

VOLUME 42
NUMBER 3
FEBRUARY 2002

The Lutheran Educator

The WELS Education Journal

We will tell to the coming
generation the glorious
deeds of the LORD.

Psalm 78:4



The Lutheran Educator

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

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

Rates: One year—USA/\$8.00—single copy/\$2.00. Canada/\$8.56—single copy/\$2.14. All other countries—air mail \$16.00; surface mail \$13.00. Postage included, payable in advance to Northwestern Publishing House. Write for multi-year rates. For single issue only, Wisconsin residents add 5% sales tax, Milwaukee County residents add 5.6% tax.

Subscription Services Information

1-800-662-6093 (Milwaukee area 414/475-6600), or direct dial 414/614-5120 or 414/614-5160 or write Northwestern Publishing House, 1250 N. 113th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284.

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Vision check

Let's eavesdrop on conversation from different professional settings:

- At a dental clinic: "Doctor, your two o'clock root canal is here."
- A loan officer to his manager: "They're a two income with a clean history—a good risk."
- One car salesman to another: "That's the second fully loaded wagon I've sent down the road this week."
- A server to her cook. "My medium well at table three wants more fire."

Look past the profession-specific language and what do you notice? These professionals sound like they're talking about things, but they're really talking about people. People need medical attention. People borrow money. People buy cars, and people eat.

But people are not always what the professional sees.

Could teachers develop the same kind of vision? The individual teacher must answer that for himself, but, regardless, getting your vision checked now and again is worthwhile. A place to begin might be a simple sentence completion exercise: "When I look out over my classroom, I see..."

Most of us will see...an ADHD or more, the source of papers that must be corrected, a scholar, a hygiene problem, the products of broken homes, an athlete, a disabled learner, a smart mouth, a gifted student who knows it, a gifted student who doesn't use it, a natural leader, a bully, a musician, a recess-wrecker, among a long and assorted list that makes up a teacher's triumphs and trials.

Yes, this is what we will see. But whom will we see? In the desks in front of us are people. Each student is a unique, complex blend of experiences, strengths, and insecurities that, before long, will play themselves out in our classrooms. How easily we can allow ourselves to define a student by only her strength or only her weakness, by just one offensive comment or a few immature acts.

Our students are more than that to Jesus. They are the people he wants to live with eternally and paid with his life to do so. When Jesus looks at our students, he sees what sometimes we do not. He sees their souls.

The same Lord gives us the opportunity to work with these works in progress. Your classroom is one stop on their life's journey that we pray will end in the peaceful sleep of a believer. How we see our students is likely to affect the way we work with them. God help us see souls.

PML

Student-Led Conferences, Part 2

Brian C. Miller

[In Part 1 Mr. Miller describe the concept and research relating to student-led conferences with parents. See V 42 #2, December 2001. In part 2 he explains the reasearch he carried out on this type of conference.]

Research Sample

The students at St. Paul's are a fairly homogeneous group as one would expect in a small community in northeastern Wisconsin. They come from a middle class economic background. We have very few students who qualify for free and reduced lunches. We also have very few students with special education needs. Academically, students are average to above average in achievement

Procedure

Since my research questions mainly focus on overall satisfaction with the conferencing process, my data collection was done in the form of questionnaires. I used open-ended questions for student, parents, and teachers before the conference and after the conference to evaluate how each felt about traditional conferences compared with student-led conferences. To determine if increased student accountability affects



student achievement, I interviewed teachers and examined progress reports.

Pre-conference surveys

Of the students surveyed before the conferences, over 70% thought that parents and teachers talk about the students' work and how they are doing in school. Almost 30% said they had no input on what goes on at a parent-teacher conference. About 40% of the students mentioned things they didn't like about parent-teacher conferences. One of the most common comments made was that they couldn't be there and that the teacher tells parents what they're doing wrong in school. Over 70% of the students strongly agreed or agreed that parent-teacher conferences give them a good idea of how they're doing in

school. About 50% strongly agreed or agreed that parent teacher conferences help them be responsible for their learning as well as encouraging them to do their best in school.

Of the parents surveyed before the conferences, about 40% said they liked talking directly with the teachers about their child. Almost 50% said they had no problems with parent teacher conferences. When asked what they didn't like about conferences, there were a wide variety of responses. A few parents pointed out that they have anxiety about what is going to be said at the conference or that they didn't like coming and finding out "surprises." Over 60% of parents felt that parent-teacher conferences give them a good idea of how their child is doing in school. About 40% felt that parent-teacher conferences help their children to be responsible for their learning and encourage them to do their best in school. Thirty percent were undecided and about 30% disagreed with those statements. (See Table 1.)

Teachers also felt that parent teacher conferences were good for parent teacher communication. They had mixed feelings about parent teacher conferences. Some said they were nervous or that they didn't like having to do most of the talking. Other concerns were that parents save up questions and concerns that they have and that the teacher is made responsible instead of the child.

Implementing the conference

We used a variety of conference for-

mats depending on the grade level. In grades one and two the students led their parents through different stations and demonstrated what they were doing in school. In grades 3-8 the conference centered around a student portfolio. Students were involved in selecting work to be included in their portfolio throughout the quarter. They chose a variety of items from each subject to be included and wrote down why they selected those items. A script was also prepared for the students to fill in to help them lead the conference. In grades 7-8 students also had end-of-the-quarter progress reports that they could use to explain to parents their grades for the quarter.

In a series of class sessions, we discussed portfolios and provided students with ideas of what they could place in their portfolios. The students learned that they would be the leaders of their conferences. They would show their parents their work, talk about the different units they studied, describe favorite units, and highlight strengths and weaknesses. Students also rehearsed their scripts with classmates and teachers.

In our practice conferences we discovered that many students used a minimum of 20 minutes. We decided to schedule conferences for 30 minutes instead of the traditional 15-minute conference. Because this would double the time for conferences, we also decided to schedule two conferences simultaneously in each room. The teacher could move from conference to conference and monitor or facilitate as needed. Once the planning was completed, we

felt that we were ready for the conference format change.

Results

The conferences ran very smoothly. There was usually enough time not only to let the child lead the conference but then still have some time for the parents and teachers to talk about student progress. Parents and students seemed to enjoy the new format and we had a good number of students and parents fill out post-conference surveys.

Student comments

When students were asked what they liked about student-led conferences, over 40% said they liked showing their work to their parents or being able to

lead the conferences.

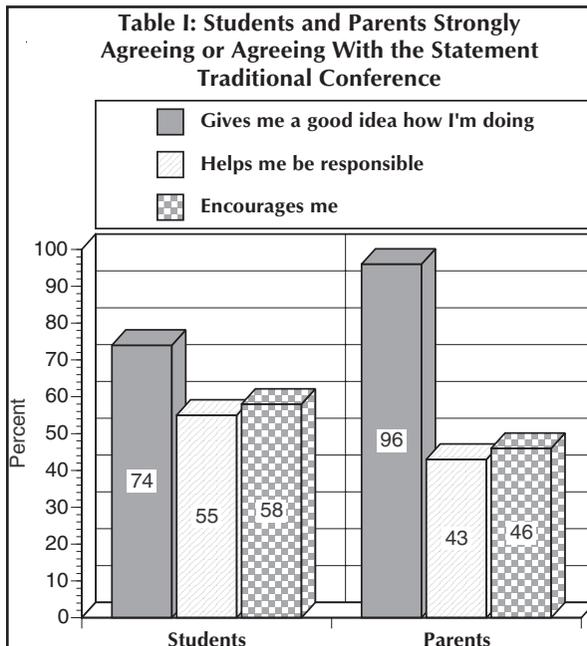
I liked explaining my work to my parents myself.

