

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Spring 2008

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The State & Future of Schools
in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

relationships in
congregations

Leadership
is a Key Component

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ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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reflections



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My family moved from The Dalles, Oregon, to Marcus, Iowa, in 1961, when I was four years old. Today, I continue to be thankful that the Holy Spirit led my father to accept the call to serve Trinity, Marcus, and Pilgrim, Quimby, for 16 years because the congregation had a profound commitment to Christian education. Some years before we arrived, the one-room Christian day school had closed, but the desire to ensure that the children of the congregation received a thorough preparation in catechesis, Bible history, Lutheran worship and the life of Martin Luther was carried out through the educational ministry of the congregation.

We memorized the Six Chief Parts (with meanings) of *Luther's Small Catechism*. We went to confirmation classes "every" Saturday morning from fall to spring for four years. Each summer, children, grades K-8, attended Vacation Bible School for two weeks. We had wonderful teachers, and by the end of 8th grade confirmation we were able to recite the entire chief parts and meanings in one recitation.

I remember Dad explaining the rigorous program of Christian education which our congregation sponsored: "There used to be a Lutheran school here." In fact, the one-room school remained on the church's property for years until classrooms were added to the church building.

While I thank God for the Christian education I received at Trinity, Marcus, I have often wondered: "What if? What if I would have had the opportunity to attend a Lutheran school all day, every day? What if from an early age all parts of my education would have been rooted and grounded in the Word of God, the source of all truth and knowledge?"

This edition of *Issues in Christian Education* highlights the state of Lutheran schools in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. We are reminded: "Lutheran early childhood centers ought to be communities where the grace of God in Christ is proclaimed and lived" (Christian); since 1992 "43,595 children have been baptized as a result of attending a Lutheran school" (Cochran); "We have experienced nearly unprecedented growth in [Lutheran high] schools and students over the past 10 years" (Stueber); being a Lutheran educator is the "greatest job in the world" (Juergensen). Each of the articles and editorials reminds us of the opportunities and challenges facing Lutheran education today. However, it is my hope and prayer that the edition underscores for each of us what Martin Luther said long ago:

"For the sake of the church, we must have Lutheran schools."

Please join me in thanking God for Lutheran schools. May He continue to bless all who serve in, all who learn from, and all who lend leadership and support to the ministry of Lutheran schools.

Brian L. Friedrich, President

The Greatest Job in the World

Whenever people ask me how I like my job, I always tell them I have the greatest job in the world ... and I mean it. You see, I have a passion for Lutheran schools, and since most of my career has been spent serving in or working with secondary schools, I have a particular interest and passion for Lutheran high schools. I have been blessed to serve as a teacher and coach at St. Paul Lutheran School in Grafton, Wisconsin, and at Orange Lutheran High School in Orange, California. I have also served as Dean of Students at Milwaukee Lutheran High School (my alma mater), and I currently serve as Director of Secondary Education at Concordia University, Nebraska. While much of this editorial can be generalized to all Lutheran schools, its main focus is on Lutheran high schools since that is where most of my experience has been.

One of the main reasons I enjoy my job so much is that I get to travel to many of our Lutheran schools across the country to supervise our student teachers and to develop new student teaching sites. Our student teachers are placed in Lutheran schools literally from coast to coast, giving me the opportunity to have a great feel for what is going on out there in the "real world" of Lutheran schools. For example, just in the last year or two I've visited Lutheran schools in New York, Maryland, Florida, Arizona, California, Nevada, Texas, Oklahoma, Illinois, and Wisconsin—just to name a few! Each Lutheran school is unique—they all are blessed with certain areas of strength, and at the same time they all face difficult challenges and struggles.

I have been in schools with enrollments well over a thousand students and schools with enrollments well under a hundred students (some of these schools are growing so fast the challenge becomes staying true to their mission, while other schools are doing a great job of understanding and staying true to their mission, but are facing the major challenge of developing new strategies to attract and recruit students in order to meet the bottom line). I've seen Lutheran schools with brand new buildings and incredible resources and others with "outdated" buildings and limited resources. I've been in Lutheran schools led

by principals with 30 or 40 years experience and schools led by first-year principals. I've seen schools with no student dress codes and schools with very strict dress codes or uniforms. I've visited schools in extremely affluent upper class neighborhoods and schools in lower class inner city areas. I've been in Lutheran schools where security is a minor concern and other schools that are surrounded by locked fences and security cameras. I've experienced Lutheran schools with brand new \$3,000 Smart Boards, and I've been in others still using "old school" chalk boards.

Yes, the Lutheran schools I've experienced differ in many ways, but one thing remains the same—every time I step into a Lutheran school I see and hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. I've seen this Good News modeled by teachers, coaches and administrators. I've seen it posted on student lockers and on classroom walls. I've witnessed the Law and Gospel being presented in powerful ways through chapel services led completely by students. I've seen teachers integrate the Faith in classes such as math, science, history and physical education. I've seen students studying the Word in religion classes and others organizing service projects to help minister to the physical and spiritual needs of people in surrounding communities. These things are happening every day in Lutheran schools—I know because I've seen it first hand.

My goal is not to paint some rosy, idealistic picture of Lutheran schools. Lutheran school students and faculties are certainly not *immune* to the same temptation and sin facing public school students and faculties. The difference (and the key) is that Lutheran schools have the opportunity to share the *remedy* for that temptation and sin. Lutheran schools are certainly not perfect, but one thing is certain: Lutheran schools serve a perfect God.

I'm also optimistic about the future of Lutheran high schools. At the same time we are hearing that many areas of the Lutheran church are experiencing a serious decline in numbers over the past 20 years or so, the number of Lutheran high schools and Lutheran high school students has increased significantly during that same

time span. One of the other great blessings of my position at Concordia is the fact that I get to attend the annual Association of Lutheran Secondary Schools (ALSS) conference. At each of these conferences I get to witness a great passion for Lutheran high schools modeled by individuals who have been leaders in Lutheran schools for longer than I have been alive. I also get to see that passion for Lutheran high schools passed down to a growing number of new leaders with a desire to continue the great ministry and mission of Lutheran high schools. I believe the greatest challenge facing Lutheran churches and schools is to stay true to their mission and ministry while at the same time being able to be innovative and adaptive in ways that meet the needs and expectations of a changing world. Leaders in Lutheran high schools are finding ways to meet that challenge.

The teacher education candidates I get to work with each semester are another reason I am so optimistic. If these students are any indication, then the future of Lutheran high schools is in good hands. I am amazed each and every semester at the talent, passion and leadership potential of these students. Getting to play a role in training this next generation of teachers and leaders for our Lutheran high schools is definitely another reason why I have the greatest job in the world!

