

VOLUME 38  
NUMBER 4  
MAY 1998

# The Lutheran Educator



The WELS Education Journal



Joel 2:28

# The Lutheran Educator

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

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**VOLUME 38**                      **NUMBER 4**  
**MAY 1998**

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**Subscription service** information on a new subscription, a renewal, a change of address, or an inquiry should be sent to Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N. 113th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284. Phone 414/475-6600. Subscription rate for U.S.A. and Canada is **\$6.00 for one year**, payable in advance to Northwestern Publishing House, postage included. For all other countries please write for rates.

*The Lutheran Educator* (ISSN 0458-4988) is published four times a year in October, December, February and May by Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N. 113th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53226. Second Class Postage paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Lutheran Educator*, c/o Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284.

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## Reflections

Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds (Ps 71:17).

Reflections upon youth and past experiences are common to teachers. Teachers often reflect upon how a lesson was taught or the events of a school day. We think about a conference with a parent or ponder the manner in which we handled a discipline problem. Yes, there are times when teachers think about their responsibilities, goals, and achievements, past and present. This is most commonly done at the end of a quarter or when the school year ends.

There is one time in life when such reflections become quite special for the Christian teacher—the eve of one's service as a called worker. Retirement is a special opportunity for reflection. My first thought, as I finish my final year of teaching, is upon the blessings I've received in my own baptism and Christian training. "Since my youth, O God, you have taught me" (Ps.71:17). From early in my childhood, I was led to ponder the meaning of such hymn thoughts as

You can lead the little children  
To the Savior's waiting arms (CW #573:2)

I entered the teaching ministry early, as an "emergency teacher." How unprepared I felt as I dealt with the education of four grades in one classroom along with the responsibilities of church organist every Sunday! However, the opportunity to teach little children the "marvelous deeds" of my Lord was all that I needed for encouragement.

Now it is 45 years later. My experiences have been many, but always there have been children to teach through lessons in the classroom, through lessons published for Sunday school and VBS, and, for over 25 years, through the training of student teachers. Throughout these years of service to my Lord, I have been grateful that "Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds" (Ps.71:17).

What an opportunity I now have for reflections upon the years that have gone by! Noteworthy are the many changes—some of which are truly beneficial and others which are not. Daily living styles and habits have changed. Teaching methods and materials are constantly in a state of change. Significant changes also have been brought about by technology: computers, copy machines, and television with the VCR and video.

Even more significant for the Christian teacher are the most treasured blessings which have not changed: The Lord still brings his "little lambs" into our classrooms to be taught his unchanging Word. Throughout my 45 years of service I have appreciated the privilege of bringing the truths of God's Word to the precious children entrusted to my care. I pray that all who are in the Lord's service will also find special delight in reflecting upon these unchanging blessings and with me express this heartfelt appreciation:

We thank you, Lord, and sing your praise For blessings you have given; ...  
That youth may grow Your love to know, Eternal riches gain (CW, 511:3)

IRM

# A Generous Man Will Prosper

Conrad I. Frey

WHEN IT COMES TO the book of Proverbs, chances are that most of us are “little lookers.” To put it bluntly, we likely don’t devote much time or effort to reading this particular book of the Bible. My guess is that most of us take a



quick glance at it here and there, our eyes, perhaps, catching sayings such as this, “Like one who seizes a dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own” (26:17). We may then say to ourselves, “Hey, that’s pretty neat, even better than the ones Ben Franklin came up with.” But, we’re robbing ourselves of some real learning if that is all we have to say. After all, what’s in the book of Proverbs is on a much higher plane than the pithy sayings of old Ben, as interesting and as witty as they may be. The book of Proverbs, to put it in its proper perspective, is the divinely inspired Word

of God, laced with spiritual instruction and with spiritual comfort.

You can see this already in the very first chapter which features some very sound advice. After encouraging us to hearken to the instruction and teaching of our fathers and mothers, the book gets right down to brass tacks by saying, “My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them” (1:10). This gets a positive twist a couple of chapters later with these words, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (3:5-6).

But, as previously noted, the book of Proverbs does not only specialize in practical instruction for Christian living. What is significant is that it also specializes in abiding comfort and rich encouragement. And God knows we need plenty of that in this present world. All we have to do to benefit from it is to appropriate it. A case in point are these words, "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed" (11:25). There is a lot more to this than the good feeling a person may get from giving a hungry individual a dollar to go buy a Big Mac. This is not a feeble attempt at humor or sarcasm nor does it infer in any way that we need not get too deeply involved with people's physical needs. That's what too many Lutherans think as they look down their noses at the organizations operating "soup kitchens." The plain truth of the matter is that we should be considerably more concerned with people's physical needs than we normally are. We ostensibly hold the parable of the Good Samaritan in high regard, though we may often be guilty of "passing by on the other side." It is abundantly clear from the parable that "passing by on the other side" is an absolute no-no. The fact of the matter is there's no reasonable excuse for taking that kind of evasive action, especially in view of what the Lord has to say in words like these, "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?" (1 Jn 3:17).

But, let's get back to the proverb that

triggered this. "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." Does the first part of this proverb sort of grab you, leaving the second part sort of just hanging there? That's certainly the case if you're thinking about this proverb merely in terms of buying a hungry person a Big Mac. There is a great deal more to this proverb than that, however. It has strong overtones of comfort and assurance for all children of God and, in a special sense, for those who serve in full-time capacities in the church. A paraphrase of this proverb indicates what I'm getting at: "A man generous with the Word of God will prosper; he who refreshes others with the Word of God will himself be refreshed." A gifted writer a century or so ago must have had a similar thought when he wrote, "The liberal hand is good; but the liberal soul is far better." And let's not forget there is a divine standard by which we can do some measurement, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Co 8:9). To bring this down to our level we should determine what it is that every person with whom we come into contact really needs, and then we should faithfully minister to these needs to the extent we are able. Each and every day that we do this faithfully, we can go to bed at night with the same ease of conscience Job experienced and expressed in this way, "Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me,

Frey

because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him. The man who was dying blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing. I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy. I took up the case of the stranger..." (29:11-16). You know, it wouldn't hurt to read that again!

Perhaps by now we've lost sight of the proverb with which we started. Look at it once more: "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." If this still is not really grabbing you, we could turn to the Prophet Isaiah for some help: "If you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will come like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-

watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail" (58:10-11).

All of this is in keeping with John's exhortation, "Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 Jn 3:18).

Obviously none of this justifies us before God, but it is a plain fact of Scripture that it is rewarded both here and hereafter. And, as Titus writes, it "...will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive" (2:10). Think about that! It is not too much to expect that this be of deep concern to those who are God's servants.

It is not too much to expect that they will delight in doing the will of him who called them to be instrumental in serving the physical and spiritual welfare of mankind. Now, let's try that proverb again, "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."

Have you learned anything from this proverb? You'll learn much more if you make a studied effort to become

steeped in the spiritual instructions and deep comfort found throughout the Book of Proverbs, for the book itself says, "...in the end you will be wise" (19:20). So, don't expect just "a little look" to be enough.