I got to show my mom how I was doing instead of all the secrecy.

I felt like the teacher.

When asked how they felt during the conferences, almost half said they were “nervous” or felt “scared.” Many of them also commented that after they got going on the conference they felt fine. About a third said they felt “good” during the conference. One student commented that he felt “responsible.”

When asked what they didn’t like about the conference, about half of the students said “nothing” or that they couldn’t think of anything they didn’t like. About 20% thought the conference was too long or thought they had to explain “too much.” Most of those were



younger students.

Over 80% of students strongly agreed or agreed that student-led conferences gave them a good idea of how they're doing in school. On whether student led conferences helped them to be responsible, over 70% strongly agreed or agreed. Two thirds felt that student-led conferences encouraged them to do their best in school. (See Table 2.)

When asked if they could change anything about the student-led conferences there were few comments. Ninety percent of the students left this blank or said "nothing." A handful of students commented they like the traditional conferences better. One student commented, "I liked it just when my parents went in." Another student enthusiastically commented, "I hope we do them [student-led conferences] again!"

Parent comments

We were able to survey more than half of our parents. When asked—

Which conference gave them a better appreciation of

- * What their child was learning in school, 77% responded student-led.
- * What your child studied in class, 82% responded student-led.
- * Your child's behavior in school, 50% responded traditional.
- * Your child's study habits, 43% responded student-led.
- * Your child's academic achievement, 57% responded student-led.

When asked which format they preferred 70% responded student-led while 16% said traditional. The rest indicated

no preference or the preferred a format that incorporates both traditional and student-led.

Many parents commented on the benefits of student-led conferences.

I could see my child's face on the great things he did which made me proud of him.

They're proud to show us what they've been doing.

The child gets more involved and feels more ownership of what he's accomplished.

To have the student accountable for what they are learning.

We received more information regarding what they are actually studying—the students aren't worried about what we are talking about.

Parents who preferred traditional conferences usually referred to the one-on-one with the teacher and privacy. One parent said, "If my child was having problems and I wanted to discuss them, I'm not sure I would want to do it in a student-led format."

When asked if they believed student-led conferences gave them a good idea of how their child is doing in school, over 80% strongly agreed or agreed. When asked if they believed student-led conferences helped their child be responsible for his or her learning, again over 80% strongly agreed or agreed. When asked if they believed student-led conferences encouraged their child to do their best in school, three fourths strongly agreed or agreed. (See Table 3.)

Parents were also asked if they saw any disadvantages to student-led confer-

ences. Very few parents saw any but some did comment that they missed the one-on-one discussion with the teacher. A few commented that they didn't get feedback on their child's behavior in school. Even when asked about disadvantages, many parents still made positive comments on the new format.

It made my son think more about what he's doing in class—where he is doing well and how he needs to focus on weak areas.

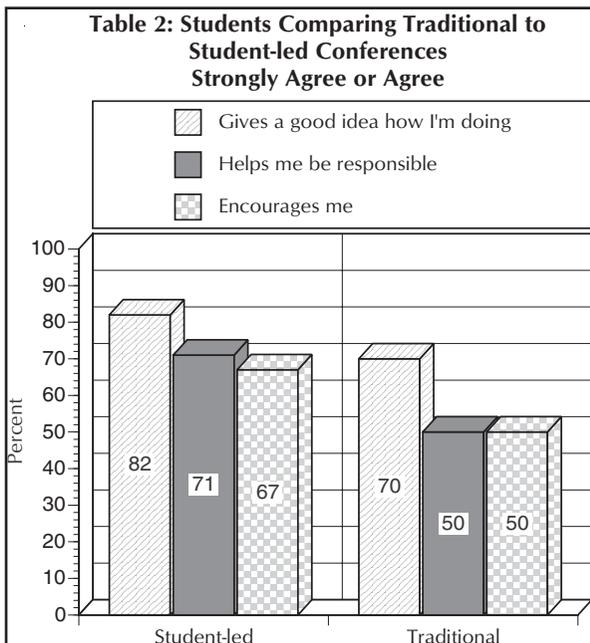
None—thanks for stepping out of the box and trying something new!

I really believe a student-led conference is extremely beneficial. I think parents and children really need the interaction. Thanks.

Although a few parents preferred the traditional format to discuss behavior problems or academic problems, they

did have the option of scheduling a traditional conference.

Teachers wholeheartedly supported the new format. They liked the student-parent interaction as well as the positive atmosphere of the conference. One teacher also commented that she liked that "everyone knows what is being said at the conference." When asked what they didn't like about the conferences, like some parents, they pointed out that they would need a separate conference to deal with any problem behaviors. Another concern was that it was difficult to have two conferences at the same time especially in the lower grades. My own experience in the 7-8 grade conferences was very positive. What really impressed me was the students' ability to explain what they were learning in school. It was gratifying to



see the usual shy and quiet students explain their learning to their parents.

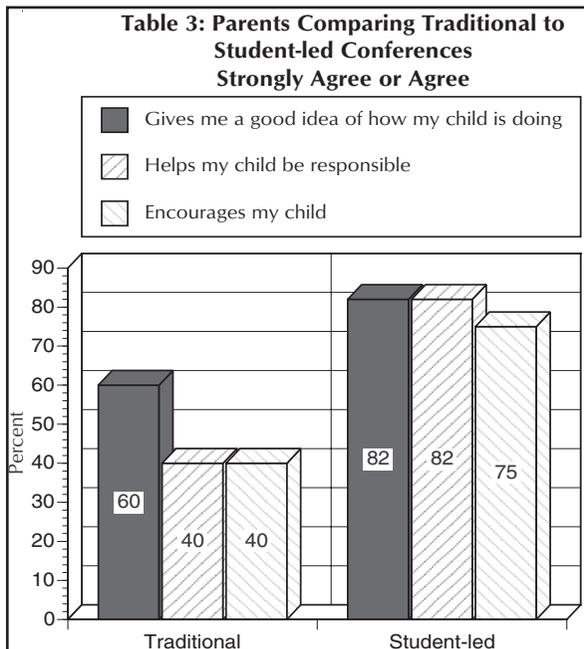
Conclusions

To measure the overall satisfaction with the conferencing formats, I compared the surveys taken before the conference and after. When comparing the student surveys, 70% felt that the traditional conference gave them a good idea of how they were doing in school, while 82% felt that student-led conferences did. When comparing how they felt about the conferences helping them to be responsible and encouraging them to do their best, 50% felt that traditional conferences helped them, while about 70% felt that student-led conferences did.

