend her? My sister believes our very "faith" may be stonewalling us.

*The minute people's religious beliefs are involved in any 'discussion' of what to do or not do, the 'stakes' for any outcome go up a 1000 times just because things like 'sin' and 'salvation' and 'being a good Christian' immediately get thrown into the equation on top (or more likely underneath) all the practical parts of the issue. Suddenly it's not just a question of Connie's diversity or unique perspective people are having to deal with, but rather, is that particular position 'right with God's Word' or the synod's position on the subject. And 'God' or 'the Bible' suddenly become big sticks people use on one another to 'back up' their various personal positions. Browbeating each other with who can quote more verses or who can name-drop people with the most divinity school credits on their transcript holding the same position. Being simply 'open' and 'curi-*

*ous' about what others think, feel, and believe about the issue suddenly becomes fraught with all sorts of possibilities for letting in 'unsound doctrine' or 'ungodliness' or 'liberalism.'*

*We all say we believe God can speak to our hearts, but we act most frequently as if life's a test where we'd better be the one 'getting the answer right' ... and judging if we did or not, by how many people we get to go along with what we believe in exactly the same way we state that belief.*

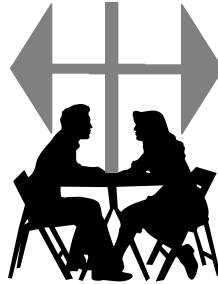
*You know, I bet God sometimes sighs over us with so much sadness when he sees group after group arrive at the answer he would most endorse for them, but bloodied, with many wounded feelings and hurt relationships, with clenched fists and clenched teeth and wizened, narrowed lives afraid of letting others 'win' ... instead of having walked there in the softness of an evening garden with him, listening to interesting people talking about their unfolding understanding of him and coming to know one another better as human individuals and as sisters and brothers with an active passion for letting him lead them through gracious uncertainty.*

Whenever two or three of us gather together in God's garden, Connie's there. She may be strolling down a belief or sunning herself on a methodology or swinging back and forth on a perspective. Or she may be perched on a tiptop branch next to the rest of us who are hugging the trunk and praying her wild chirping won't rock our world too much. But pretty soon we begin to notice the intriguing melody she's

Czer

invented and want to join in.

Maybe we're not all in tune or have precise diction, but the song is long and varied enough for all of us to find our entrance and our voice. Far far below us, earth-bound creatures gaze up in wonder. "How can they all be so differently and yet come together so beautifully?" Connie winks at them, and they move away, nodding. Ah, that's how. Connie was there, directing them subtly and wisely: allowing them to make the song their own.



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

### How to Foster Healthy, God-pleasing Controversy

#### *Remember the Golden Rule*

- ❖ Give people credit for being as intelligent, fair, and freethinking as you are.
- ❖ Be respectful.
- ❖ Actively listen to others. Use eye contact, head-nodding, taking notes, smiling at humor, looking quizzical if confused, etc. to give them evidence of this. Don't doodle, read something unrelated, work a crossword puzzle, pick your nails, whisper to others, shift around a lot in your chair, or daydream about your next brilliant counter-argument. Be present, and then they owe you the same.
- ❖ Play the yes game when you differ markedly from people you ordinarily respect and admire. Consider how is it possible that someone this good, wise, practical, etc. can think this way? Now what did your musings teach you about others' motivations, needs, and dreams?

#### *Be a Fair-minded, Objective Thinker*

- ❖ Concede points whenever the other side makes good ones.
- ❖ Don't enflame emotions with overly sentimental and specific stories without statistical backup.
- ❖ Ask lots of questions and listen to the answers—take notes even.
- ❖ Avoid fallacious reasoning—such as “offering a false dilemma” (example: “Either we will follow our Savior's dictum to ‘Go and teach all nations’ by opening our school's doors to everyone who desire a Christian education, or we will shut them to some of the most troubled young people in our community and be held accountable one day before our God”).
- ❖ Gather evidence objectively, and don't expect to find just what will prove your point.
- ❖ Share your findings with the opposition before a formal meeting so they have time to respond.
- ❖ Don't weight down your findings with a lot of commentary—trust the facts to speak for themselves.
- ❖ Summarize other's views to yourself and others accurately, not in a slanted manner (even when the opposition isn't present).
- ❖ Ask for feedback about the accuracy of your summaries.