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From *The Picture Catechism*, ©1983 Dr. Martin Luther College. Used by permission.

# The Developing Brain

Cheryl A. Loomis

**B**RAIN POWER—where does it come from? Can people do anything to increase the brain's capabilities? Is this a matter of nature versus nurture? Are today's parents able to produce a "super baby"? Can you make your child more intelligent? Is it possible to force brain growth? All of these questions are critical topics because we know more about brain development today than ever before. Neuropsychology studies the relationship of brain development to children's behavior and learning. But we cannot generalize from the study of the adult brain and apply it to a child's brain because adults have already acquired skills whereas children are learning skills for the first time.

How does the brain develop? We know that the human brain is wired for instinctive behavior, emotions, and thinking power. At birth the brain contains 100 billion neurons. Each neuron is equipped with dendrites. At the end of the dendrites are receptors. At birth dendrites are sparse and undeveloped, much like branches on a young tree.



Neurons receive messages from dendrites and pass them along to connect with other neurons. The gap

between one neuron and another is called a synapse. It is in these synaptic connections that learning begins. You can think of these synapses as being enriched by repetition. Repetition enhances learning.

Within the first month of life, synapses increase twenty fold. The infant brain contains more than 1,000 trillion synapses. God has provided twice as many as needed to guarantee that a child will be able to receive input from any environment into which she is placed. The brain doubles in weight within the first year of life. The first two years provide a time of dynamic growth for the cortex, the upper portion of the brain. It is here, in the cortex, that neurons are being organized.

Experience is a critical factor in development of synapses. Rats, for example, that were caged in a toy-filled environment had 25% more synapses than the rats housed in empty cages. For a human being, more connections

equal more brainpower. Some believe this could mean a boost in IQ of 20 points or more.

There is some evidence that the sequence of synaptic formation coincides with the formation of various skills in the child. It appears that synapses and neural networks form through active interest and mental effort by the child. However, an infant cannot do this in isolation. Adults need to provide proper stimulation for this development to take place. As Sue Bredekamp, a noted specialist in early childhood education, said, "Children are born hard-wired, experience provides the software." In order to maintain these connections, a child's brain consumes twice the energy of an adult. In an enriched environment the branching of dendrites increases and an impoverished environment can lead to the decrease in the size and number of brain cells. Environment does change the brain!

It is the overproduction of synaptic connections followed by their loss that leads to patterns in the brain. The brain continues to grow through the early teens. As part of that growth, synapses which are unused are lost. This leaves the individual with a brain that is truly unique. By the age of eighteen, the brain has declined in plasticity (cell weight and the branching of dendrites) but it has increased in power.

As the brain's plasticity lessens with age, it becomes more vulnerable to trauma, such as strokes or brain injuries. Certain kinds of repeated trauma can change the structure of the

brain. In such cases fewer synapses will form and attach. The brain becomes high-wired (as if on a "hair-trigger alert") and releases stress related hormones. Overproduction of these hormones may cause a child to have problems in self-regulation or control. This type of behavior is evidenced in a child who is hyperactive, anxious, or impulsive.

Different regions of the brain develop at different times. Language development is one of the most important. The human brain is automatically wired for language. By the age of three most children can produce sentences. Parents need to keep in mind that their infant can understand the spoken word although she won't be able to verbalize. A four-day old infant is able to distinguish one language from another. Results of one study showed that French babies sucked more vigorously than Russian babies did when hearing French spoken. When the same group of babies heard Russian spoken, it was the Russian babies that sucked more vigorously. Children who are spoken to frequently, especially about specific objects in their environment, develop better vocabularies and score better on later tests of intelligence. A six- to ten-month-old can sort and tune in to the phonemes heard and used around him. By the age of one a child can link words to meanings. God has created the brain with the ability to understand that labels refer to whole things and not just parts. This enables children to continue to make sense of their world. Around the age of eighteen months, children



acquire one new word every two hours. It is at this time that a child will begin bringing together two-word sentences. Vocabulary is correlated with how much a child is spoken to. He needs to hear words and sentence structure. Television, however, doesn't take the place of the human voice. TV is not in the context of on-going events. Proper stimulation, not overstimulation or expensive stimulation, is what is needed for language development to be enhanced. Effective stimulation is simply talking to the child.

Good prenatal care can do much to foster brain development. Some effects of the environment in utero may not be immediately seen. Hormones secreted during pregnancy may influence academic abilities, thus some Eastern medicine practices encourage expectant mothers to enrich the developing fetus by having pleasant thoughts and avoiding angry, disturbing behavior. There is better evidence that poor nutrition, drug or alcohol abuse, and exposure to toxins can cause irreversible conditions in the developing child. Thus the quality of development during the prenatal period determines

the future structure of the brain. At three weeks following conception brain cells are multiplying more rapidly than any other body cells. Another growth spurt in formation of brain cells lasts from the second trimester of pregnancy until six months after birth. There are some biological factors which are outside the

mother's control. Parents, therefore, need to realize that if prenatal care was not as positive as it could have been, much can be done after birth to compensate for earlier problems. While we can't undo what happens before birth, we can change what happens after a baby is born.

With the current findings we have available, parents can be better informed about the growth of their child's intelligence. Parents should use this knowledge to support their own good judgment. Parents need to provide a safe environment, love, and conversation for their children. One loving adult in a consistent environment can do much to provide the nurturing each child needs. Simple activities, like rocking and cuddling, stimulate growth. The following guidelines for brain-building play have been developed for parents:

- Interact with the child.
- Get down on the floor or at eye level with your child.
- Get involved when you have the time to be patient
- Make sure the child is interested and actively involved in the activity.

## Loomis

- Activities must be repeated many times for the brain to become proficient. Games like “pat-a-cake” “peek-a-boo” are good suggestions.
- Provide positive, age appropriate stimulation.
- Give your child immediate praise and feedback.
- Avoid being too restrictive. The use of playpens or restraints should be held to a minimum amount of time.
- Childproof your home.
- Provide a window for the child to look out
- Your home should be well organized. Store toys and books on low shelves that are easily accessible to the child. Eliminate a toy box full of clutter.
- Introduce new toys one at a time. Toys should be developmentally appropriate. (Healy, p. 22)

In an effort to do what is best for their child, parents might push too hard. Marketing techniques can lure parents to buy toys that are not appropriate or beneficial. The developing brain doesn't know the difference between an expensive stacking toy and a set of measuring cups pulled from the cupboard. It is important to recognize the signs of over-stimulation. Parents should tune in to the child's reactions. Signs that a child has had too much stimulation include exhaustion, anxiety, pressure, and fear.