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The Future of Lutheran High Schools

At our 7th and 8th grade Lutheran elementary school visitation day in September, I asked each visiting student to give some thought to this question: "What is the one main thing that you are looking for in a high school?" In other words, what is the one non-negotiable characteristic that the high school that you attend must have? They were then asked to write down an answer. Answers ranged from "good food" to "attractive females," but of the 112 students that I asked, the top three vote-getters were: 1. Quality athletics (28 percent); 2. Great teachers (17 percent); 3. Excellent academics (16 percent). "Christ-centered" education finished a distant fourth at 10 percent.

At first glance, the message seems obvious—I need to make sure that my school has quality athletics, great teachers and excellent overall academic programs. That's what the kids are looking for, and Denver Lutheran High School won't appeal to them unless we have those things. In light of the fact that more and more eighth graders get to choose (or play a large role in the decision) where they will attend high school, it seems obvious that we need to be a "school of choice" for our potential customers.

This is also the message that resonates from the school ministry branch of the LCMS. Pick up any book on "making schools excellent" and the message is the same: that for Lutheran schools to survive they must become schools of choice—that they must become schools of excellence or die. And while I do believe that thoroughly Christian schools are committed to excellence (to steal a phrase from Dr. Gene Frost in his book, *Learning from the Best—Growing Greatness in the Christian School*), I wonder if we are missing the boat. While we stare in the face of the competition of public, charter, and high-level private schools that have a seemingly bottomless pit of resources, I wonder why we aren't really selling the one thing that we possess that truly makes our schools different than the competition: God's Word. I am sure that every Lutheran high school in the nation promotes its "Christ-centered approach," or its "spiritual environment," or its "Christian worldview." They list those right along with the other attributes

that make their school great. But do we really boldly tell people about the power of God's Word and its benefits in the lives of our youth?

The Baptist church is selling it. Recently, high-level leaders in the Southern Baptist Church have called for an "exit strategy" from the public school system. Claiming that keeping kids in the public school system indoctrinates them in secular humanism, Darwinism and other non-Christian worldviews, Baptist families are being encouraged (or required—they are Baptists after all) to educate their children with Christ at all times. Forms of the phrase, "Either educate your children with Jesus Christ, or they will be educated against Him," are the mantra for the non-Lutheran Christian high schools. An exodus from the public schools is slowly beginning in the United States.

In an appropriately Lutheran way, we need to get on board. In light of the fact that an adolescent's brain is not fully developed until he/she reaches that age of 22 or 23, and in light of the fact that high school students are a captive audience for 35–50 hours a week, I do not believe that our church body fully recognizes the opportunity that it has been given. I do not believe that our church is preaching the value of developing with Christ through high school education. I do not believe that the majority of our churches have fully recognized that our Lutheran high schools are the very best means by which to have our youth firmly planted in God's Word.

I dream of a world where every pastor in the Colorado Lutheran High School Association would say to a family with high school kids, "I want to get your kids to daily be in the Word; they would get that at Denver Lutheran High School." I dream of a world where every church in our association would view its youth as "future missionaries in need of funding" and do what it takes to provide financial support to those that need it to attend DLHS. I pray for pastors who would boldly preach on the power of God's Word and then add, "hence, the importance of Lutheran education." I dream of a Synod where Lutheran high schools would never be viewed by churches as

just another item in the budget that money goes to support. They should be viewed as the essential ministry that our Synod has to our youth. A couple of hours a week at "youth group" hardly seems enough to combat the spiritual warfare being launched at our kids. Investing 35–50 hours at a school dedicated to using God's Word in all aspects of its operation seems far more beneficial—after all, God's Word is there.

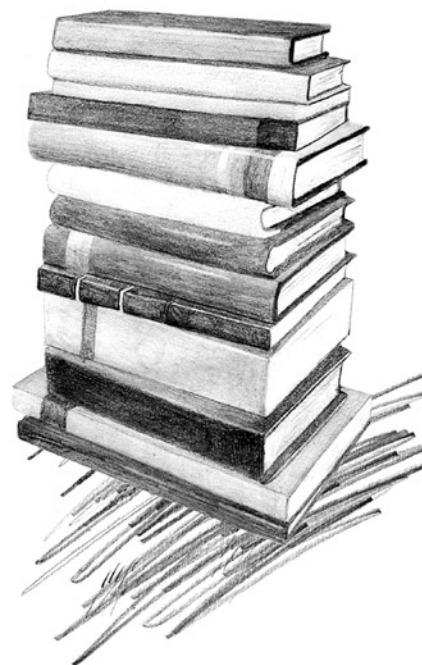
Are we selling that message? Clearly the 7th and 8th graders of the Lutheran elementary schools in the Denver area don't know or believe that the most important characteristic in a school is whether the name of Jesus Christ is spoken there. It is our job then as Lutheran high schools, but also as a larger church body and Synod, to educate both students and parents about the importance of developing with Jesus Christ in our Lutheran schools.

Dan Gehrke

Principal

Denver Lutheran High School

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The Joy of Serving in Lutheran Schools

It should come as no surprise to those involved in Lutheran schools that things have changed over the years. New and recurring family life issues, expanding technology opportunities and the declining availability of synodically trained teachers are topics to be addressed. Combine these with the great variety of curriculum resources to choose from with diminished financial support, and you begin to get the picture as seen by those involved in administering and teaching in Lutheran schools today.

Even with these challenges, the joy of serving in the Lutheran school comes from the knowledge that God's Word does not change. Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning ...," and John 3:16, "God so loved ...," still carry the message of the world created and the world redeemed by God through His Son, Jesus Christ. That message is a comfort to all who minister in Lutheran schools, for it speaks to their students and to them personally as well.

Of great benefit to our Lutheran schools is the system of higher education that prepares Lutheran teachers for our schools. Because our Concordia University System provides cutting-edge teacher preparation, teachers who provide student teaching opportunities in their classrooms stay current with the latest topics and ideas in education. Continuing education opportunities also enable teacher growth and improvement in ministry.

The past 20 years have seen the introduction and growth of National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA). Nearly 50 percent of our early childhood centers, elementary schools and high schools have achieved some level of accreditation through NLSA, and it has been the most important factor in the ongoing improvement of Lutheran schools.