*Never Allow Your Conduct to Overshadow Your Ideas*

- ❖ Don't pout or grimace or slam doors.
- ❖ Avoid sarcasm—it almost always makes you look worse than those you attack.
- ❖ Don't get personal
- ❖ Don't be vengeful ever.
- ❖ Keep calm or at least act that way.
- ❖ Don't sink to others' levels if they get nasty. Remember I Peter 3:16: "Keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."

*Be Humble (As Opposed to Trying to Seem Humble)*

- ❖ Keep a sense of humor.
- ❖ Don't act know-it-all.
- ❖ Don't use rhetoric that makes you seem condescending.
- ❖ Concede points graciously.
- ❖ Don't drone on and on and on and on—others do have things to say, and most people stopped listening after the first minute anyway.
- ❖ Beware of connotations of all words you use—not all people react the same way to even simple words like "traditional" or "liberal," and assuming they do is faintly egotistical.

*Be Honest and Completely Above-board*

- ❖ Don't sign petitions or hold top-secret meetings.
- ❖ Don't manipulate the system or do politicking (like bringing in inactive members whom you've privately "coached" to vote on an issue).
- ❖ Don't call in favors.
- ❖ Don't bait and switch—your main concerns should remain constant.
- ❖ Seek out the opposition for private discussions to prove you are truly interested in the issue, not just in looking smart or controversial in front of others.
- ❖ If you think of new concerns, try to inform the opposition before a meeting (so they don't feel foolish and unprepared, especially leaders) or save it for another time.

*Avoid Risky Tactics That Seem Manipulative*

- ❖ Do not give ultimatums that make it impossible for you to capitulate—unless you're willing to make the sacrifice.
- ❖ Don't call a vote too early—others may not have heard enough and become angry at you for hurrying them.
- ❖ Don't assume the old ways this group has divided in the past will be how it will divide this time. And don't assume who will be your ally and who the opposition.
- ❖ Don't align yourself with a group just because you have sided with them in the past—even if you think your bread is buttered on that side. Be complex and hard to figure out.
- ❖ Never agree to take a side for an ulterior motive. Don't allow yourself to be bought.
- ❖ And never assume others are aligned for suspicious motives either.

*Use Passion Wisely*

- ❖ Don't be afraid to get passionate, especially near the end of a discussion, but try not let your voice shake or get teary or your listeners may shift to feeling pity or scorn for you.
- ❖ Don't be too dry and logical—passion can be very charming, while an ultra-stoical tone can be vaguely irritating and doesn't connect others to the issue.
- ❖ Timing is vital. Save a story or insight that builds on all you've said before for the very end.
- ❖ If you do not sense unity yet, suggest that more time for be allowed for discussion or offer a good compromise—make it easy for others to move towards you without sacrificing their passionate beliefs completely.

## The Conference

Rachel Mendell

**I**t was my first day off in 14 years. Dave had taken the day off to stay with the children so I

could attend the home education conference in Columbus. This gathering of educators, and the curious, has always intrigued me. It is the only place I have found with such a wide range of philosophies, methods, and curriculum.

The two-day, 15th annual, Christian Home Educators of Ohio Conference, was held at Veterans Memorial Auditorium. The days were divided into opening keynote address and five workshops. Vendors were open until evening for those attempting to sit the entire day in classes.

I arrived as early as possible to avoid Friday morning rush hour and to give myself time to deal with big city traffic and parking. The parking lot, already filled with campers and out-of-state RVs, quickly began to overflow with vans and cars from all over Ohio.

Signing in was quick and painless, and after finding all my workshop rooms, I settled down in the huge auditorium to watch interesting people and



look through my goody-bag of catalogs. As I ate my breakfast (granola bar), the Hoffman family set up for their musical intro-

duction. Sound level testing, old friends finding each other, new guys looking lost; these brought back memories of my teacher conferences of the past. The family ensemble opened with Pachabel Canon in D, then an Irish gig, and after introductions, an original folk song on family life. I was impressed by the full sound created out of just a guitar, violin, keyboard, and voice.