The parent surveys showed an even

greater difference. Over 80% felt that student-led conferences gave them a good idea of how their child was doing in school compared to 60% for traditional conferences. When asked how they felt about student-led conferences helping their child to be responsible and encouraging them to do their best, 75% felt that student-led conferences did compared to about 40% for traditional conferences. Also parents overwhelmingly did not disagree that student-led conferences helped their child be responsible and encouraged them to do their best. When asked that about traditional conferences, 30% disagreed.

We have found that student-led conferences do a better job of informing the parents of what their child is doing in school as well as what their child's achievement is. We have also found that



student-led conferences make students more responsible for their learning and does encourage them to do their best for the most part. They give the students, parents, and teachers a better picture of who the student is and what he or she has achieved.

In examining progress reports, I could see a noticeable difference in achievement this year. In 7-8 grades, I had more students achieving at a higher level than last year. Last year I had six students out of 23 make the Honor Roll. This year I had sixteen students out of 25 make the Honor Roll. I'm not sure if that is due to the new conference format or a new group of students. I feel there are too many variables involved to use this information as verification of the new format.

Future plans

After reviewing how the new conference format was received by students, parents and teachers, I feel that our school will continue to use the student-led format in the future. We will make some revisions based on our first year experience. Some possible questions to consider are the following:

- * Do we want to continue the format in grades 1-8? (Some lower grade teachers may want to revise the station format.)
- * Do we want to revise the conference times? (In grades 7-8, I had a range of 10 minutes to 30 minutes. Most of the conferences were around 20 minutes. Some conferences in grades 5-6 went over 30 minutes.)

- * Do we want to schedule two simultaneous conferences? (This was a concern of a few parents as well as the teachers. It sometimes didn't allow the lower grade teachers time to help the nervous student. Having only one conference in the room at a time would also allow for time to discuss concerns one on one with the teacher or behavior concerns. The drawback to consider is that this could turn into a negative conference for the child instead of a positive experience.)

Another consideration is to have an optional traditional conference earlier in the year to discuss any problem areas or concerns with the parents. We would then have our student-led conferences scheduled at the end of the first quarter. Through student-led conferences, I believe parents begin to recognize their children's ability to assume increasing levels of responsibility and appreciate the opportunity to strengthen the lines of communication with their children. As a teacher I feel that the student-led conference format leads to a more positive and relaxed conferencing atmosphere. Now that we have students with a year of experience behind them I also believe that in the future there will be reduced conference preparation workload for the teacher and diminished teacher stress during conferences. With some fine-tuning, I am looking forward to having student-led conferences at St Paul's School in the future. ♣

Brian C. Miller is principal of St. Paul's Lutheran School, Algoma, Wisconsin.

Survey of Music Education in the WELS



Darin Menk

Music research

Much excitement has been growing in music education the past few years. Brain research has connected music to growth in other styles of learning. Music has been put on the same level as the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences that have been tested for years as true labels of intelligence (Gardner 1991). Expectations for music have been gathered into the National Standards and tools for assessment and strategies for the teaching of these standards have been produced (MENC 1994).

With this renewed interest in music education, schools and even entire school systems are re-evaluating and revising curriculum using the national standards in music as a tool (Brown 1993). No longer can music be considered just “singing time.” It is a body of knowledge to be taught, it contains a set of standards that must be met, and it creates connection to other cultures, curriculum and other intelligences (Fowler 1994).

Music education in the WELS

WELS teachers are also currently revising their music curricula. This is nothing new for the WELS. Emil Backer encouraged revision of WELS schools’ music curricula already in the 1930s. “Our schools are filled with incompetency in school-music teaching and a lack of systematized music course” (Backer 1930). To remedy the situation, Backer wrote a new WELS curriculum and encouraged its implementation.

Criticism of WELS music education continued in the 1960s. Martin Albrecht, then head of the music department at DMLC, summarized music classes this way, “The trend of the day seems to be purposeless and aimless music teaching” (Albrecht 1961). In 1962, a new music curriculum guide was created to help teachers plan a complete music curriculum. Several years later, DMLC Professor Meilahn Zahn still felt music curriculum was weak. “Too often it seems a really well-planned music program is non-existent. Each teacher does what he pleases in this area” (Zahn 1968). “In our teaching

of music, we must proceed to develop those concepts which make music the art that it is" (Zahn 1969). Zahn also questioned if rhythm was "a forgotten element in the music classroom" (Zahn

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Though a new curriculum is in place in many WELS schools, the amount of time set aside for the teaching this curriculum has decreased.

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1969).

In 1973, a survey was sent to all WELS schools and churches. Though the survey contained a church and school focus, it did provide some insight into teachers' views of music education and the need for further music education training. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents felt that it was important that every teacher have a knowledge of music teaching methods and materials. Forty-three percent of those surveyed thought it was somewhat important that a teacher would have the ability to develop a music curriculum. And 37%

of the respondents said that it was important that every teacher be proficient in playing some classroom music instrument (Dr. Martin Luther College, 1973). In 1974, Professor Edward Meyer encouraged schools to write clear, measurable objectives in school music (Meyer 1974).

In 1984, a more detailed music education survey was taken to identify any changes in the content of music education in the WELS. Two of the greatest strengths of WELS schools in 1984 were the strong emphasis on singing and large amount of time allotted for music class. Other strengths and weaknesses highlighted by Wagner in 1984 are as follows:

- Lutheran heritage was regularly included in music.
- Music was most often taught by the general classroom teacher.
- Very few classroom instruments were available for the teacher and student.
- The curriculum was viewed as weak by most schools
- Over half of the schools requested help in teaching music.

After the 1984 survey results were presented, numerous articles were published in *The Lutheran Educator*. Articles examined the need for the development of a personal and school philosophy of music education (Wagner 1982), of church heritage and current music trends (Meyer 1986) and better preparation of future teachers in the WELS (Wagner 1993). Synod-wide conferences on national, state and district levels also encouraged WELS schools to have stronger music programs.

In 1993, an informal survey of one hundred schools was initiated to see which DMLC music courses matched the needs of WELS schools. The survey reflected that fewer teachers regularly sang or played music in the classroom and an even smaller number of teachers regularly taught music class than seen in the 1983 survey (Wagner 1993). Again, papers were written and symposiums gathered to encourage teachers to change what and how they taught music (Backer 1993). Numerous articles were also written in *The Lutheran Educator* with the same goal. "We intend to present characteristics of traditional Lutheran music, our heritage, that compel us to emphasize its use in our churches and schools" (Wagner 1995).

WELS 2001 music survey

Since surveys had already been used to identify strengths and weaknesses of past WELS music education, the author used a similar format to gather current information (Menk 2001). The survey included topics previously covered so comparison over the years could be made. New questions were added to clarify previous survey topics and to identify new strengths or weaknesses.

The final survey included curriculum, staff, schedule, materials and equipment, and perceived needs of the Kindergarten through eighth grade music curriculum. It did not include instrumental, string, and piano programs because these programs are developed by contractors on an individual basis and consist of pullout lessons

during the school day.