When one talks with teachers, they will tell you that there is an increased demand for accountability in the education of children. Many of today's parents are more educated than their counterparts of past years, and this translates into conversations of concern and expectations for excellence in the classroom. At the same time, family life has placed new demands on children, and teachers meet young people in their classrooms with heavy hearts because of issues faced at home and in their neighborhoods. The teacher who finds a balance in great teaching and great human care is the teacher who has meaning and gives hope for students. Have children changed? No, but the world in which children live has changed. Have teachers changed? Good teachers have always cared for their students as if they were their own. God reminds us all of His call in Isaiah 43:1, "You are mine!"

School leaders have also become more business conscious, as congregations watch the rising cost of supporting a school. Tuition and fund-raising have become critical parts of the funding formula for many schools, and administrators find themselves stretched once again to address these questions. Is it any wonder that many of our teachers are reluctant to step into leadership roles? Solving this question of financial support will come only from the dedicated members of congregations and families who continue to be a faithful blessing to their schools.

Establishing and enabling good relationships with parents, co-workers, pastors and members of the congregations served by the school are key elements for those who lead in Lutheran schools today. Parents desire that their pastor and teacher know their children. Parents want to know that their children will be cared for in a

proper and healthy way. They also want them to grow—to grow in knowledge about themselves, others, and the world in which they live. It is important that those in the church and the school take time to know their families and their children from the time they enter membership in the body of Christ, which often occurs at the baptismal font.

Trusting relationships between co-workers are equally important. Having a working knowledge of the support and encouragement of others on the ministry team goes a long way in enabling a faculty and staff to provide a solid Christian education experience for children and families. When a church and school staff is centered on prayer and the saving message of the Word of God, many blessings will result.

Is there another role in life that provides more opportunities for day-to-day contact with young people and their families to share the Good News of Jesus Christ? Is there a more satisfying and fulfilling calling than to "Train up a child in the way he should go ..."? I don't think so.

That's why I'm blessed and pleased to say, "I'm a Lutheran school teacher!"

Dave Koopman

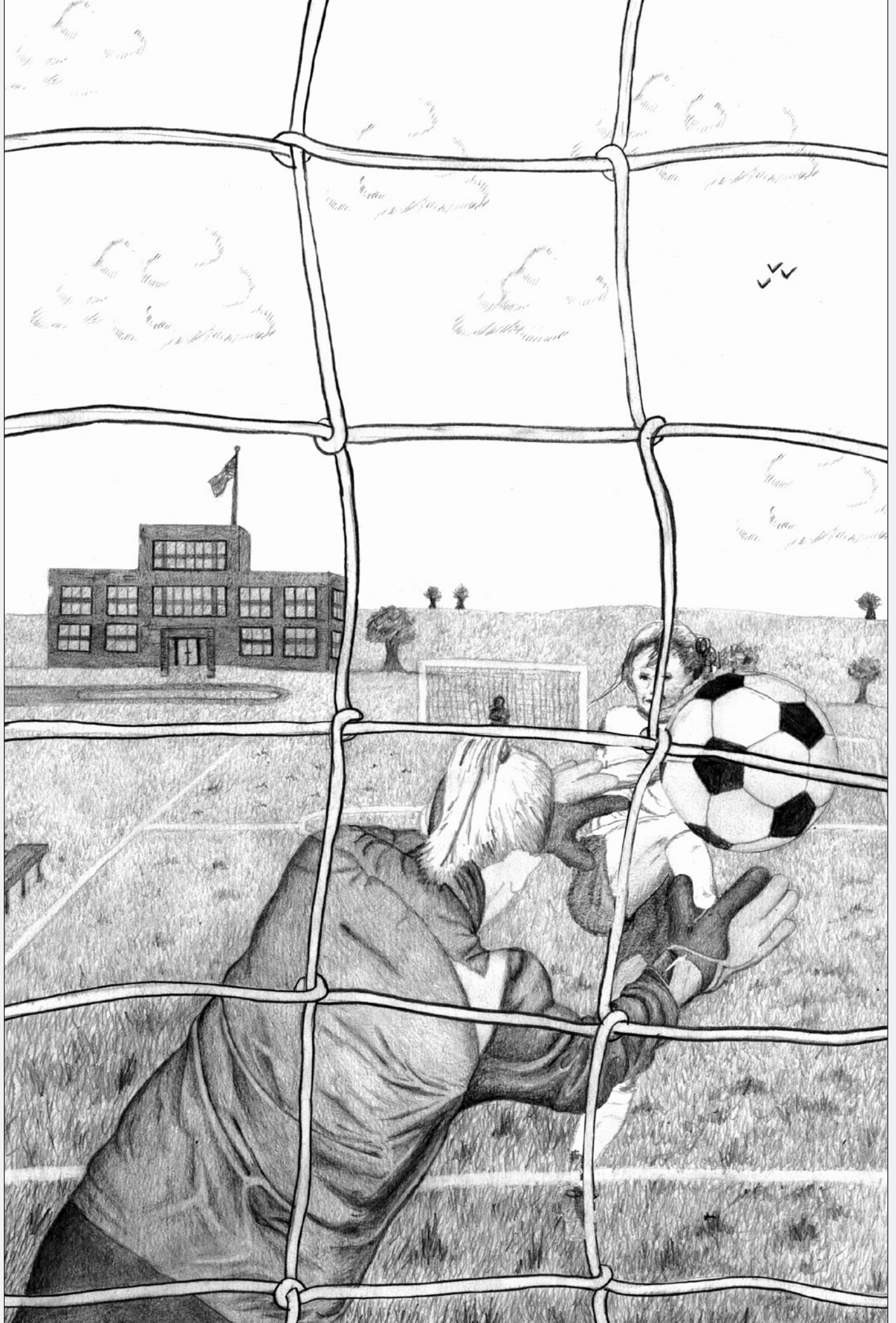
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JUDITH CHRISTIAN

The State of Early Childhood Education in the LCMS



• Illustration by Michelle Roeber •

ISSUES

Thousands of young children and their families come to approximately 2,300 LCMS campuses each year through the doors of early childhood centers. These centers represent the greatest number of schools sponsored by LCMS congregations. The most recent Lutheran School Statistics (2006-07) reveal that the number of children enrolled in LCMS early childhood programs exceeds the total number of students enrolled in grades 1-8. (Cochran, 2006) It's time for congregations to intentionally attend to these very young children and their families, with the knowledge and understanding that these groups enter our buildings needing acceptance, Christian relationships, the message of the Gospel, and scaffolding (someone to walk with them as they grow as a family centered in Christ).