Current findings have enabled educators to draw the following conclusions. A child's potential is strongly influenced by experiences in the early years. We need to take advantage of the windows of opportunity and emphasize the

value of early childhood education! Children at these crucial years of development receive the least attention from the educational world. Warm, loving attachments between caregivers and children need to be maintained. Educators need to explore the possibilities of introducing a foreign language in elementary school or earlier. Remedial education may be more beneficial at ages three and four than at the age or nine or ten. It costs less to remediate at a young age than it does to wait for the child to fall behind. The gains made in early years remained solid eight years following remediation. David Weikart, the guiding force behind the popular early childhood education curriculum, HighScope, said, “If early education is like a vaccine against risk factors, then giving it to poor, deprived children should help protect them as they grow older.”

In summary, good prenatal care, attachments between children and adults, and positive age appropriate stimulation will aid in brain development. Adults can refurbish their minds through reading and learning. Never again will the brain be able to master new skills or rebound from setbacks as easily as it does during the “wonder years” of learning.

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# WELS Elementary Teachers Speak Out About Foreign Language in Elementary Schools

Shannon R. Bohme

## Background

Many industrialized countries in the world have emphasized the importance of learning a foreign language. The United States is not one of them. Fortunately, America is starting to wake up and realize the benefits of teaching a foreign language, especially in an elementary school setting. Many states are passing laws implementing foreign language into the public school system. Our Lutheran elementary schools (LES) are not included in these mandates. However, should our LES follow suit? This is a difficult question to answer because there are differing opinions in our synod. No research has been done in our synod on the attitudes of our LES teachers on teaching foreign language so this topic seemed an appropriate one to research.

This research hoped to find the answers to several important issues. First, how important is teaching a foreign language in elementary school and why? The second question I tried to answer was what types of programs



should our schools use.

The final question I hoped to answer was how qualified our teachers felt if asked to set up or teach in some type of a foreign language program.

## Procedure

My study was directed toward our elementary school teachers. Approximately 20% of WELS elementary teachers received this survey. In order for the data to apply to all teachers, a random list of schools was generated. The list included every fifth school in a listing by state. Eighty-eight schools (477 teachers) were in the random selection. The principal of the selected schools received a packet containing enough twenty-question surveys for each teacher in the school. The principal had instructions to distribute them, collect them in a week, and send them back to me. I received responses from 254 teachers (53%). I believed this was a good return rate.

### Results

The data were entered and analyzed with the computer software, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Some of the results were conclusive, but others were not.

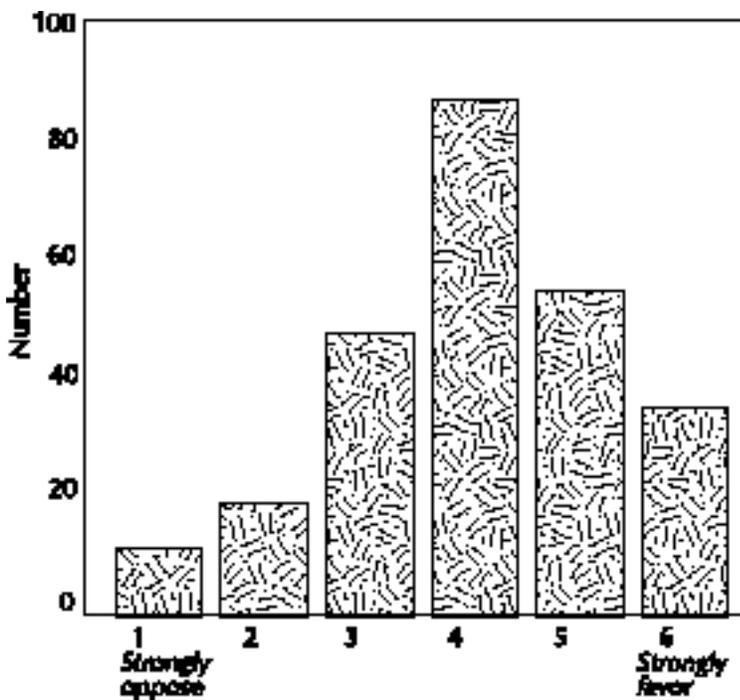
Graph 1 shows how the teachers ranked the importance of teaching a foreign language in the elementary school. The scale was from one to six with six being strongly in favor and a one being strongly opposed. From the graph, one can see that about 66% of the teachers ranked it a four or better. The mean of the ranking was slightly over four.

The next question dealt with the type of foreign language program the teachers would want. They had two choices: either a FLEX or a FLES. The programs were defined for the respondents as follows:

FLEX: an introduction to more than one language, no basic language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) learned; taught three times a week for three to six weeks; goal is to expose and create an interest in foreign language learning; usually the teacher doesn't need any foreign language skills.<sup>1</sup>

Graph 1

Where would you rank yourself in wanting a foreign language taught in elementary school?



FLES: the goal of this program is to learn basic language skills with an emphasis on speaking and listening within the context of culture; three times a week for an entire year; teacher needs to know the basic language skills of the language.

The results shown in Table 1 are inconclusive; the teachers chose each program the same number of times. Also, there were no relationships between these results and other responses such as the respondent's language background and experience.

	Frequency	Percent
FLEX	123	48.4
FLES	126	49.6
No response	5	2.0
Total	254	100.0

The teachers did agree that a foreign language should be a part of an elementary school curriculum. Table 2 shows over 68% of the teachers agreed with this.

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	173	68.1
Disagree	75	29.5
No response	6	2.4
Total	254	100.0

However, Table 3 indicates that more teachers disagreed with the idea of requiring every student to participate in foreign language classes.

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	122	44.1
Disagree	138	54.3
No response	4	1.6
Total	254	100.0

The next question tried to determine which language should we teach in our schools. The teachers had five choices: Spanish, German, French, Latin, or it does not matter. They chose Spanish more than any other, as Table 4 indicates. German ranked second among the languages with French and Latin



A foreign language should be a part of an elementary school curriculum...but not every student should be required to participate.



**Table 4**  
Which language would you prefer your school offer?

	Frequency	Percent
Spanish	165	65.5
German	35	13.8
French	6	2.4
Latin	4	1.6
Doesn't matter	42	16.7
Total	252	100.0

finishing far behind.

In addition to asking which type of program would be best for their school (FLEX, FLES), the teachers were asked which they believed they could teach. The results indicate that a majority of our elementary teachers believe they could teach a FLEX program while only a few think they could teach the more language skill based FLES program (Table 5).

The more language study a person had, the more likely the teacher would

**Table 5**  
Do you feel qualified to ...

Years of foreign language study	teach a FLEX program		teach a FLES program	
	yes	no	yes	no
0	9	24	0	32
1-2	55	56	5	106
3-4	55	32	18	70
5-6	12	6	9	9
7-8	4	0	1	3
Total	135	118	33	220

say he or she could teach in a FLEX program, which requires no language background. However, the table also indicates that even those with a foreign language background believed they could not teach in a FLES program, which does require a language background.

The teachers were asked at what grade level they thought foreign language instruction should begin. Table 6 shows the results.

**Table 6**  
Which grade level do you believe the teaching of a foreign language should begin?

Primary	Inter	Upper	Second
98(39%)	85(33%)	47(19%)	23(9%)

Most teachers want foreign language education to begin at the primary and intermediate levels. More than 70% chose either primary or intermediate.