All schools were included in the survey; 256 schools returned the survey. This represented seventy percent of WELS schools of varying sizes, rural and urban areas and cultures. This return rate suggests that the results are reliable and represent all WELS schools.

Results

In 2001, singing was still the major focus of WELS music education. This is to be commended. However, the time spent on music instruction has decreased. In fact, a greater number of schools have cut both the number of music classes per week and the time allotted for music. Other comparisons between 1984 and 2001 survey data can be seen in the Table 1.

Though a new curriculum is in place in many WELS schools, the amount of time set aside for the teaching this curriculum has decreased. And though we have a Lutheran music curriculum, the teaching of the Lutheran heritage and liturgy is taught in fewer than one-fifth of the schools. One-third of survey respondents felt that their curriculum was a weakness, and over half of the survey respondents requested some form of music consultant to help them improve in their teaching of music. This is a slightly higher percentage than reported in 1984.

According to national and state music associations, conferences, and college education programs, there are nine content areas that must be included to teach a complete music curriculum.

Table 1: Comparisons of 1984 and 2001 Survey Data

Item	1984 results	2001 results
Curriculum		
1. Schools with written philosophy and goals	19%	28%
2. Curriculum revised in past five years	28%	31%
3. Music required in grades K-8	88%	79%
4. Music curriculum content-general	64%	70%
5. Lutheran heritage instruction taught regularly	47%	18%
Staff		
6. Music taught by classroom teacher	75%	65%
7. Music taught by departmentalized teacher	21%	26%
8. Music taught by music specialist	3%	5%
Schedule		
9. Days of music instruction-K-2		
three or more days per week	69%	50%
one or less days per week	10%	21%
10. Minutes of music instruction-K-2		
sixty minutes or more per week	58%	28%
less than twenty minutes per week	3%	18%
11. Days of music instruction-3-6		
three or more days per week	55%	28%
one or less days per week	14%	21%
12. Minutes of music instruction-3-6		
sixty minutes or more per week	57%	34%
less than twenty minutes per week	4%	10%
13. Days of music instruction-7-8		
three or more days per week	44%	20%
one or less days per week	21%	27%
14. Minutes of music instruction-7-8		
sixty minutes or more per week	48%	36%
less than twenty minutes per week	8%	13%
Materials and Equipment Available		
15. Individual child textbook or resource pages	43%	71%
16. Music series recordings	18%	55%
17. Videotapes	25%	28%
18. Autoharp	29%	33%
19. Guitar	4%	8%
20. Recorders	32%	55%
21. Orff instruments	6%	15%
22. Handbells	3%	19%
23. Music budgeted	37%	78%
Needs		
24. Curriculum as greatest strength	11%	14%
25. Curriculum as greatest weakness	40%	31%
26. Staff as greatest strength	33%	35%
27. Staff as greatest weakness	13%	32%
28. Schedule as greatest strength	17%	16%
29. Schedule as greatest weakness	8%	18%
30. Materials and equipment as greatest strength	9%	19%
31. Materials and equipment as greatest weakness	16%	22%
32. Music consultant requested	55%	58%

Table 2: Summary of Curriculum Content in 2001

Curriculum content	K-4	5-8
1. Sing regularly	77%	69%
2. Perform on instruments regularly	14%	18%
3. Improvise regularly	1%	3%
4. Compose regularly	1%	2%
5. Sight read music regularly	21%	28%
6. Listen and analyze music regularly	17%	18%
7. Evaluate performances	4%	8%
8. Connect music to other curriculum	13%	6%
9. Experience many cultures of music	9%	10%

Table 2 reflects the content of the music curriculum in WELS schools.

The data indicate that the content of music curriculum in WELS schools is limited. Singing is very important and is definitely stressed in WELS schools. But the other skills of music are seldom taught. Though the teaching of composition and performance could provide our Synod with more Lutheran composers and could provide more of our congregations with keyboard players, instrumentalists, choir directors and worship leaders, these are seldom taught.

Survey data show that more schools today have classroom instruments to use than schools did in 1984. These instru-

ments can be used to teach rhythm, melody, harmony, accompaniment, and the other elements of music. Of the schools that already have classroom instruments, few are being used. Table 3 reflects this information.

Recommendations

If music instruction is to include a greater variety in content and teachers are to consider music as their strength, the following recommendations need to be considered:

1. Because curriculum is still viewed as the greatest weakness in one third of the schools, education in the use of the most commonly used curriculum,

Table 3: Summary of Instruments Available and Frequency of Use

	percent of schools who own instrument	percent of schools who regularly teach instrument
1. Keyboard	92%	10%
2. Autoharp	33%	4%
3. Guitar	8%	0%
4. Recorder	55%	48%
5. Melody bells	15%	7%
6. Tonechimes or handbells	54%	42%

Sing and Make Music, must continue beyond MLC courses or the purchase of the materials.

2. Because many general classroom teachers are teaching music, workshops, seminars or classes on the planning and teaching of music lessons that include the nine content standards must be offered.
3. Because one-fifth of the respondents consider scheduling a weakness, and

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In some aspects of music education, the WELS has grown.

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more schools are cutting music class time, someone must be given the time, space, and resources to take charge in teaching the music classes.

4. Because less time is scheduled for music, all general classroom teachers must make music teaching time a priority. Teachers must carefully plan music lessons so that each minute of music time is put to full use.
5. Because many schools have classroom instruments that are not being used, workshops or classes on playing, using, or teaching classroom instruments must be offered. Then teachers will be better able to put them to use for themselves and their

students.

6. Because one-third of the respondents consider their faculty's music ability weak, where a school budget provides money for further education, at least one faculty member should pursue further music education. This teacher can then serve as a consultant for other faculty members in that school or other area schools.
7. Because Lutheran liturgy, heritage and hymns are seldom taught in WELS schools, teaching resources must be created for all grade levels. Sample lessons and a sequential, leveled curriculum could be included in these resources.

In some aspects of music education, the WELS has grown. More schools have a written curriculum to follow and are putting it to use in classrooms. Singing has been a strength of WELS schools and continues to be one. Finally, more classroom instruments are available to teachers and students.

Many weaknesses, however, remain in the music education of WELS students. Teachers must include a variety of music skills in their curricula as found in national standards to meet all of our children's and congregations' needs. Time must be provided for the teacher to prepare and teach music classes effectively. Available classroom instruments need to be put to greater use. Opportunities for further music education must be provided and teachers must take advantage of them. Then we can say that we have faithfully made use of the resources available to us to prepare our students as the future music

leaders of our congregations. May the Lord bless these efforts to serve Him and his children. ❧

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Confirmation Instruction — Smooth Sailing or Foundering?

Gerald Kastens

How would you describe parent involvement in the confirmation instruction of your congregation? Is it a smooth sailing ship or one that's foundering? Before you answer, consider these WELS youth and family trends:

- Less than half of all WELS members attend church on any given Sunday.
- Fourteen percent of adult members participate in formal Bible study.
- By age 19, approximately one-third of our youth attend public worship in any Christian denomination as often as twice a month.
- It is estimated that 5% of our WELS homes have daily devotions.
- Only 42% of all WELS congregations offer Bible class opportunities to their youth after confirmation.
- Six percent of WELS teenagers attend some type of formal Bible study.