The best of the denomination's centers view themselves as "family" centers. The center staff acts as extended family, daily ministering faithfully to the needs of children and their families through words and actions that reflect the extravagant love of Jesus. More than 151 early childhood centers (those not affiliated with elementary schools) have opened during the last 10 years (1996-97 to 2006-07). New early childhood programs have also been initiated on elementary school campuses. Yet this opportunity for mission and ministry is often ignored, overlooked by congregations, and left exclusively to the center's director and teachers. The diversity of children and families served in our early childhood centers, as well as the teachers and leaders within them, challenge traditional thinking about what and who constitutes Lutheran schools.

Diversity of Programs

The LCMS is ranked third among religious organizations housing early childhood facilities in the United States. (Neugebauer, 2000a). Over one-third of the 6,118 LCMS congregations sponsor early childhood

education programs (full day child care and pre-kindergarten classes). A wide range of diversity, beyond geographical differences, exists among the denomination's nearly 2,300 early childhood programs. Approximately 90 percent of the 1,018 LCMS elementary schools report having early childhood programs on their campuses. Another 1,379 are affiliated with congregations not sponsoring elementary schools. (Cochran, 2006) LCMS early childhood programs are located in all 35 of the denomination's districts, with the largest centers among those not affiliated with elementary schools found in the Northwest District (94) followed by the Texas District (84) and Michigan District (79). Each of the 2,300 early childhood centers has its own unique features.

Type of Community

A study conducted by Aid Association for Lutherans (2001) revealed that 30 percent of LCMS programs are located in small cities (population of 5,000-50,000). Another 22 percent of LCMS early childhood programs are operating in rural areas (population under 5,000). Twenty percent of LCMS early childhood programs are located in suburban areas of a large city (population over 250,000). Eight percent of LCMS early childhood programs can be found in urban areas (population over 250,000).

Type of Program

LCMS early childhood programs include full-day child care programs that enroll children age six weeks to five years, as well as half-day programs for three, four and five-year-old children. Some operate 12 months of the year while others follow the traditional school calendar. Some programs hold three-hour sessions, while others provide care and education for eight or more hours each day. LCMS early childhood programs may also provide after-school programs for elementary school age children and summer "camps" for young children. Many provide combinations of these programs. Common to all of the denomination's early childhood

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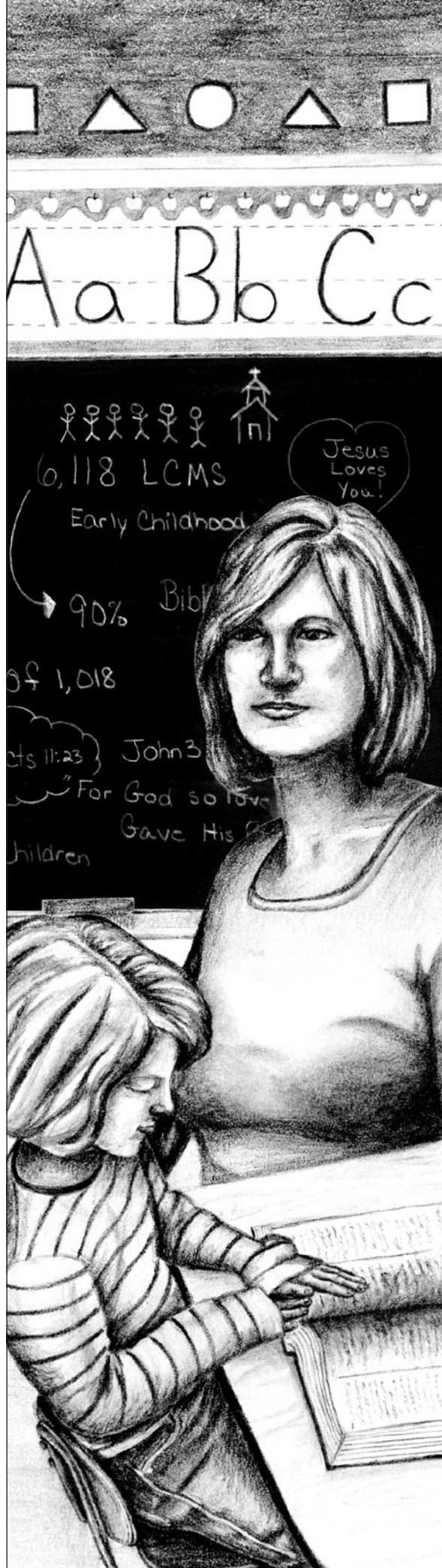
programs is the enrollment of children who are four years of age.

Self-Governance

State regulations pertaining to early childhood centers vary, and although early childhood programs are part of a national structure with primarily regional districts, there is little regulation of individual programs due to the LCMS practice of self-governance. Self-governance is reflected in the variances in the percent of programs that are licensed by the states and accredited through a certified accrediting agency. In 2001, it was found that 79 percent of LCMS early childhood programs had a state license; 31 percent were accredited through the denomination and 12 percent were accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Aid Association for Lutherans, 2001, p. 35). National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) reports indicate that the number of LCMS early childhood centers (not affiliated with elementary schools) accredited through that agency has risen from 26 centers in 2003 to 74 in 2007.

Who is Serving in LCMS Early Childhood Programs?

The rapid expansion of LCMS early childhood centers in the 80s and 90s quickly out-distanced the number of graduates available for placement through the Concordia University System. (Only 19 commissioned ministers were placed in early childhood programs for 2006-07 according to the Placement of Commissioned Ministers report provided by the Concordia University System.) In addition, low salaries (average starting salary was reported to be \$25,863 for early childhood candidates), lack of benefits, and geographic limitations of potential workers have challenged these schools to identify, hire and keep qualified administrators, teachers and other staff. As a result, approximately nine percent of early childhood educators are rostered



• Illustration by Michelle Roeber •

by the LCMS as “ministers of religion, commissioned.” (Stueber, 2001) This represents a 50 percent decrease during the 10-year period from 1991-2001.

A study conducted in 2004 found that the majority (66.6 percent) of respondents have served as directors of the programs in which they are currently serving for a period of 0-6 years. (Christian, 2004) Longevity is observed when directors, along with their pastors and congregation members, attend to shaping cultures of collaboration and excitement about spiritual nurture and outreach.

Among participants in the 2004 study of early childhood program directors, 9.3 percent reported having a bachelor’s degree, and 5.7 percent reported a master’s degree in the field of early childhood education. Only .1 percent reported a bachelor’s degree, and 7.6 percent reported a master’s degree in education administration; .3 percent reported a bachelor’s degree, and .3 percent reported a master’s degree in business administration. (Christian 2004) Although the majority of early childhood program directors do not hold degrees in educational leadership and administration, only in recent years have early childhood center directors been included in national and regional leadership development conferences through which elementary and high school administrators have benefited for decades.