Music done, we found out 4000-plus were expected this day. We were asked to fill out orange critique sheets. The first-timers were asked to stand. Half of the assembly rose bringing applause from the old-timers. The rookies don't understand, but they will, probably same time next year.

The Barth family gave the keynote address. This family moved to Vermont in the 70s so that they could home-school legally. Their five children, educated at home, are now raising their own families and running businesses of their own. Two of the sons and two of

the daughters spoke. This was a good example of how the dedication to home education can be successful.

*10:00 A.M.* "Frugal Living" I had to choose from 11 different workshops, all dedicated to beginners. My choice was a good one. The first-time workshop leader's nervous voice did not detract from her wonderful information. Frugality is a practiced skill among home educators because the majority of us have to make do with one income while the other teaches; not easy to do in a dual-income based economy.

Stephanie Howes taught us the "envelope system" of budgeting, buying sales, and co-oping. She also discussed cooking from scratch, "construction site negotiations" for building supplies, and the coupon game. She finished up with suggestions for saving money on curriculum including borrowing, swapping, library book sales, garage sales, and activity passes (membership to zoo, science museums, or historical societies). We used up the rest of the time swapping ideas and addresses.

*11:30 A.M.* "Ohio Legislative update" I won't bore you with Ohio details. But education, after all, is partly federally funded, particularly for large programs. After these are in place in public schools, there will be pressure for private schools to comply (usually through changes in state proficiency tests), and eventually, the home educator's community.

Melanie Elsey has been involved in public policy research since 1989. She makes frequent trips to the courthouse and capitol, keeping track of current

legislation and budget bills in the legislature. She also sits in on meetings of the state board of education, and collects committee meeting notes, proposed bills, and proposed curriculum changes. The topics discussed this year were the National ID Card to be required by 2006, the changes in the 12th grade proficiency test (Ohio), the new "Programs That Work" (HIV/AIDS/homosexuality methods teacher training), and the quiet evolution from "school" to 24 hour "Community Resource Center."

*1:00 P.M.* "Teaching High School At Home" Dr. Jay Wile, once a chemistry professor and researcher in Indiana, now an encouragement to those attempting home education for the 9th through 12th grades, gave an overview of "Teaching" High School At Home. He began his research of the home education movement when he realized the top three students in his college classes were home educated. "Teaching" is in quotation marks because by age 14 most home-educated children are learning on their own with tutoring from their parents. His information was condensed, precise, and backed up with research. He gave us a college-bound work load model with method and curriculum suggestions, explanation of tests required for college entrance and scholarships, and how to prepare for PSAT, ACT, SAT, and SAT II. Dr. Wile also gave us an example of a typical transcript, suggestions for record keeping, and how to figure GPA. He urged us to keep records of all activities: work, apprenticeships, volunteering, and

Mendell

independent study. He listed ways to aggressively apply for college acceptance. As the most entertaining of the workshop leaders (and holding the fastest pace), I decided to follow him to his second workshop.

2:30 P.M. “‘Teaching’ The Junior High and High School Sciences At Home” Dr. Wile presented information (no repetition) in chemistry, biology, and physics. He explained what mathematics is required for each science and when these subjects are generally taught. He stressed that it is important for students to understand that all fields of science are constantly changing. He suggested getting two books for students to read with opposite viewpoints, comparing and contrasting them. An example of this would be Dixy Lee Ray, *Environmental Overkill: Whatever happened to Common Sense?* (Regnery, 1993) and Al Gore, *Earth in Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (Houghton Mifflin, 1993). Dr. Wile concluded with suggestions on grading, the importance of lab work, and tips on how to pick a good microscope.

4:00 P.M. “College How and Why” My last workshop of the day was given by Earl Rodd, who has had two children in college. I found it informative because Mr. Rodd clarified real reasons for going to college rather than “college for college’s sake.” He stressed having clear goals before applying to or attending any college. He suggested preparing the student for the humanist onslaught of ideas present at secular colleges.

Mr. Rodd also discussed admissions and gave guidelines for records to keep,

work to be involved in, whom to talk to in admissions, and tests to take. Mr. Rodd gave tips for test taking, including studying vocabulary, taking practice tests, and taking tests early to give time for a second try. He gave hints for paying for college (stay out of the loan trap), looking for scholarships, and surviving college once you get there.