Outwardly, this data indicates that youth confirmation in many WELS churches seems to be foundering or headed in a direction other than the one spelled out in the Savior's Great Commission. The sad fact is that the influences of our post-Christian society have invaded Lutheran homes leaving

many parents with the attitude that nurture is the business of the church, not the home. It is also painfully apparent that a growing number of our confirmands are getting little or no spiritual nurture in the years right after they are confirmed.

It shouldn't surprise us that adults and teenagers think that confirmation is the end of formal Christian training. In most churches, the final year of instruction for eighth graders ends with a grueling oral test in front of their family and congregation, followed by a worship service where each youth wears a gown and flower. After the service, families throw a huge party and lavish their eighth grader with gifts and money. Where there are Lutheran elementary schools, the end of the year is marked by another ceremony with all the trappings of a high school graduation. It's no wonder that young and old alike have the idea that eighth grade is the end of all formal instruction in God's Word.

The cry for greater parental involvement seems to be universal. Declining attendance in worship, low Bible class participation, a lack of Bible study at

home are parent problems that affect the whole family. In most cases, parents need admonition, encouragement, and support if they are going to exercise their role as a child's most influential spiritual guardian. The examples that follow are real-life, not imaginary or the ideal. They are examples of the efforts of others to deal with the problems we've identified. That struggle together with a dogged determination to do better has led them to search for solutions.

A church in Michigan requires at least one parent to accompany their child to every confirmation class. Confirmation classes for all children (LES and public school) are scheduled at a time that is convenient for everyone. Parents sit with their child in class. This approach encourages parents to be responsible for their child's assignments and provides a review of basic teachings of the Bible.

One WELS church asks parents to participate in parenting classes where the history, purpose, and practice of confirmation are explained. At this time, a consultation with the parents and confirmand is scheduled to discuss a spiritual growth plan for the family. Midway through the year, another conference is held to evaluate classroom progress, church and Bible class attendance, and parent involvement.

For ten years a Wisconsin congregation has been teaching parents confirmation lessons so that they are equipped to teach the material to their sons and daughters. Every three weeks the pastor meets with the children to review, listen to memory work, and test

the children on their understanding.

A Milwaukee congregation has decided to delay confirmation until the beginning of ninth grade. Confirmands complete their instructions by the end of eighth grade. The teenager and parents are asked to meet individually with the pastor in the coming fall to discuss if the young person is ready to be confirmed. Church and Bible class attendance for the summer months are discussed. The teens are confirmed and accepted into membership along with any adults who have completed a Bible Information Class. Little emphasis is placed on all the trappings that traditionally accompany confirmation in Lutheran churches.

For a number of years, a central Minnesota congregation has held its confirmation at the end of ninth grade. In this case, teenagers participate in three years of instruction beginning at seventh grade.

One pastor requires parents to listen to all memory work and to administer an oral test to their child at the completion of each unit of instruction. Parents meet with the pastor at the beginning of the school year to receive information and training. Parents do grading and evaluation.

A northern Wisconsin congregation has established a mentoring program for confirmands when parents find it difficult or impossible to be involved. Each week senior members of the congregation meet with youth to practice memory work and review lessons. One of the unexpected benefits of this initiative is that teen and mentors have devel-

oped friendships and stayed connected throughout high school.

In one central Minnesota church, parents are asked to make a promise during the worship service on Confirmation Sunday to make every effort to help their teen remain faithful in attending Bible classes and church.

Many WELS churches have demonstrated concern about equipping and supporting parents to nurture the faith of their teenage sons and daughters. In these places classes are offered that have themes related to the family: for teenagers—“Dealing with Your Parents”; for parents—“Understanding Your Teenager”; and for parents and youth together—“Communicating in the Home.”

To compass the whole of Christian doctrine into a two- or three-year educational program is similar to the stuffing of geese. The new Christ-Light® High School Curriculum from Northwestern Publishing House offers a wealth of Bible study materials for the years after grade school. With the introduction of the teen curriculum in the spring of 2001, congregations can begin to make teen spiritual growth a priority. Each church can expand their expectations of teenagers by establishing and maintaining a birth through 12th grade program of instruction in God’s Word. The questions that remain unanswered are: Will our churches and schools respond to the opportunity or will it be “business as usual”?

Can this ship be righted? One of the greatest challenges facing Lutheran churches is dealing with change.

Tradition is both our greatest strength and our greatest weakness. Change for the sake of change is not progress. But change to fill the spiritual needs of teens living in a contemporary society is our mandate. Leading parents and their children into a lifetime of growing in the Word is just what Jesus meant when he called Peter, and us, to feed his lambs.

The Great Commission implies that Christians are ready for action. The debate for change needs to continue as well as encouraging others to look for ways to do a better job of nurturing the faith of youth and parents. Make no mistake about it; this work will always be work. It will always take time. And nothing will ever replace the Spirit’s power or the Spirit’s tools. ✠

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WELS WORDS: Stewardship

Gregory Kieta

My favorite section of the newspaper is the comics. I usually read the whole paper, but I always read the comics first. A couple of years ago, the comic strip Sally Forth had a series of cartoons about a game called “Buzzword Bingo,” which was played during meetings. Each player would listen for “buzzwords” like “proactive” or “user friendly” and mark them down on a sheet that was set up like a bingo card. Whoever got a line completed won.

Obviously, the point of the joke was that in many offices, they throw “buzzwords” around until they become a kind of jargon. Sometimes, it almost becomes a new dialect that the uninitiated simply can’t understand. That’s true about church bodies as well. In the next few issues of *The Lutheran Educator*, I would like to take some time to address “WELSpeak” that maybe isn’t always that clear to our members. I’ve spent the last eight years in the ministry, and the seven years before that attending Synod schools. Like many of you, I am so steeped in WELSpeak that I probably don’t even know how to speak English any more. I hope that our reflection on these words will make us

better servants of God’s people.

The first WELS Word I want to consider is “stewardship.” Stewardship is a “church” word. I don’t often see it in the newspaper or hear it on TV. Yet we pastors and teachers use the word constantly. I wonder how many people we lose when we use a word which doesn’t have very much meaning outside our synodical circles?

Stewardship is a fancy way of saying that nothing that we have really belongs to us. It all belongs to God. My house, my bank account, my church — even my wife and children are really only mine in the sense that God has loaned them to me, rather than to somebody else. God expects me to take good care of the things that he has loaned me. A couple of years ago, I was in a car accident. While my van was in the shop, a member loaned me a car. If I would have returned that car with trash scattered all around the inside, the fuel gauge on empty, and with a really bad smell coming out of it, most people would say that I didn’t take very good care of it. I wasn’t a good steward of something that was loaned to me. Christian stewardship begins by recognizing that all that we have on loan

Kieta

from God. We want to be sure that we take good care of what belongs to him.