Number of Children Enrolled?

God has given LCMS congregations and early childhood programs an unprecedented opportunity to nurture and shape children and their families for service in His kingdom by introducing Jesus to children at an early age. In the midst of numerical decline in other areas of children’s ministry, LCMS early childhood programs enrolled nearly 132,000 young children and their families (LCMS School Statistics 2006-07). To gain perspective, there are more children attending early childhood programs than are enrolled in grades 1-8 in LCMS elementary schools. It should also be noted

that the 18,512 children enrolled in LCMS kindergarten classes nearly matches the number of students (18,806) enrolled in grades 9-12 in LCMS secondary schools. (Lutheran School Statistics 2006-07)

What Kinds of Changes in Enrollments in the Next Ten Years Can Be Anticipated?

The average center, as of this writing, enrolls 45 children (Lutheran School Statistics 2006-07). While rapid emergence of centers as seen in the 1980s and 90s is unlikely, the recent trend of increasingly larger enrollments (43 of reporting centers recorded 190 children to nearly 500 children enrolled in their centers) will likely continue. Among these larger centers, 18 are located in the Midwest. (Lutheran School Statistics 2006-07) It is anticipated that the emergence of larger centers will continue, the majority of which will provide full-day child care for very young children. Current trends suggest this growth will occur in areas outside of the Midwestern states.

How Are Early Childhood Centers Financed?

The most recent Lutheran School Statistics report indicates early childhood centers receive 12 percent of their income from the congregation; however, a number of centers receive 0 percent support from the congregation, and many are charged with paying rent, utilities or the mortgage on the building and property. Tuition represents 81 percent of financial support with income from other sources coming to seven percent of the total budget. (Lutheran School Statistics 2006-07). This reliance on tuition to support the operational budget often limits the types of groups served by LCMS early childhood centers, and has implications for staff salaries and benefits, staff professional development and ultimately the quality of care and education of young children.

Are Lutheran Early Childhood Centers Private, Parochial or Public?

The question of Lutheran schools as private, parochial or public, so frequently voiced, suggests the need for new language. "Private" in the minds of many suggests exclusivity, elitism and often affluence. "Parochial" suggests concern about self-narrowness provincialism and limited scope. "Public" may also suggest fewer boundaries or moral and ethical standards.

Perhaps a better word for parochial would be *personal*. The best of Lutheran early childhood centers are always personal. They are not publicly held, and they are organized to create a climate and culture that encourage the nurturing of personal relationships involving children, families, staff and congregation members who are always engaged in the personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ. In the best sense, the centers are and ought to be parochial in that the people within them engage in the life and mission and ministry of the local church with which each center is affiliated, teaching Lutheran doctrine and faith practices. We are at our best when we are intimately (personally) related to the life and mission of Jesus Christ, and connected to the whole body of Christ through a local fellowship of believers.

Lutheran early childhood centers are indeed *public* in the sense that the doors are open to the community, welcoming children and families in the greater community; yet they are personal in the formation of the Christ community. These centers are also personal in that they are connected nationally and internationally with one another as they provide care and education for children of all races and cultures within their communities.

Lutheran early childhood centers are also private in that a high percentage of LCMS centers are located in middle class and upper middle class communities where parents have the financial resources to afford the cost of tuition. Rather than making them exclusive

communities, such resources ought to be tapped and released to enlarge the work of God's kingdom.

In Which Ways Are the Means of Grace Present?

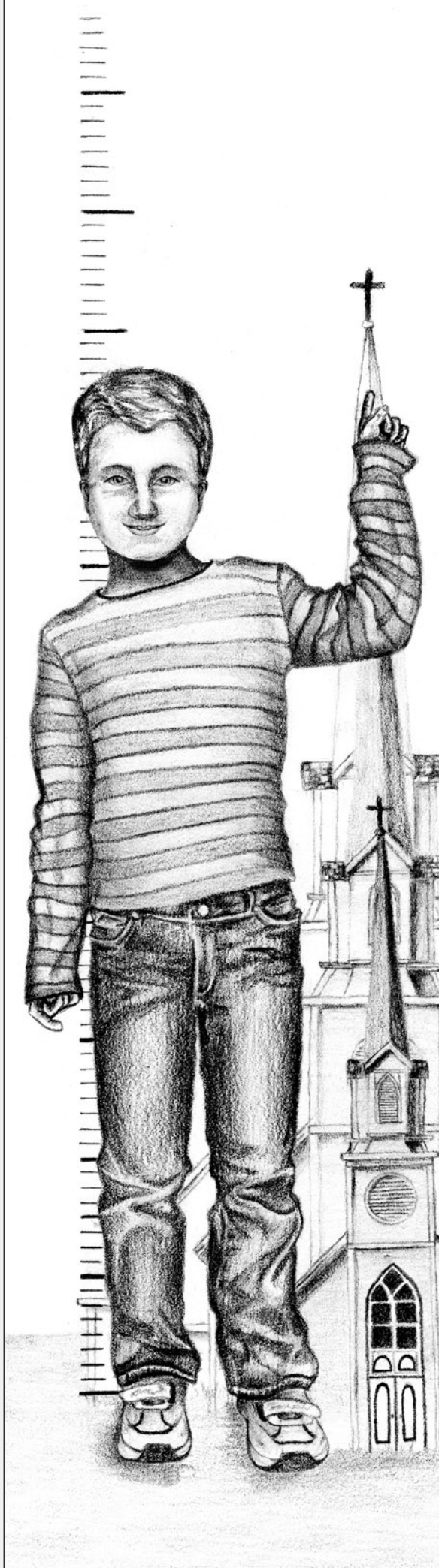
Lutheran early childhood centers ought to be communities where the grace of God in Christ is proclaimed and lived. Scripture is read and learned as teachers share the great stories of Jesus. Within these schools the baptismal life is celebrated and the baptismal mission taught. Teachers walk with children and their families in their baptismal journey and invite those who are not baptized to join in the journey.

Looking through the eyes of the young child, the exterior and interior environment of buildings and classrooms invite them to enter, giving messages of welcome and of a waiting world of learning and discovery. The climate communicates to each child and his/her family: "Jesus loves you. We have planned for you. You belong here." The language of teachers and staff is, "I love you because Jesus loves me. I forgive you because Jesus forgives me."

Can Early Childhood Centers Serve the Mission of Congregations?

Lutheran early childhood centers *are* in mission *with* their affiliated congregations and ought to be established and supported with that understanding. The question is not one of *serving* congregations, or congregations *serving* centers; rather, it is one of *being* in Christ's mission together.