The teachers were asked how they thought a foreign language is best taught: calling a person to the staff or through some kind of distance learning. The results are shown in Table 7.

More of our teachers would rather call a person with foreign language ability the next time a position opened rather than use distance learning. The more language background a respondent had, the more likely he or she believed calling someone would be the better choice.

### Discussion

I set out to find out how our LES teachers felt about teaching foreign lan-

**Table 7**

Which would you choose if you had a choice between calling someone with a foreign language background and using distance learning to teach a foreign language?

	Years of a foreign language					Total
	0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	
Call	13	59	51	12	4	139
Distance	16	46	33	6	0	101
Total	29	105	84	18	4	240

someone to the school. This is very important. A foreign language is difficult to learn. The teachers who had more language realized this and responded by selecting the calling choice. Our synod is pursuing both the calling a teacher and the distance learning theories. While the theories do not coincide, both may be necessary for the next decade. The Spanish program

and other related areas. The data provided some excellent indications of our teachers' attitudes, some of which were expected, while others were not.

The average response on the importance of a foreign language teaching in elementary school was a little more than four on the six-point scale (toward the strongly in favor end). The mean was somewhat lower than I had expected. I thought it would have been around 4.5. Does this mean our teachers do not think foreign language should be taught in grade school? No, more than 66% (Graph 1) of the teachers ranked the importance from a four to a six. A majority of LES teachers believe that teaching a foreign language is important.

Another interesting piece of information came from Table 7. This table compares calling a person to the school or using a distance learning program with the number of years a teacher has taken a foreign language. The results indicate that the more years of a foreign language a teacher had, the more likely he or she was to choose calling

at MLC trains teachers to start foreign language programs in elementary school. However, it can only train so many teachers each year. Distance learning can fill a void for a few years, but after a Spanish teaching force is in the synod, it will likely become obsolete.

Table 2 and Table 3 provide some excellent information. Table 2 suggests that a foreign language should be part of the curriculum while Table 3 indicates a foreign language should not be taught to all students. LES teachers



Most teachers want foreign language education to begin at the primary and intermediate levels.



believe a foreign language would be too difficult for some students. This may be true for a FLES program, but a FLEX program exposes the students to a language in order to spark interest and learn a few phrases. It seems our teachers want a Spanish program like a volunteer band or junior choir program.

Table 6 makes a push for teaching a foreign language when the students are young. Research supports this kind of thinking. Table 4 shows the different languages that could be taught. Spanish has 65% of the vote and many believe the most practical. However, the other languages, especially German, should not fall to the wayside. Table 5 provides some startling information. Only 33 teachers, or 13% of the respondents, think they could teach a FLES program. A number of reasons could explain this. One reason could be a lack of foreign language; another reason could be the teacher took the foreign language in high school and too much time has passed. However, no matter what the reason, this data provides added support to the Spanish program at MLC. Our schools must keep up with the changing world.

### Conclusions

My research about foreign language and LES teachers provided varied results. Spanish is the foreign language of choice, most teachers prefer calling a teacher with foreign language skills the next time a position is needed, instruction of a foreign language needs to start before students reach the upper grades, and most LES teachers do not

“  
Only 13% of  
the respondents,  
think they  
could teach a  
FLES program.  
”

believe they are qualified to teach a FLES program. This information may be useful, but the research in this area is not exhausted.

I would also like to thank those teachers and principals who cooperated in this research. Your help was much appreciated.

### ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> A curriculum similar to a FLEX program can be found in Arthur Eggert's article, "Lutheran Culture and the German Language: A Curriculum for Lutheran Schools," *Lutheran Educator* Vol. 35, No. 2 (December 1994), pp. 54-57.

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Shannon Bohme is a student at Martin Luther College. He graduates from the Secondary Teacher Education Program in May 1998.

# Movies as History

Frederick H. Wulff

**N**O DOUBT STUDENTS enjoy watching history as if it were taking place before them with all the scenery and sound effects. Some studies indicate that students do not read as much in this television age; rather, they rely more on visual signs. Film maker Ken Burns says that visual images "will become the glue that makes memories." Our students are being exposed to many documentaries and special series regularly on television. Some of these are quite well done. Possibly we can even tune them in to these scheduled programs beforehand. In 1990 Ken Burn's *The Civil War*, an eleven hour series, broke the PBS audience record for an education series. An estimated 13.9 million Americans watched the first program with many more, estimated at 40 million, tuned into the later programs. Since then millions more saw subsequent broadcasts or watched them in classrooms. We definitely do not want to downplay reading, but teachers can take advantage of the video offerings.

The Bradley Commission on History in the Schools has noted that "History instruction must help students perceive past events and issues as they were experienced by people at the time, to develop historical empathy as opposed to present-mindedness." This prescription might be partially accomplished

with carefully selected movies. We need powerful story telling as a framework for history with a natural sequence; many movies and documentaries do flow in narrative fashion. At the same time a number of movies may lend themselves to meaningful discussion sessions. Why not use the better movies to flesh out the bones from the past?

To their credit the motion picture industry has become very adept at bringing people and events to life. With special effects and recent technology they can capture almost any imagery. Although some movies may be excessively offensive because of gratuitous sex and violence and not adaptable for our use, there are some good movies, documentaries, and special series suitable for the upper grades and secondary schools.

Movies must be more than entertaining or exciting, important as these qualities may be. The primary concern of any social studies teacher should be to seek the most truthful accounts of historical events possible, and consequently to have students seek out historical accuracy when they watch movies. Is it possible to find out the truth about the past? This should be our quest. As Christians we have a high regard for honesty and finding the truth. Unfortunately, a prevailing Oliver Stone mentality complicates our task and the public is sometimes subjected

to extravagant claims based on the slenderest of reeds.

Dr. Lynne Cheney, in a recent interview, lamented that “apparently the Oliver Stone version of reality has replaced historical reality.” Certain movie directors like Stone feel that not having all the answers surrounding an event or events is a justification for deception and untruth, but they only muddy the historical waters. If movie makers wish to indulge in purposeful distortions for the sake of artistic creativity or lively fiction, that is their prerogative. But they should not palm off fiction as history. Historian Eric Foner commented in a book, *Past Imperfect* “God knows how many people now think Jim Garrison (in JFK) had the assassination all figured out.”

I believe that the movie, *The Lincoln Conspiracy* based on a book by Balsiger and Selliers could serve as another object lesson in how profit-seeking individuals can muddy the waters of history. The Hollywood authors make the claim that they have unearthed “shocking new evidence” to prove their conspiracy theory. If this were an honestly-held viewpoint, history might be well-served, but the movie is a purposeful distortion based on untruth.

How then can we judge an author’s honesty and commitment to providing truthful knowledge on a particular subject? First, we need to learn the subject area ourselves. Teachers should be lifelong students of history. They cannot be satisfied with superficial knowledge that excuses shallowness with “there is just too much history.” Second, we

need to look for the names of reliable consultants used in the production.