What has God loaned us? First and foremost, God has loaned us his Word. The Holy Scriptures are a rich treasure that belongs to God. Not everyone on this earth has them. Not everyone who has them takes care of them. We take care of the Bible when we revere it as God's own Word. We are good stewards of the Word when we take the time to study it and to understand what it says. People whose Bibles have never been opened are no better stewards of God's Word than are people who say that they are Christians, but who don't actually believe what the Word says.

In the same way, God has given us the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We take good care of them when we practice them the way Jesus instituted them, and when we are faithful in using them. People who can't remember the last time they came to the Lord's Supper are not taking good care of God's gifts. It may seem like being a good steward of baptism is making sure that all of the children we are responsible for are baptized. That's true, but it doesn't go far enough. Baptism is not a one time "dunking" and then it's over. Baptism gives us Christ, it washes away our sins and creates faith in our hearts. Baptism is a gift that God intends for us to use on a daily basis, by constantly remembering what he did for us in it, and drawing peace from that gift. If we never even think about our own baptism, are we being good stewards of it?

Our congregation, and especially the

children, is a loan from God which he expects us to take care of. Our stewardship of our congregation begins with our stewardship of the Word and sacraments. In order to teach the Word, we must be committed to studying it and to

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Good Christian stewardship begins for us at the cross and is really an opportunity to express our trust in what God has already done for us.

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growing in our knowledge and our faith. Even though most children in a Lutheran elementary school haven't been confirmed yet, their teachers have, and part of teaching good stewardship of the sacraments is setting an example in gratefully receiving them. How can the children we teach treasure their baptisms if we don't treasure our own? How can they daily drown their Old Man and cling to the Savior who died for them, if we don't teach them that?

God has given us many other gifts, too. Our families certainly should be

high on our list of things that God expects us to treat as though we will have to return them to him some day. God has given each of us a certain number of days on this earth, a certain number of spiritual and natural gifts to be used, and a certain amount of material wealth. All of it really belongs to him. How we use it is what we call “stewardship.”

But that isn’t the whole picture. If it were, the idea of Christian stewardship would probably make us more than a little uncomfortable. Who can claim that he or she has been a good steward of God’s Word? How many of us can claim that we know that Word as well as we should or that we have been as faithful as God wants us to be in teaching it to others? What pastor or teacher can honestly say that he or she has always treasured the congregation God has loaned to him or her? Who can truly claim that he or she is as generous with his possessions and his time as God wants us to be? When we hear God’s demand that we be more generous, more faithful, more forthcoming, well, we have to hang our heads and admit that we often just don’t measure up. We don’t deserve his generosity. We don’t deserve the richness of the gifts that he has given us.

But the wonderful thing about God is that he forgives us for not being good stewards of what he has loaned us. He forgives for Jesus’ sake. Jesus practiced perfect stewardship of all of God’s rich gifts to him. Again and again, we see Jesus treasuring the gifts that God had given him—whatever possessions Christ

had, whatever time was available to him he devoted to the Lord first. Jesus lived for the people around him—literally. Love caused him to come down to this earth and self-sacrificing love drove him to the cross for us. Christ’s devotion to the Word and to his church was without comparison. God has given to us that perfect love of Christ. What is more, God has given us the death that Jesus suffered on the cross as the payment for our own failures in this area. God punished Jesus because we are not good stewards. God tells us that all of those failures are wiped away — they no longer exist!

Good Christian stewardship begins for us at the cross and is really an opportunity to express our trust in what God has already done for us. It is also an opportunity to express our trust in what God promises that he will do for us in the future. God has promised that he will multiply all of our gifts to him. He has promised that he will bless us more richly than we can imagine for all that we devote to him. Stewardship is knowing that promise of God and trusting it enough to act on it. We can only know and trust that promise if we are in contact with the gospel, the power of God to believe and to live according to God’s promises. All Christian stewardship begins and ends in God’s Word. ✠

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Of Franzmann, WELS, and the US Census

John Isch

Between 1990 and 2000 the population of the United States increased by 13.2%, from 248.7 million to 281.4 million. This growth of 32.7 million people represents the largest census to census increase in United States history.

In the same time period the baptized membership of WELS decreased by 3.8% and the communicant membership decreased by .4%.

The Word does not fall on receptive ears and the church is well aware of what Martin Franzmann once wrote:

*Of all His scattered plenteousness
One-fourth waves ripe on hill and flat,
And bears a harvest hundred fold:
Ah, what of that, Lord, What of that.*

We can also reflect on whether our churches are located in growth areas of the United States. The availability of comparisons of the 1990 and 2000 census data permits this reflection. The observations below are based on the census data by counties in 1990 and 2000. All WELS congregations operating in 1990 and 2000 were matched with the county in which they are located. With this data set, it is possible to match communicant and baptized membership in each congregation in

1990 and 2000 with the 1990 and 2000 population of the specific county in which the congregation is located. We will look at two questions: Are the congregations of WELS still primarily located in rural areas? How did the growth (or decline) in the membership of WELS congregations match the growth (or decline) in the population of the county in which those congregations are located?

Is WELS still a rural church?

There are 3141 counties in the United States. The largest county is Los Angeles county (9,519,338) in California; the smallest is Loving County, Texas, with 67 people. We have WELS congregations in 470 of those counties (15% of the total). These “WELS” counties contain half of the US population. The average size of the WELS county is around 300,000 persons compared with the average US county size of 90,000. These numbers are a bit misleading because the way the counties are distributed by population is very uneven. There are a few large counties that skew the averages. When distributions are strange like this, it sometimes is useful to use the median, the middle score, rather than an average. The median size

of counties in the US is 24,000 and the median size of WELS counties is 88,000.

Another way of looking at county size is what geographers call a SMA. A SMA (Standard Metropolitan Area) is a county (and adjacent counties) that has one urban area of 50,000 or more population. Using a county population of 50,000 or more (which is not the same as a SMA) as a rough definition of urban living, there are 914 counties in the US of that size or more. We have WELS congregations in one out of four of those counties (266). Two-thirds of our congregations are in a county of 50,000 or more. These congregations include three-fourths of our baptized members. In the US as a whole, 85% of the population lives in a county of 50,000 or more. Is the WELS still a rural church? Hardly, but in comparison with the total US population, there is a somewhat greater proportion of our members living in small town/rural America, but we are not Lake Wobegone.