Lutheran early childhood centers serve a growing population of non-Lutheran children as well as children from families who openly claim no church membership. Among the 132,000 children enrolled in LCMS early childhood programs, 20 percent claim no church affiliation, and 52 percent are reported to be non-Lutheran. It is



estimated that among the non-Lutheran group, approximately half are not active in their reported churches. Too often responsibility for outreach to these families is left solely to the director and staff.

The mission field is on our doorsteps and in our buildings. Congregations with early childhood centers have been given the opportunity to exercise God-given responsibility to provide positive firsthand experiences that by the power of the Holy Spirit nurture the faith of your children and their families. The question ought to not be one of "who serves who?"; rather it is one of "how best to unite in mission and purpose."

What Are the Relationships Between Early Childhood Centers and Congregations?

A needs assessment study of LCMS early childhood programs conducted in 1995 revealed that nearly 80 percent of LCMS early childhood programs are to operate as a ministry of the congregation. (Hall & Bushing, 1995) However, when put into practice, the study found that among early childhood centers' needs, the need for strengthening the relationship between congregation and early childhood program ranked highest. The 2004 study of early childhood program directors found that respondent directors assigned lower ratings to statements pertaining to collaborative planning with congregation staff, boards or appointed committees. (Christian, 2004)

A growing number of early childhood centers serve as mission outposts from which a congregation is established. Where there is an established congregation, the role of the early childhood center in achieving Christ's mission with the congregation must be clearly understood and articulated. It is essential that each center's staff form ministry teams with church professionals, boards and committees who are serving in the congregation.

Future of Lutheran Early Childhood Centers

John Westerhoff (1976) notes, "One of the central tasks of church education today is to help us regain a vision of God's kingdom ... Throughout Scripture the people of God, when they are most faithful, live by God's vision for them and the world." (p. 37). If LCMS early childhood centers are to thrive in our changeable world, they must hold to God's vision for them. It is here that LCMS early childhood centers (and Lutheran schools in general) are perhaps most fragile.

At a time when free public early childhood education is emerging in cities and states, LCMS early childhood centers may be tempted but cannot afford to compromise the basic tenets of their existence. Central to thriving, rather than surviving, is the uncompromising conviction that LCMS learning communities are about the mission of Jesus Christ and that they are motivated and positioned for the work God has planned for them to do in their corner of His world. The future of Lutheran early childhood centers can be found in possibilities.

There is an important place—a niche—for early childhood centers. Our culture today has largely abandoned children and youth. Our gift to children is God's gift to His people—placing all of who we are in His hands. We are to communicate to children that we are called to be His, using the talents, interests and resources He has provided to live out what He plans for us to do. To have the opportunity to fill this niche we need to employ high standards of excellence in care and education of young children. Substandard is not an option!

This is not a time to isolate ourselves from the world or to conform to the world. Rather, it is a time to set ourselves apart—being people who whole-heartedly proclaim Christ as Savior. Teachers therefore empower children, employing the beatitudes. Every director, teacher, congregation member must know and experience and be actively engaged in the theology of Lutheran education:

assimilating "followers of Christ" in a unique learning community.

Early childhood educators are called to come along side children—talking, sharing, teaching, living the gospel of Jesus Christ. Once understood and practiced, the community needs to seek out and welcome new data and design itself for shifts (change), working toward integration of faith and life.

What Are Possible Ways of Addressing Significant Challenges Facing Early Childhood Education in the Next Ten Years?

The Church today has a challenging opportunity to care for and nurture children and their families. The need is enormous in a world that is claiming our children. To seize this opportunity leaders and educators in LCMS centers must:

Be spiritually mature. They must be able to boldly articulate their faith in Jesus as Savior and translate such into a life of service.

Be courageous. They must work with a bold vision, take risks, set challenging goals and attain standards of excellence.

Define the identity of their centers and be true to that identity. Who they are and what they are about must be carefully crafted and widely articulated. They must concisely communicate the mission of the school and describe its benefits to children and their families.

Be personal. They must be invitational, practicing acts of hospitality. They must personalize the message of Jesus Christ for each child and family in a way that transcends race, culture, economic levels, family shape and family history. They must seek to surprise and delight children and adults alike, providing something beyond their expectation.

Prayerfully determine the special niche God has called them to fill. They must identify and fill a specific need in the

community and then widely communicate that specialty.

Be entrepreneurial. They must relentlessly guard against the adoption of a scarcity mentality. They must identify new funding sources and passionately communicate the mission, goals and accomplishments of their centers, inviting and exciting others to participate with their financial gifts.

Be knowledgeable about technology.

They must recognize the Internet as the primary channel for information among young parents. They must keep up with the rapid advances in technology, using it to engage in broad-based two-way communication.

Intentionally seek to nurture ministry teams. The greatest threat to Lutheran schools today does not come from external forces but from internal dissention and conflict. Effective teams, collaborations and partnerships must be attained in order to relentlessly and spiritually focus on finding God's will in pursuit of His mission. Together they engage in prioritizing, planning and strategizing.

Involve the community. The needs and demands of effective ministry require the work of a variety of hands united in purpose. Lutheran early childhood centers cannot afford to overlook the necessity of communicating their mission, goals and operational plans as well as their benefits to a wide range of audiences.

Be life-long learners. They must be supported and resourced to grow spiritually and professionally. All boards, committees, church work professionals and others in leadership positions must personally commit to participating in opportunities that expand their knowledge and worldview. They must be vigilant in their attainment of standards of excellence.

Be focused and passionate in concern for children. They must nurture a child's growing faith with such uncompromising conviction that each child will say, "This