Third, we can search out reviews by professional historians who have established reputations in a particular area of history. In the case of *The Lincoln Conspiracy* we might consult a review by David Lindsay of California State University which points out that the story depends upon Edward Baker, a man who had a grudge against Secretary of War Stanton and was known by contemporaries as a notorious fabricator and whose words were not supported by reliable sources. Both students and teachers should realize the importance of background research and critical thinking.

Critical thinking should cultivate an awareness that movies may distort historical accuracy by a present-mindedness—to take events from the past and twist them to suit current mind-sets. We might ask whether the artists were willing to tell history as it should have been or like it really had been. Ken Burns maintains he did the best possible job with *The Civil War* in evoking what it must have been like at the time. He had his critics from “the new historians,” but his response was, “Only those who seek to use history for polemical ends can find real fault in this approach.” Films also offer teachers an opportunity, says professor Harvey Jackson, “to get students not only to evaluate the accuracy of what is depicted, but to ponder why the film was made as it was.”

Lynne Cheney believes that sometimes accounts are presented “not to

get at the truth, but to create a picture of the past that is socially useful." Edmon Martin, a major researcher on early slavery including the now-famous Amistad incident, was happy the movie Amistad spurred attention to the slave rebellion, but complains it misrepresents the faith and the role of 19th century abolitionists. The movie plays down their contributions and trivializes their profound religious faith. He was quoted as saying, "I can see why that would be congenial to contemporary American culture, but it really misrepresents American history." Teachers need to watch for present-mindedness that forces history to tell a story to justify a current ideology. History may serve to be socially useful and to broaden our cultural outlook, but history should not be rewritten or invented retaliation just to mold student opinions.

Can we be too critical of movies that attempt to put life into dry dates and facts of seemingly little meaning? Is it possible that historians can be such nit-pickers that they stifle creativity and artistic projects? Ken Burns once blamed "the Germanic academic model from the end of 19th century that really spelled the end of popular history." He went on to say that other historians "helped kill the public's appetite for history." Good history has always been a balance between capturing the truth of events and breathing life into the drama of events. We should ask for both. Burns, in a conversation with David Thelen, acknowledged he had come to "depend on historians for their expertise to guide me through many

projects."

A reasonable solution is to have creators of a historical epic (if it claims to be history) enlist the use of historians as consultants. There have been attempts by a number of filmmakers recently to authenticate their work by using prominent historians as consultants. One notable example is *The Blue and the Grey* an eight hour mini-series on CBS) which made use of the distinguished Civil War authority Bruce Catton. Ken Burns himself in his *The Civil War* asked historians C. Van Woodward (who enlisted James McPherson), Shelby Foote, and David McCullough to serve among the 22 consultants. *The Civil War: A House Divided* was another a well-done video that used the talents of John Hope Franklin as an adviser. Professor Jenkins suggested that networks employ historical consultants, just as medical or legal consultants have been employed in recent years. Those who produce and direct documentaries for TV could greatly benefit from historians; historians in turn should appreciate the artistry of television producers.

There are also movies that are not really history, but take place in a historical setting. Such movies are really not documentaries but they may serve as discussion points about the period portrayed. James Fenimore Cooper's novel, *The Last of the Mohicans* was recently the subject of a movie. Historian Richard White in his review of the movie ripped into it with obvious relish, but director Michael Mann defended his work: "I wanted history to

become as vivid and real and immediate as if it were being lived right now." Of course the movie was based on the novel, but we could note the strengths and weaknesses of its depiction of historical events. Teachers may want to have students look up the historical account of Fort William Henry, the importance of the British support in the French and Indian War, or the role of the frontiersmen during the conflict. Then, too, teachers could compare the review of *White* with other reviews. There are teachers that make use of historical novels as a way to study the past with good results.

As noted above, an excellent way to check on the merits of historical truthfulness in a movie is to look up movie reviews by professional historians. In a recent book, *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies*, sixty of the world's most lauded historical writers look beneath the celluloid surface of popular movies to examine the relationship between film and the historical record. According to the book's jacket, "Best selling authors as Gore Vidal, James McPherson, Antonia Fraser, William Manchester skewer, praise, pick apart, and otherwise illuminate these cinematic portrayals of history, telling us as much about what the filmmakers got right as about where they went wrong." The book is edited by Mark C. Carnes, chairman of the history department at Barnard College, Columbia University. Put out by the Society of American Historians, the book covers a spectrum of films from *Spartacus* and *Julius Caesar* to *Anne of a*

*Thousand Days* and both films on Christopher Columbus up to *Mississippi Burning* and *JFK*. Some movies have value in a historical sense. The popular movie *Glory* was reviewed by prominent Civil War historian James McPherson. McPherson starts with a question: "Can movies teach history? For *Glory*, the answer is yes." He goes on to say that it is also "one of the most powerful and historically accurate movies ever made about the Civil War."

#### Sources for movie reviews

An excellent hard cover book of reviews is *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies* may be found in most libraries.

Most larger libraries have issues of the *Journal of American History*. Robert Brent Toplin, editor of the *Movie Reviews* in the journal, has had numerous movie reviews over the years. *Reviews* in this Organization of American Historians publication began to turn up in numbers starting with the December 1996 issue ("History on Television: A Growing Industry," Vol. 83, numbers 3-4). Among the 27 recent titles reviewed in that edition are *Patton*, *George Wallace* and *Andersonville*. The recent December, 1997 edition has numerous professional review offerings, which include *Thomas Jefferson* produced by Ken Burns (1996), *Hawaii's Last Queen* (1997), *Ghosts of Mississippi* (1997), and *The People vs Larry Flynn* produced by Oliver Stone (1996).

Besides the movie reviews found in the widely circulated news magazines

such as Time and Newsweek reviews may also be found in American Historical Review History and Theory and American History.

#### Sources of movies for social studies

- Instructional Film Archives. Toll free 1-800-366-1920 or custom service number 203-268-1796. Ask for their Video-Cassette catalog.
- The American Experience PBS videos. Call toll free 1-800-344-3337. They have a 62 page catalog with content summaries of their videos offered in 1998.
- Direct Cinema Limited, a company that advertises its films and videos in the Magazine of History. Call toll free 1-800-525-0000
- Learning Corporation of America, customer service department 1-212-397-9360
- Teacher's Video Company: American History 1998 has a comprehensive 95 page catalog of every aspect of our nation's history. They also have 79 page catalog World History & Social Studies 1998 or just about any country. In either catalog the videos are listed as \$29 each, with a buy 4, get 1 free offer. 1-800-262-8837.
- The A&E Network has launched the History Channel—HTV which features history related movies, miniseries, documentaries, and dramas. A monthly TV calendar of HTV history offerings are available on the Internet (<http://www.historychannel.com/>)

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## Teachers Who Leave

Ramona Czer

DEAR TEACHERS,

When a teacher leaves, we think about how she's influenced us and how we'll miss her. When a teacher leaves, especially after forty-five years of dedicated service to her Lord, it's only natural we ask her to share her experiences. When a teacher leaves, it's time to listen and learn.