After all these workshops, it was time to shop. In the vendor hall there was a variety of curriculum including learning games, art supplies (at excellent prices), music books, and an almost unlimited supply of used curriculum. If you know what you need, it’s a gold mine. If you’re a first-timer, you may be overwhelmed. Also present this year were health products, computer curriculum, clothing and gifts, ministry presentations, and college PR people. I found my Saxon Algebra and Biology, then headed to my favorite conference place, Miller Pads and Paper (best construction paper ever).

On the way home I felt satisfied. Not only was my 9th grade curriculum complete, but I hadn’t been called “Mom” once. I had seen old friends and made new ones. Most important was the wealth of information I had gleaned for another year in the trenches.

There is so much help out there for home educators. There are so many wonderful materials of high quality that I can get only at the convention. Every year I go, I end up wishing I had gone when I was still in the “traditional” classroom. This teacher/parent highly recommends state home education conventions for classroom teachers, Sunday

school teachers, pastors, and parents. It will broaden your methods, open your eyes, and give you a million ideas you can take home and use. You'll never know unless you go and see for yourself.

*Some suggested resources*

Apologia Educational Ministries 808 Country Club Lane Anderson, IN 46011 Dr. Jay Wile 765-649-4076 science

Families Honoring Christ 6044 Pine Creek St NW North Canton, OH 44720-5526 Earl & Diane Rodd 330-305-9318

Miller Pads & Paper 2840 Neff Rd Boscobel, WI 53805 Randy & Renee Miller 608-375-2181

National Writing Institute 7946 Wright Rd Niles, MI 49120 Lea Marks 616-684-5375

The Learnables 3505 E Red Bridge Rd Kansas City, MO 64137 Sherry Schuman 816-765-8855 (Foreign Language, elementary and beyond)

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## REVIEWS

## REVIEWS

New software offers fill your mailbox. Which are worth the purchase price? On a limited budget, what can we afford? Won't the reference product be out of date so quickly that it may not even pay to purchase it?

Microsoft Encarta's *Interactive World Atlas 2000* has recently been released. Many of you may be familiar with earlier versions of this affordable reference, perhaps under the title of *Virtual Globe*. Is the 2000 release worth the purchase price? (Currently Microsoft lists *World Atlas 2000* at \$34.95)

*Virtual Globe 1999* was listed as one of the "Top 50 CDs" (*Newsweek* Special Issue, Winter 1998). *World Atlas 2000* has expanded its offerings. It has more

articles (now 11,000), more place names (an additional 600,000), and more images, videos and audio files. Brand new to *World Atlas 2000* are multimedia maps that let you "experience the sights and sounds of faraway places and cultures as images, world music, flags, and national anthems come to life on the map." This features attempts to gather all types of data through an organizational structure that provides convenience to the viewer. This reviewer preferred the country by country listing of images and sounds that is still available through the country search option.

Other improvements have been made. The additional web links offered by this product allow the user to have

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some previewed web sites from which to choose. *World Atlas 2000* adds 2,500 web sites to the 4000 found in *Virtual Globe 1999*. Additional map styles are included in *World Atlas 2000*. These might be used to follow precipitation patterns through the year.

To get a brief taste of this product, visit their web site and take the tour. <http://www.microsoft.com/encarta/> Changes from earlier versions are clearly outlined. This site also provides details on the Microsoft *Encarta Reference Suite 2000* that provides four multimedia reference works, including *World Atlas 2000*, in a package deal of \$64.95. System requirements are not listed on line, but are on the end flap of the box, which could be reviewed at a local vendor.

Is *World Atlas 2000* worth the purchase price? Certainly, if one is looking for a first CD ROM atlas reference. Is it worth the price to upgrade from *Virtual Globe 1998* or *1999*? While there are significant improvements from earlier versions, most of us would be very content with either of the older versions. Any of these three products would serve our Lutheran elementary schools very well. There are evolutionary references including "the human animal" and "naked ape" and the age of the earth as 4.7 billion years old. But there are also extremely valuable tools to show the culture and life of other lands. *Encarta Interactive World Atlas 2000* is one of the best CD ROM atlases on the market today. It has earned its award winning status.