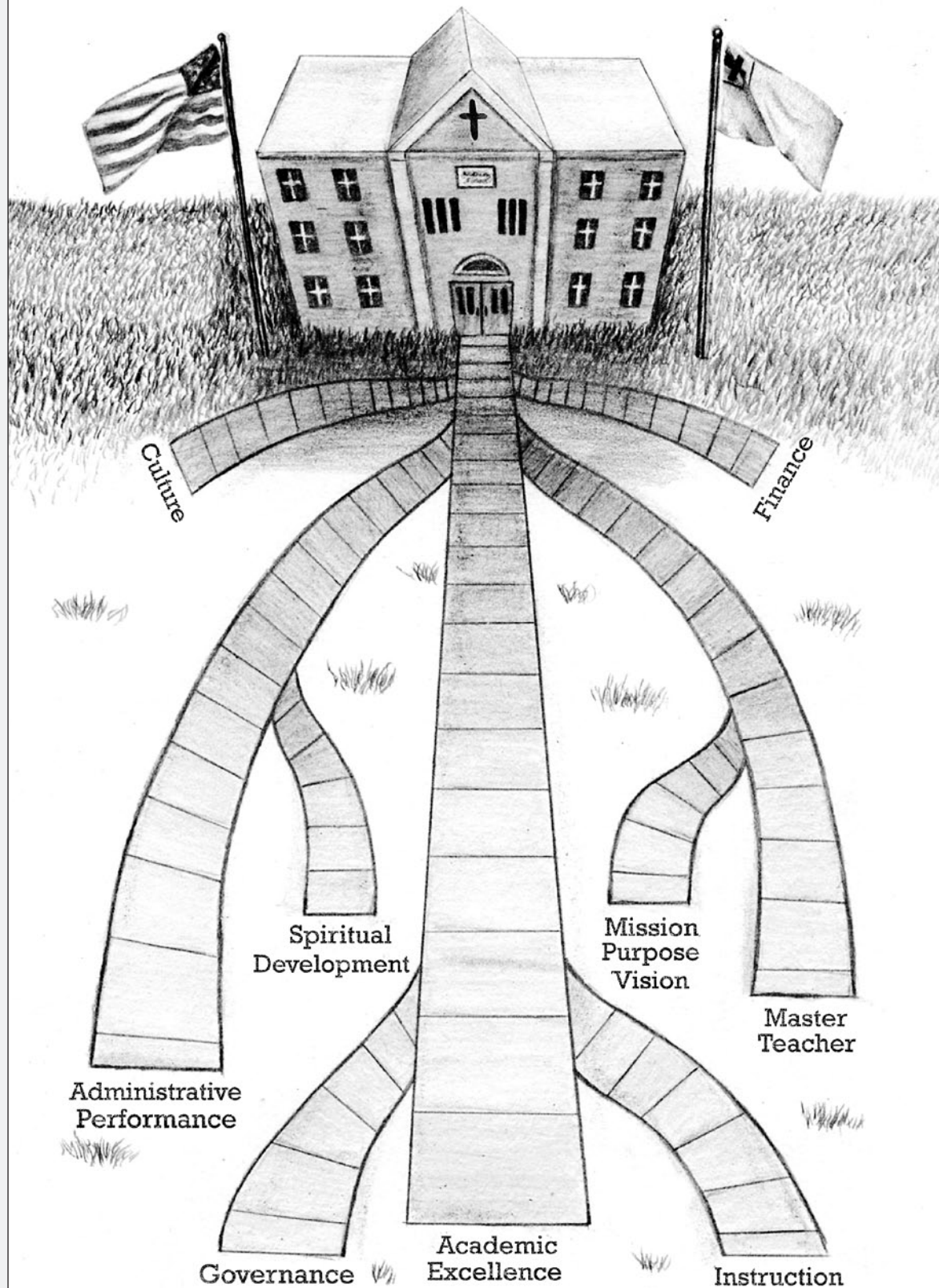
Jesus is like no other. He is Christ, the Son of God."

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BILL COCHRAN

Lutheran Elementary Schools: Opportunities and Challenges



• Illustration by Michelle Roeber •

ISSUES

Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:36-39)

Lutheran Schools Are Great Places to Grow Because ...

- They are driven by a commitment to the Gospel and focused on a mission of bringing hope and healing to students and their families.
- They are governed by board members who clearly understand their roles and focus on the vision and board policies that effectively govern the operation of the school.
- They are engaged in effective strategic planning which enables the Lutheran school to maximize its ability to achieve its mission. They utilize an accreditation process such as National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA). They develop and follow a business plan. They develop and implement a communications/marketing plan.
- They meet or exceed state and national academic standards at all grade levels.
- They help to develop a minimum of 30 developmental assets in children.
- They lead a minimum of three percent of their students to professional church work.
- They lead students to share Christ and their faith story in an unbelieving world.
- They identify future leaders for our schools.

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... and They Have Educators Who ...

- **Model visionary leadership.** They inspire a shared vision and model the way. They practice stewardship of resources, build up others and empathize with others.
- **Model servant leadership.** Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? (Robert Greenleaf)
- **Model spiritual leadership.** They study God's Word, share their personal faith story, apply Law and Gospel appropriately, exhibit a passion for ministry, act courageously, equip God's people for service, care for others, demonstrate integrity, and pray.

Some Statistics: Taken from the 2006-07 Lutheran School Statistics Report

- 3,527 (59 percent) of LCMS congregations are involved in Lutheran School Ministry (PK-12)
 - 1,018 Lutheran elementary schools enroll 130,395 students (K-8)
 - 39 percent of students are from the operating LCMS congregation; 17 percent of students are listed as unchurched
 - 3,910 students were baptized as a result of attendance in a Lutheran school
 - Approximately 1/3 of teachers teaching in Lutheran schools are on the LCMS roster
- The average Lutheran elementary school in 2006-07 had 135 students with nine teachers. The average member fee was \$1,787. The average non-member fee was \$2,948. Forty-two percent of the budget came from the operating congregation, with 48 percent coming from tuition, and 10 percent from third source funding.

In 1996-97 there were 1,031 Lutheran schools with a total of 151,946 students. Seventy percent came from the operating congregation. The number of students

baptized as a result of attending a Lutheran school: 3,446. The average fee for members was \$1,001 and for non-members, \$1,887.

In the last 10 years, over 40,000 students have been baptized as a result of attending a Lutheran school. Our Lutheran schools remain one of the best tools the congregation has to tell the story of Jesus Christ. The ministry of the Lutheran school fits very well into President Kieschnick's "One Message" focus and the *Ablaze!* movement.

What does all this mean for the future of Lutheran schools? Several factors have led to the decline in the number of Lutheran schools and the total enrollment: parents, even LCMS parents, are making choices about the education of their children; the decline in LCMS baptisms; demographics where Lutheran schools were located; and the economy. On a sad note, several of our "city schools" have been closed to become locations for charter schools or because the make-up of a school did not match the make-up of the congregation.

Lutheran schools need to become "The School of Choice" in their community. While the main reason for Lutheran schools remains sharing the saving Gospel message of Jesus Christ and nurturing the faith, an "excellent academic curriculum" must be also available. Excellence begins with National Lutheran School Accreditation. LCMS School Ministry has identified and defined nine components of an "Excellent Lutheran School."

The Nine Components and Characteristics of Excellent Lutheran Schools

1. **Academic Excellence** is characteristic of schools that provide evidence of sustained high levels of learning and performance for all students on the knowledge and skills needed for success. Students in today's Lutheran schools must demonstrate the integration of academic and personal skills into complex performances similar to real life tasks. Only with the prerequisite skills, motivation, and a sense of efficacy will

students be prepared to meet the demands of life.