Mrs. Irma (Paap) McLean is leaving St. Paul's Lutheran School, retiring after thirty years of service to its students and to many student teachers of Dr. Martin Luther College. But that kind of leaving isn't as important as another kind of leaving she's been doing her whole life. In fact, what most inspires me about Mrs. McLean is how intent she is in leaving everything in God's care. During a talk we had recently, it didn't surprise me when she shared that one of her all-time favorite hymns is Hymn 414, "I Leave All Things to God's Direction."

Irma Paap was born in the post-depression years on a farm about thirty-

five miles from New Ulm. The farm had no electricity, used an outhouse rather than indoor plumbing, and her parents had to nestle their firstborn, Irma, in a laundry basket for a bed.

I leave all things to God's direction;  
He loves me both in wealth and woe.  
His will is good, sure his affection;  
His tender love is true, I know.

My fortress and my rock is he:  
What pleases God, that pleases me.

Ever since she was four years old, Irma knew she wanted to be a teacher. She'd visit her aunt who was a Christian day school teacher in Good Thunder, and, following her around, dreamed of the day when she could do the very same things. Although she wanted to attend Martin Luther High School, it was full, and she had to attend Bethany Lutheran High School instead for one year. The next year she transferred to New Ulm.

After high school and two years of study at Dr. Martin Luther College, Irma was asked if she'd take a call as an emergency teacher. She had a younger sister going into high school and Irma

knew how hard financially it would be on her parents to have two daughters in school. So, without even consulting them, she agreed.

Her first call was to Our Savior's Lutheran School in Jamestown, South Dakota, teaching twenty-three students in grades one to four and eventually kindergarten, playing organ, and serving in other ways as well. They were busy and rewarding years. During her time there, she received many calls, some that she'd return only to get them back again, but after four years, she accepted a call to West Allis, Wisconsin, near Milwaukee.

At West Allis she also taught grades one to four, but she doubled the number of children in her classroom. "I always had bruises on my legs during those years," because of the crowded conditions, she said. The piano was so close to her students' desks, for example, that the front row children could go home and pick out the melodies they'd watched her hands play over and over. She was also an organist there, and did many tasks in a principal's capacity.

God knows what must be done to save me;

His love for me will never cease.

Upon his hands he did engrave me

With purest gold of loving grace.

His will supreme must ever be:

What pleases God, that pleases me.

After a few years at West Allis, she received a call from Dr. Martin Luther College to be a supervising teacher. "I returned it," she explained, "because I'd had no student teaching experience." Because she left college after

only two years, she'd been taking classes each summer to try to earn her degree. This worked well except that student teaching wasn't offered in the summer. However, Irma paid for a substitute teacher herself and reluctantly left her young children in West Allis to student teach under Mrs. Eric Sievert for an abbreviated time of five weeks. It seemed strange to her to leave the students who really needed her to go learn how to teach in a classroom with an abundance of teachers. But she learned much and finally graduated from DMLC, eventually going on to earn her Masters degree. In 1967, the college again extended a call to her, which she accepted.

As a professor, her main responsibility was to oversee student teachers at St. Paul's Lutheran School, which was located then across from St. Paul's Lutheran Church. She taught third and fourth grades initially, then fifth and sixth for a while, and finally first and second grades. In the new school building on Payne Street, she taught in five of its classrooms. Because she supervised at least two student teachers every semester (except for one quarter after her mother died and another year and a quarter when she wrote Sunday school lessons for the synod), more than one hundred student teachers have been influenced by Professor McLean and through them, thousands upon thousands of students.

My God desires the soul's salvation;

My soul he, too, desires to save.

Therefore with Christian resignation

All earthly troubles I will brave.

His will be done eternally:

What pleases God, that pleases me.

"When I would have doubts, it was often a hymn like this one that would bring me back," she said. Being a called worker can be exhausting and overwhelming work, especially if you think you have to do everything, she believes. Mrs. McLean advises today's teachers to set their priorities carefully. The children and their needs can't be overshadowed by congregational needs or a social life or anything, except one's family. "Learn to say, 'no,'" she says. Mrs. McLean had an opportunity to shift her own priorities six years ago when she married Mike McLean. She had to learn to reschedule her time so she'd have some evening and weekend hours for her husband.

Another piece of advice she shared is that young teachers shouldn't be swayed by new ways of doing things. They should learn and glean from new programs or philosophies, but they shouldn't feel guilty if they can't subscribe to them totally. "Use common sense and take what matches your personality, your school, and your students' needs."

Mrs. McLean wishes more teachers would take time to read aloud to children, which to her is the foundation of all learning. Although she still uses basal readers because of the sense of structure and progress they give to students, she's abandoned the idea of drilling long lists of vocabulary words before reading the stories. Instead, she shares the story first, letting them just enjoy it, then she has them do partner

reading. The next day they read it as a class, and then she looks at five vocabulary words a day from the lists. The children read the words and look at them closely for such things as consonant blends or compound words or rhyming sounds. By the end of the lesson, even the weakest readers can read these lists of five words and are so proud of themselves.

After years and years of meeting children's needs and of guiding young people in their training to become teachers, this woman has accomplished so much, yet she humbly gives credit elsewhere. "I don't think anyone can serve the Lord without knowing it's his strength. We don't do any miracles; we just do what we can. Teaching can be very rewarding if we focus on our Lord, rather than on everyone else's expectations. You must trust that he will use us in our limited abilities."

My God has all things in his keeping;  
He is my ever faithful friend.

He gives me laughter after weeping,  
And all his ways in blessings end.

His love endures eternally:

What pleases God, that pleases me.

Because she has cared her whole life about pleasing God, we won't forget Mrs. Irma McLean. We can't. She's one of those teachers who leave behind the fragrance of knowing him.

A thankful parent

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

# Administrative Release Time (ART)

Gregory D. Thiesfeldt



The WELS super-principal flies into the building at 7:00 A.M. wearing his “superman” shirt with his cape rippling in the breeze. He arrives before everyone else so that he can change into his teaching clothes in the phone booth (usually called the faculty rest room). He’s ready to teach all day because he stayed up after the board meeting last night to do his lessons. Still, he got his six hours of sleep—that’s all that super-principal needs to be refreshed and ready to face the challenges of another day. After super-principal finishes teaching at 3:15 P.M., he hastens again to the phone booth. It’s time to change roles again. Now it’s time to be the coach. After practice ends at 5:00 P.M., super-principal steps into the office to thumb through the mail and other correspondence that came to his desk that day. He makes quick mental notes about the tasks that will need to be done tomorrow when there is no practice after school. He

knows that more jobs will pile up by then, so he tosses a few things that don’t look worth opening into the waste basket. A super-principal is efficient and never wastes time with junk mail. He notices that it’s 5:45 P.M., so he hustles home for supper at 6:00 P.M. Choir rehearsal is at 7:00 P.M. tonight, so there should be just enough time to change clothes, eat, talk with the family, and drive back to school. Super-principal is thankful for his faithful wife, who has adapted to his busy schedule. He makes a mental note to spend more time with the family when the weekend comes. If he can get his papers corrected, grades recorded, and next week’s meetings planned on Saturday after the school basketball games, maybe there will be some time Saturday night...