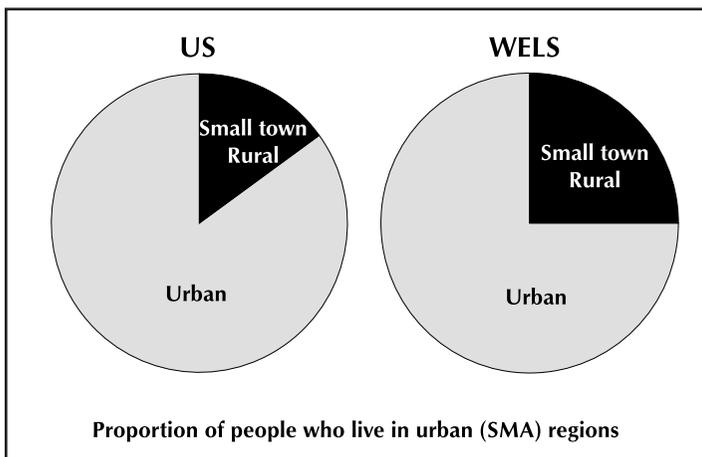
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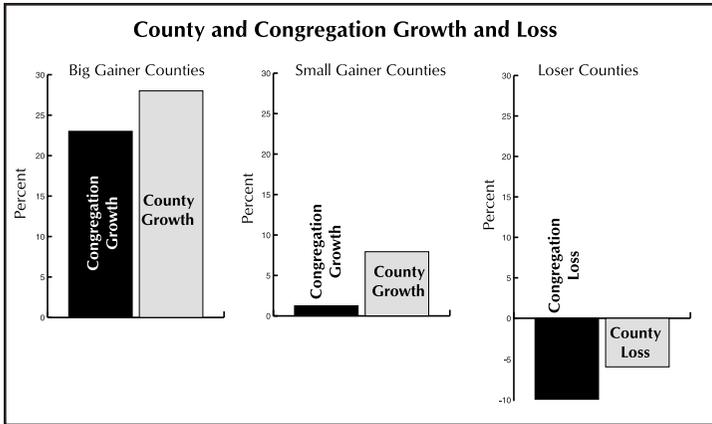
gregations match the growth/decline of the counties in which they are located?

The 3141 counties in the United States grew by an average of 11.1% (even though the absolute growth rate—paragraph one—is 13.2%: math is fun!). The median gain in the US counties was 8.4%. Among US counties, 677 counties lost population, 12 hung steady, and 2452 gained. In our “WELS” counties, the average gain was 13.5% with the median at 10.4%. There were 65 WELS counties that lost population and 406 that gained. This doesn’t tell us much except that, on average, counties in which the WELS is located grew a bit more than did all counties in the US.

To make this more complicated, we make three groups of counties: big gainer counties (increases of more than 15.3% in population, small gainer counties (increases of between 0% and 15.3%, and loser counties (loss in population between 1990 and 2000).

First, a little better than a fourth of our communicant members (28%) live in big gainer counties, better than half (56%) our communicants live in small gainer counties, and 16% of our communicant members live in loser counties. (This is not a comment on the fine people in these counties; the author lives in a charming, but, alas,





a loser, county.) If your congregation was located in a big gainer county, the congregation grew an average of 23% compared with an average county gain of 28%. If your congregation was in a small gainer county, your congregation gained, on average, 1.4% in its communicant membership, but counties in this small gainer category gained 7.7% in population. And if your congregation was in a loser county, it lost 9.7% in its communicant membership while the county itself lost 5.4% in population.

So when our congregations are in counties in which the population increase is particularly strong, our congregations grow less than average and when our congregations are in counties that have smaller gains, our congregations also gain fewer people. And when our congregations are in counties that are losing population, these congregations lose even larger percentages of their members.

In fact, there is a very weak correlation between county rate of growth and congregation rate of growth. The correlation between both baptized and com-

municant growth and county rate of growth is .13. (For those whose math skills have long left them, a correlation can vary between -1.00 and +1.00 with zero being no correlation. A correlation of .13 is quite small and it means

that of all the things that can explain why a congregation grows, the rate of growth in the county explains only 2% of that growth. Simple?)

It should be noted that one particular county may be affecting these results. One county that has 47 congregations of WELS lost about 2% of its population over the decade. The congregations in that county with some 25000 communicants lost 16% of their communicant membership and 18% of their baptized membership in this time period.

Thus numbers pile on numbers. Perhaps it is better to return to Franzmann:

*Preach you the Word and plant it home
To those who like or like it not,
The Word that shall endure and stand
When flow'rs and mortals are forgot.*

*Preach you the Word and plant it home
And never faint; the Harvest-Lord
Who gave the sower seed to sow
Will watch and tend his planted Word.*

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Teens: Sleep, Dreams, and Education

Rhoda Wolle

We've all heard the advice to get a good night's sleep before a major test. According to recent research conducted at Harvard University, what is really important is to get a good night's sleep the night after one learns a new concept.

The brain performs primarily two types of mental activity during sleep. The first type of brain wave activity is referred to as SWM or slow wave movement. The second type of brain activity is REM, rapid eye movement. Throughout the night a sleeping person progresses through a series of cycles.

The first half of the night's sleep consists primarily of SWM. That is when a person has the feeling of very deep sleep. For example, while one is sleeping the telephone rings, waking the person. Upon awakening it takes a few moments for him to determine his whereabouts.

The second half of the night consists primarily of REM, this is also the part of the night filled with dreams. During REM a person's brain activity is very similar to being awake. It is during this dream time that the mind is trying to make sense of many of the day's activities. It is sorting through all of the new information and trying to make connections with past schema. Studies show that in order for the mind to make these connections effectively one must have at least six hours of sleep. During

the study, participants were taught to do a simple task that consisted of recognizing patterns on a paper. Participants showed marked improvement on this task after they had received a good night's sleep (Stickgold et al. 2000). Another way to understand this concept is to consider a pianist who practices for hours attempting to play a musical passage correctly. Eventually she gives up and goes to bed. The next day she sits down at the piano and plays the piece perfectly. During sleep, her mind was rehearsing the piece and forming the correct neural connections from her mind to her hands. In order to perform up to her potential she needed a good night's sleep. In the same way, each student must also receive a full night's rest in order to give his brain the necessary time to assimilate information.

We live in a culture that values ambition and drive, even at the cost of losing sleep. Too much sleeping is considered to be a trait of someone who is unambitious or lazy. We may often be sending our teens the wrong message. The average adolescent mind should receive at least eight to nine hours of sleep per night. Teenagers are also on a different biological time clock due to changes that are occurring in their bodies caused by puberty. Many young children, prior to their teen years, are able to wake up bright and early and are eager to start watching early morning cartoons. Not so with the adolescent.

Studies show that there is an actual change in the timing of melatonin excretions during the teen years, and with this change comes the tendency to stay up later and also to sleep later into the morning (Carskadon et al. 1997). Many teens stay up late on weeknights and wake up early for school. When the weekend arrives they sleep 12 hours trying to catch up on lost sleep. This sleep pattern is not as effective as averaging 8-9 hours of sleep per night. So even though our young people are not tired at 10 or 11 P.M., they should be encouraged to at least go to bed and rest until they fall asleep.

Why do high schools begin at times that are contrary to the biological needs of our teens? Unfortunately, the reason we start high school at around 8 A.M. has origins that are unrelated to effective sleep habits. The origination of our morning schedule has more to do with transportation issues, such as bussing, than it does with the sleep requirements of adolescents. Most sleep experts agree that starting high school classes between 9-11 A.M. would be much more advantageous academically, but the repercussions are far reaching. This not only complicates transportation it would also affect co-curriculars as well as work schedules and social time.

Power napping is another area that doesn't fit well into our school schedule, but is academically rewarding. It turns out the Spanish custom of an afternoon siesta has positive attributes. Research shows that a 15-35 minute power nap can dramatically refresh one as well as increase capacity for memory

and recall (Stickgold 2001).