EH



Morgenthaler, Shirley, Ed., *Exploring Children's Spiritual Formation*. River Forest, IL: Pillars Press, 1999.

Public education is trying to rediscover moral education. Lutheran schools never lost it. That's not news. But what is interesting and perhaps news is that Lutherans are doing research on moral or spiritual development. That is, conservative Lutherans are venturing into the same empirical slough where Piaget, Kohlberg, and Fowler have trod.

The Center for the Study of Children's Ethical Development (CenSCED) was created at Concordia University, River Forest, in 1991. This edited book is a result of two conferences that CenSCED held at River Forest. The first conference discussed the existing literature on child development and spirituality and the philosophical and theological perspectives of spiritual development. The second conference examined sociology, culture, congregations, and families and the contributions these make to understanding children's spiritual development. The presentations, reactions, and discussions at these conferences make up the book.

Dr. Morgenthaler, the editor, had the daunting task of pulling together some fifteen presenters from disparate backgrounds and persuasions. She manages the task with grace, making virtues of the differences and coherence of the varying perspectives.

As with most edited works, some sec-

tions stand out. Dwayne Mau (culture), James Wind (congregation), and David Anderson (family relationships) provide thoughtful analyses and reviews of research on three influences on children's spiritual development. Those who know the work of Peter Benson and the Search Institute in Minneapolis will find familiar studies cited in these sections. Gary Bertels provides the needed scriptural perspective from which research on spiritual development must be evaluated.

Concordia has applied this research paradigm in a recently concluded study, *Children in Worship*. Some of the results of this study can be found in recent issues of *Lutheran Education*.

There are at least two dead-ends that CenSCED needs to avoid in this ambitious research program. The first danger is to use research to explain how the Holy Spirit begins and nurtures faith through Word and Sacraments. Research that fails to recognize the Means of Grace as just that, the means that God uses to reveal and seal his Grace to us, will go nowhere. There are no other means on this earth that God uses. Thus, a growth in faith and sanctification occurs only when the Word is preached and the sacraments are rightly administered. Increasing the frequency of children's sermons in worship services, for example, will do nothing for the spiritual development of children if those sermons are devoid of sin and grace.

In its current research CenSCED appears to be examining factors that may hinder the proclamation of law and

gospel rather than what can be done to supplement that proclamation. The difference between these two—what assists the Holy Spirit and what hinders the Holy Spirit—is sometimes hard to distinguish in practice, as the church growth enthusiasts often found. Yet there is an important difference.

Someone who ignores the culture of a people may put up barriers to the message of sin and grace because the listeners turn away in anger at an unintended insult. In such a case, God's Word did not lose its power. Rather, sin, in both the hardness and anger of the hearer and the lovelessness and ignorance of the speaker, made the soil impervious to the Word. When CenSCED reports how worship services often lack appeal to a variety of senses, focusing only on hearing, they are not suggesting incense as a replacement for the reading of the gospel. They are making, rather, a thoughtful observation about the learning and attention processes of young children and how ignoring the importance of senses can make attention and learning more difficult.

CenSCED may also be avoiding, perhaps by just ignoring the issue or redefining the terms, the problem of applying development to spirituality. Development, in its classic meaning of Piaget, Kohlberg, and Fowler, is like a ratchet on a windup spring. The ratchet prevents the wheel from turning backwards; it can only be turned forward. Thus, most discussions of development are ratchet-based: children grow bigger, never smaller; vocabulary increases, never decreases; thinking become more

complex, never more simple. The ratchet model doesn't fit spirituality or sanctification, however. Perhaps in a perfect world our faith would inevitably grow stronger and more mature. But in this world it is dangerous and wrong to assume or believe we will be better Christians at 90 than we were at nine. Robert Coles describes children whose gift of faith and trust would be the envy of any adult; and some adults would do well to regress back to the child-faith of their youth. If you would trace David's faith from the peaks in the Valley of Elah to the abyss on the roof of his palace, you would not see a neat line of ratchet-based development. The mountains and valleys of faith-life define development in a much different manner than psychologists do.

This initial effort to provide a

research paradigm for spirituality is interesting and worth reading by those who teach children in congregations and schools. It will be interesting to see if CenSCED succeeds where many others have faltered.

JI

Reviewers: Earl Heidtke, John Isch