While some of the above may be exaggerated, much of it is the picture of the routines of a typical WELS principal-teacher. Like Superman, he does it all! He has exceptional energy and dedication to his work, but if he is honest about his job performance, he will admit that neither of his jobs—teacher or principal—is done as well as he would like it to be done. He does the

best that he can, but wishes that the day was longer so that all of his responsibilities could be done more thoroughly and more satisfactorily. What can be done to help the busy WELS teacher-principal with this problem? ART—Administrative Release Time—is one answer.

Administrative Release Time (ART) is the amount of time given to teaching principals during the school day to handle the responsibilities of school administration. The lack of ART for our principals has been viewed as an on-going problem in our Lutheran elementary schools. Our shortage of principals gets more acute every year as principals retire or resign. Capable men with leadership abilities seem uninterested in serving as principals. A key factor in this problem may be the time-management stress that goes along with the principal-teacher's job. The author gathered data and opinions about the state of ART in the WELS with the goal of improving awareness that ART is needed by principals. Development of ART could lead to improvements in the administration of our WELS elementary schools. It could also help with the critical shortage of principals. The information that follows is directed to these objectives.

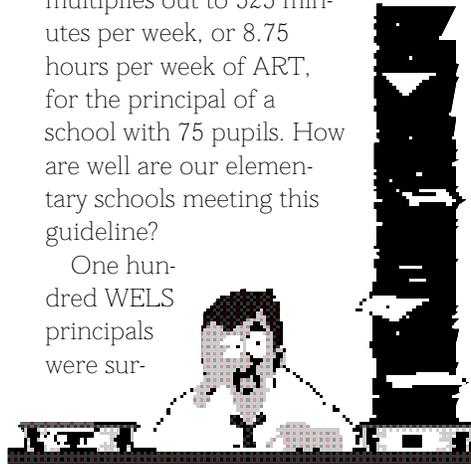
The WELS Guidelines for Self Study, produced by Commission on Parish Schools in 1994, provide both a rationale and advice for Lutheran elementary schools about ART. According to this report the following practice is found in the model LES:

"Sufficient time is provided (to the

principal) for administrative duties. On the elementary level the equivalent of at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  of each day is released from the principal's teaching duties for every 75 students in the school."

If we use 420 minutes as the number of minutes in a typical school day, 105 minutes is  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a day. This multiplies out to 525 minutes per week, or 8.75 hours per week of ART, for the principal of a school with 75 pupils. How are we as our elementary schools meeting this guideline?

One hundred WELS principals were sur-



veyed about the state of ART in their schools during the summer of 1997. Seventy-seven principals completed and returned the survey. These schools have a total enrollment of about 12,000 pupils taught by 605 teachers. The data provided by these participants is the basis for the analysis that follows.

The WELS Guidelines for Self Study recommendation of  $\frac{1}{4}$  day for each group of 75 pupils can be broken down to an equivalency of pupils per weekly hour. This calculates to 8.6 students for every weekly hour of ART. The survey average came to 16.3 pupils for every weekly hour of ART. Therefore, the schools surveyed are providing about

53% of the ART recommended in the guidelines. Perhaps Table 1 will illustrate the point more clearly to enable schools of different sizes to compare themselves both to the survey averages and to the recommended guidelines.

Enrollment	Survey ART Hours	WELS Self Study Guidelines for ART Hours
50	3.1 hours	5.8 hours
100	6.1 hours	11.6 hours
150	9.2 hours	17.4 hours
200	12.3 hours	23.3 hours
250	15.3 hours	29.1 hours
300	18.4 hours	34.9 hours

Another way of looking at the current ART practice in the WELS is to consider the number of principals who receive full, 1/2, 1/4, or less than 1/4 ART. These data are included in Table 2.

ART	Schls	Enrll Range	Enrll Mean
Full (25-40 hrs)	5	203-315	270
1/2 (15-24 hrs)	13	160-276	205
1/4 (8-14 hrs)	20	108-220	159
Less than 1/4	39	40-200	124

It was noteworthy that 51% of the schools surveyed provide fewer than seven hours of weekly ART to their principals. Among these were four schools with enrollments in the 175-200 range.

When asked about recent or anticipated changes in ART, 30 (39%) of the principals reported that ART was stable and that no changes were anticipated. Fifteen (19%) reported that they anticipated expansion of ART in the near future. Twenty-four (31%) had recently expanded, but are stable now. Eight schools reported that their ART has been reduced in recent years.

When asked to respond to the question: "How adequate is the amount of ART given to you?" not a single principal stated that he has too much ART. Thirty-two (42%) indicated that the ART given to them is enough and 45 (58%) of the principals reported that their ART was inadequate.

Sometimes there are non-teaching, nonadministrative responsibilities handled by principals that use up many hours of time. One of these is the practice of coaching school athletic teams.

Most who coach do so by their choice. It is not required of them. Twenty-nine (38%) of the principals who responded indicated that they serve as coaches. A higher percentage (46%) of these are from schools with enrollments under 150. In the schools with enrollment over 150, only 30% of the principals are coaches. It seems that the practice of principals coaching is more common in the smaller schools, but it is not unusual for principals of larger schools to coach. When asked, "Should principals coach?" 52% said no, 32% said yes, and the rest indicated that the decision

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depended on many factors. Many comments were made which indicated strong feelings about this question. Generally, it is believed that coaching should not be required of principals, but that it should be allowed if the principal volunteers to assist the school in this way. It was often pointed out that



The lack of ART for our principals has been viewed as an on-going problem in our Lutheran elementary schools.



coaching is a healthy and enjoyable outlet for the principal.

Several surveys were returned by principals who were not coaches, but were responsible for the church's music programs. They indicated that time invested as organists and choir directors should also be considered in the analysis of time-consuming, non-teaching, non-administrative tasks.

Principals use ART for a variety of different tasks. My list follows. It includes tasks mentioned by principals who replied to the survey.

- classroom observation

- pre-observation planning and conferencing
- post-observation conferencing
- student discipline and counseling
- school finances (processing bills, writing checks, recording expenditures and deposits, depositing money)
- correspondence (written, telephone)
- ordering books and supplies
- lesson planning
- making copies
- administration of food programs
- weekly newsletter
- planning for meetings (faculty, Board of Education, congregational, Obudget, self study, long range planning)
- budget planning
- management of family accounts for school fees (monthly statements, contacting delinquents)
- correspondence and conferencing with parents
- conferencing and planning with pastors, secretaries, and parent-teacher organization leaders
- synodical work as school counselor

Does this list sound like enough to keep a principal busy full-time? If a principal-teacher is not given sufficient ART, he finds it necessary to do these tasks outside of school hours. This is often at the expense of classroom preparation, family time, personal spiritual growth, and time for personal rest and relaxation.