In conclusion, as parents and educators we need to ensure that our students are getting enough sleep. Many teens get into the habit of getting too little sleep during the week and then trying to catch up on the weekend. This is not as effective or productive as averaging eight to nine hours of sleep per night. Academic achievement requires a regular and consistent time to dream and assimilate new information. The brain is a remarkable organ, a most powerful and mysterious creation. We have spent centuries attempting to understand the masterpiece God created in the mind. The more we learn about the brain the more we have reason to join with King David and proclaim, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made, your works are wonderful, and I know that full well." Psalm 139:14 ☛

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Brown, William H. and Victor H. Prange, *Not Unto Us: A Celebration of the Ministry of Kurt J. Eggert*. Milwaukee, Northwestern, 2001. Reviewed by Wayne Wagner

Pastor Prange and Mr. Brown have given to the WELS a valuable resource by compiling the contents of this new publication from Northwestern Publishing House. Rev. Carl H. Mischke concludes the Foreword by writing, "May this volume serve as a fitting tribute to the dedication of a man. But above all, may it serve as an incentive to praise and thank our gracious God for giving this man to us 'for such a time as this.'" This volume does much more than that. It provides essential reading for anyone concerned with Lutheran worship, especially within the WELS and especially at times such as this.

The book can be roughly divided into three sections. The first contains selected writings by Kurt J. Eggert. The second includes reflections on various aspects of Eggert's life and ministry, on his contributions to Lutheran worship, and on worship practices in the history of the WELS. The third is a narrative chronology of the development of *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* (CW).

Part One: A sampling of writings by Eggert

The sampling of Eggert's writings includes selections from newsletters that Eggert edited, the *Northwestern Lutheran*, and the journals *Church Music* and *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. Although these writings come from sources published between 1958 and 1993, anyone who is serious about characteristics of true Lutheran worship can easily find their relevance when considering worship in the WELS at the beginning of the 21st century. Eggert writes with a concern for retaining the best in worship that has been a part of the Christian Church even before the Reformation and making it live in the present.

For example, while writing specifically to encourage the use of the Propers in WELS services, Eggert presented four principles that apply to Lutheran worship in general. They are worth repeating, including his own emphases in italics.

- ❖ Lutheran worship is *scriptural* in content and gospel-oriented.
- ❖ Lutheran worship is *congregational* in nature, involving the whole body of worshipers as active participants.
- ❖ Lutheran worship is *liturgical* in form,

retaining the historic liturgies of the Western Church and the organizing principle of the church year.

❖ Lutheran worship is *artistic* in expression, utilizing all the resources of the arts in interpreting and illuminating the content of the worship.

He continues, “There is a certain pri-

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Eggert’s discussion of the meaning of “contemporary” has much to say to those among us who are concerned about being the church of today, not of yesterday.

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ority for these principles, but Lutheran worship is at its best when *each* of these principles is allowed proper expression. History teaches us that this balance can be rather easily upset. Each age must wage its own struggle to retain it” (pp. 25-26). Most certainly a case can be made that the WELS is in a struggle to retain these principles and complete balance even now in many congrega-

tions as evidenced by what one hears of entertainment-based contemporary worship practices and music in WELS churches, of statements regarding the irrelevance of historic liturgy to visitors and members, or of mediocre presentations of music and other arts in worship.

Similarly, in regard to the use of the canticles in worship, Eggert writes, “A third reason for full use of the canticles by the congregation relates to artistic considerations, or rather to Christian and specifically Lutheran attitudes toward the arts. If it is indeed a truly Lutheran point of view that the arts are God’s good gift to us, then it seems strange that we can get so excited about publishing, promoting, and singing pop ‘creations’ that say next to nothing, while at the same time consigning songs like the canticles to the worship museum through our nonuse!” (p. 32)

Eggert’s discussion of the meaning of “contemporary” has much to say to those among us who are concerned about being the church of today, not of yesterday. In promoting a sense of “now” he encourages education in and about Lutheran worship. Eggert writes, “That which is old or archaic-sounding is much less objectionable if it is thoroughly understood.” He also urges supplementing our heritage hymns with “hymns which reflect contemporary life in their subject matter, phraseology, metaphors, and allusions.” (p. 37)

Unfortunately, formatting and references in the section containing Eggert’s writings are at times awkward, but this small inconvenience in no way diminishes the importance of what he wrote.

The small sampling of words worth contemplating that we have included in this review suggests that these articles are valuable reading for anyone concerned with worship in the WELS. Brown concludes the first section of the book with a brief accounting of the texts, tunes, and compositions by Kurt Eggert.

Part Two: Reflections by others

Reflections related to Eggert's life include the very personal account by his wife Ruth, an account of his leadership with The Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee, and the publishing of the newsletter *Viva Vox*.

These are followed by a brief article about hymnody and a very informative account of the history and worship practices within the WELS. The first was written by the highly respected author and teacher on Lutheran worship and music Carl Schalk. The second was written by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor James Tiefel. These essays provide fine complements to the writings by Eggert selected for the first part of the book. Again, worship leaders in the WELS would do well to read and seriously consider these two essays.

Schalk writes, for example, "In the church, words and music are not devices for emotional manipulation, nor are they tools for inducing a variety of psychological states presumably conducive to worship.... In the public assembly of Christians, to proclaim the gospel means to tell the story of salvation, or at least whatever significant part of that story the particular time, season,

festival, or commemoration might suggest. To tell the story does not mean to

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*These articles are
valuable reading for
anyone concerned
with worship in the
WELS.*

”

'tell about the story,' but to tell it, to tell the story of how God has accomplished our salvation" (p. 129).

The essay by Prof. Tiefel is most enlightening. Beginning with Luther, Tiefel briefly surveys attitudes and practices that have shaped or been a part of WELS worship history. One gains a better understanding of why we are who and what we are in worship, both good and bad, through this review. May what Tiefel observes in his optimistic conclusion to the essay continue to grow into the norm rather than the exception in the WELS in the years to come.

Part Three: *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*

The final section of the book, written by Rev. Victor Prange, records the history of CW, the current WELS hymnal. Anecdotal commentary, items from per-

Wagner

sonal journals, and quotes from official minutes of the Joint Hymnal Committee and Commission on Worship meetings make this especially interesting to read. They also provide a flavor of the process of our hymnal development that helps one to understand the challenges faced by the committee and the extensive consideration that was given to many aspects of the hymnal project. While one may not agree with every aspect of the final product, a greater understanding of the difficulties inherent in such a project may lead to a respectful appreciation. The personal style of this accounting make it very enjoyable to read in addition to being informative.

In conclusion

This collection goes far beyond fulfill-

ing the goal to provide a fitting tribute to the life and work of Kurt Eggert. In this short volume, Northwestern Publishing House has provided a valuable resource regarding WELS worship. Even a casual reading invites the reader to reflect on the status of worship in the WELS today, especially in view of the growing struggle to retain worship and music for worship that is true to Biblical theology, excellently crafted, and in keeping with the best of distinctively Lutheran and true Christian worship history while living in present times. ❧

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