The survey asked how ART was used by our principals. The following lists show how WELS principals use their ART and which tasks they consider to be the most important priority. The ordering of tasks was determined by

the estimated percentages given by the principals of time spent on each task. It was noteworthy that the two lists did not come out the same.

How do WELS principals use ART?

1. Administration of school finances
2. Classroom observations and conferencing
3. Planning lessons
4. Counseling students
5. Preparing the school newsletter
6. Planning for meetings
7. Long range planning, administration of food programs, parent contacts
8. Other

Which task is the highest priority?

1. Classroom observation
2. Administration of school finances
3. Counseling students
4. Planning lessons
5. Planning for meetings
6. Others

Finally, the survey asked principals to indicate which tasks would be given more attention if more ART was provided. Three tasks were mentioned quite frequently. Forty-two (55%) said that more time should be devoted to classroom observation, 15 (19%) said long range planning, and 8 (10%) said counseling students. This indicates that principals feel that the supervision of instruction in our schools is a task that is currently in need of more attention. Providing additional ART to principals could open up more opportunities for this.

Several thought-provoking comments and ideas were added by survey participants. A few of these are shared below. They are paraphrased for brevity.

- ✿ The role of the principal is changing. More time is needed today than in the past.
- ✿ Our WELS system needs a new administrative model. There simply is not enough time for all the tasks we are expected to do.
- ✿ It is difficult for principals to ask their congregations for more ART. The CPS needs to be more aggressive in its encouragement to congregations about the need for ART.
- ✿ The lack of sufficient ART is the main reason for the shortage of principals in the WELS.
- ✿ It is frustrating to do two jobs. If God blesses me with a call to another school, I pray that the call will not include administration.
- ✿ Finding the right substitute teacher to fill in during my ART is difficult.
- ✿ Having adequate secretarial help can reduce the need for ART.
- ✿ Large blocks of time for ART are more useful than an hour here and there.
- ✿ Administrative duties can be shared with other staff members. Some of the principal's ART can be given to these staff members while the principal teaches in their rooms.
- ✿ Larger schools need an assistant principal to share the administrative duties. ART should be shared, too.
- ✿ ART should not be used for correcting papers or for lesson planning.

How can we persuade our congregations that more ART is needed? First, the Board of Education needs to be told about the need. Principals cannot be bashful about requesting ART. The

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martyr who continues to allow himself to be overworked wrongs himself and his school. Principals need time to be better principals. ART will free up some time for classroom preparation, so the principal can be a better teacher, too. If a principal fails to inform his Board of Education about the need for ART because he prefers to spend time on other tasks instead of administration he is practicing avoidance. Again, the school is wronged by this practice.

There are those who will resist the implementation of ART because of the expense of paying a part-time teacher. A half-time teacher paid at substitute rate for 40 weeks will cost the congregation about \$7000 per year. This is a small price to pay for the improved administration of a school where our children are nurtured in their Christian faith.

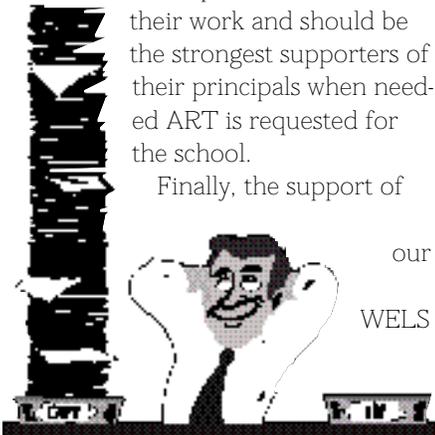
Support for ART should also come from the pastor. Pastors are administrators themselves who use a large portion of their time to plan for the efficient operation of the church. They realize

the importance of ART in their work and should be the strongest supporters of their principals when needed ART is requested for the school.

Finally, the support of

our

WELS



Commission on Parish Schools is vital in bringing about increased ART in our schools. The CPS cannot mandate changes that affect how congregations implement ART. But it can inform the congregations about the need. It can



Principals cannot be  
bashful about  
requesting ART.



promote and encourage the improvements that are needed. And it can make suggestions about the most efficient ways to implement the changes.

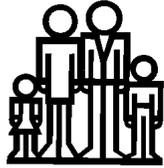
The precious gift of Christian education has prospered and grown immensely in our synod. This is a great blessing from the Lord of the Church. As our schools have grown, so has scope of the principal's call. The development of ART will enable the principal to work more efficiently and effectively. May this serve to glorify God and advance His Kingdom!

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Greg Thiesfeldt is principal and teacher at Faith Lutheran School, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

## Children's Books about Families

Reviews by Cheryl Loomis



Eve Bunting. *Fly Away Home*

*Fly Away Home* is a story about a homeless family. Since the death of his mother, Andrew and his father have had to live in an airport. They keep moving from terminal to terminal in the hopes that they will not be noticed. The story is told from the child's point of view and tells what his everyday life is like. He tells about having to sleep sitting up, washing in the airport bathrooms, and most importantly, avoiding being noticed. "Not to be noticed is to look like nobody at all."

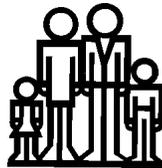
This story would be good to use in breaking the stereotypes of homeless people. Andrew's dad has a job but does not earn enough money for them to live in an apartment. Andrew is saving money he earns (tips from carrying other people's luggage) hoping for the day they can live in their own home. Plans are being made for Andrew to attend school next year. Other homeless people are shown living in the airport.

Andrew spies a bird trapped in the

airport. Just as the bird finds its way out, so Andrew hopes his family will find a way out, too.

Beautiful, watercolor illustrations convey the emotions of the story.

This book could be used in an early childhood setting to portray different types of families. It is clearly a book that would be appealing to people of all ages.



Patricia MacLachlan. *All the Places to Love*

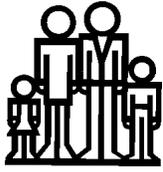
A little boy remembers all the special places on his grandfather's farm. Eli knows that no matter where the rest of his life takes him, all the places he loves are right here on the family farm. The story begins with Eli's birth and ends with the birth of his sister, Sylvie. Eli

## Author

looks forward to all the places he will show Sylvie.

Beautiful paintings show life on a family farm in New England. These scenes show all the places Eli says he will love forever.

This story could be used to describe the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. It could also be used when a new sibling enters the family. Family traditions are also highlighted in the story.



Vera B. Williams *A Chair for My Mother*

This Caldecott Honor book tells of a family's determination to work together. Following a fire that destroys all of their belongings, a young girl, mother, and grandmother, save all their coins in the hopes of buying a much needed easy chair. Family and friends have helped replace their furniture, but they only have hard kitchen chairs on which to sit.

This story shows good examples of a family's love, caring, determination, and anticipation. It could be used as a multi-generational story, too, as the grandma lives with the family. Other family members are mentioned as they offer help following the fire.

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Professor Cheryl Loomis serves on the staff of Martin Luther College in the early childhood education program.