2. **Administrative Performance.**

Lutheran school excellence does not occur without exceptional leadership performance. Exceptional leadership requires administrators that are dedicated to visionary leadership and empowering management. Lutheran school excellence occurs when the school community continually strives to accomplish the mission of the school to students and families. The administrator leads the team in successfully meeting or exceeding the organization's expected outcomes.

Becoming an exceptional administrator is an ongoing process of learning and growing, beginning with basic administrative competency and developing towards leadership that is both visionary and empowering. Excellent school management demands an understanding of the position, task expectations, and the outcomes established by the organization. An effective school leader must possess exceptional abilities in data analysis, staff motivation and public communication. An effective school leader must assure that marketing and public relations are effectively being accomplished. Above all else, a clear commitment to sharing the Gospel message and maintaining a proper respect of the Calling is paramount.

3. **Culture.** Excellent schools and their leaders take a holistic view of their organization. In addition to examining curriculum, analyzing test scores, surveying parent satisfaction, inventorying equipment and materials, and observing and evaluating teachers, they take an even deeper and broader view by determining and understanding the school's culture. Moreover, just as they work to influence a school's practices and processes, they strive to mold and form a school's culture.

While it is generally understood and accepted that all schools have a culture, defining a school's culture is another issue. One can find mission statements, statements of philosophy, value statements, and belief

statements but not culture statements. This may be because there is not a clear understanding of how to define the culture of a school. If asked to define the culture of your school, would you point to your written documents—curriculum, mission statements or the like—or would you begin describing the environment of the school? In any case, once you begin describing how things happen in a school such as rituals and traditions, what is rewarded and what is punished or what is celebrated and what is ignored, you are beginning to describe its culture. Simply put, a school's culture is the "way things are done around here."

Consequently, many school cultures are made up of historical patterns informally developed over time, which may not be connected with the school's written statements of mission, beliefs and philosophy. Excellent schools recognize this phenomenon, and their leaders work to align culture with the school's mission and purpose.

4. Finance. The issue of financing a Lutheran school of excellence is a far-reaching and expensive proposition. Historically, the chief source of financing a Lutheran school has been the sponsoring congregation. As the cost of education has risen, tuition and fees have become the chief source of operating revenue. With limits on these two sources of funding, a third source has become an essential means to sustaining a Lutheran school. Third source funding, often called *development*, may include annual fund drives, endowments, parent-teacher organizations, booster clubs, and solicited gifts.

The financing of Lutheran schools today is widely varied; however, issues such as adequate physical facilities, updated equipment and curriculum resources, financial aid for students, teacher salaries, and benefit packages are a challenge to address and overcome. Developing a professional business plan, removal of obstacles to financial excellence, and maintenance of a positive cash flow will lead

the excellent Lutheran school to sustaining its ministry for the future.

5. Governance. The pursuit of any Lutheran school's mission requires governance. The congregation or school's stakeholders generally consign this endeavor to a board of directors or some other governing body. This body serves effectively when it understands its purpose and function and strives to be a true servant to the organization. It must also stay focused on the future while providing guidance for what is happening today. It's easy for a board to spend all its time dreaming and debating. "When all was said and done, a lot had been said and not much had been done" accurately describes too many board meetings. Alternately, boards may get so bogged down with the details of the present that they lose sight of the future.

For a governing board to effectively provide guidance to the school, it must also clearly understand its own identity. In dealing with identity, the board strives for clarity concerning its purpose, role and mindset in relationship to other entities within the school and congregation.

Boards have specific functions. The guidance dynamic actively engages the board in the life of the school but not in the day-to-day operations. Boards must constantly learn to improve their ability to think strategically. Thus the governing board establishes outcomes for the school. The board also sets policies within which the administrator must work and defines guidelines for its own behaviors and efforts. Policies for the administrator insure ethical and prudent administration. The board then consistently monitors activity for progress toward these outcomes and adherence to other policies. All of these activities fall under the guidance dynamic.

Governance always addresses the desires of the stakeholders—those who invest resources in the school because they believe that God and His people will be better served if the school effectively lives out its mission. Stakeholders may be congregation/association members, families that pay

tuition, or others invested in the school's ministry. Whatever the case, governance always is concerned with the desires of the stakeholders and therefore must be separate from operations that serve the students and are the responsibility of staff. Effective boards think of stakeholders as the owners and realize that owners are best served when the board has aligned the competing dynamics of guidance and identity.

6. Instruction. Instruction itself has the largest influence on achievement and learning. Despite the best of intentions, instruction is not always as effective as it should be and can improve significantly and swiftly through collaborative and intentional intervention by teachers and administrators. Instruction reaches its ultimate goal when students are productively engaged in their own learning.

There is a growing consensus among education stakeholders that effectively preparing students for success will require collaborative effort and shared vision. Enhancements beyond the traditional curriculum must be incorporated into the core matrix—not just an “add on.” Excellent schools are accountable for results that matter. Student assessment is designed to measure students' knowledge, skills, abilities and beliefs. Assessment indicators validate mastery of rigorous, meaningful and relevant core and enriched content, skills and beliefs.

7. Master Teacher. Lutheran school excellence does not occur without exceptional classroom instruction. Exceptional classroom instruction requires teachers who are dedicated to the instructional process and are equally dedicated to personal professional development.

Developing master teachers requires an understanding of a teacher's relationship to the students and the instructional process as well as an understanding of the development of an individual as he or she grows professionally. It also requires an understanding of the Call to teach and the joy Lutheran educators have as they proclaim the Gospel message.

8. Mission/Purpose/Vision. A school's mission statement simply states why the school exists. The statement focuses on the distinctive purpose, outcomes, and results rather than methods that are the ultimate results of the school's work. In creating strategies to accomplish its mission, a school develops a vision that paints a picture of what “mission accomplished” success looks like.

Vision without action is diligent idleness (head in the clouds). Action without vision is stagnant busyness (noses to the grindstone). The long list of school and congregation failures includes two types of organizations. One type possesses plenty of energy, hard work and activity, but fails because it has no clear and inspiring vision of the future. The second type has a fantastic vision for a creative and dynamic future, but fails to implement a successful day-in, day-out plan of action. Schools and congregations with a healthy sense of mission are committed to both vision and action.

By aligning the vision dynamic and the action dynamic, a school is assured of implementing and living its mission. The stages of vision dynamic include experience, values and insight. The stages of action dynamic are preparation, implementation and adjustment. When they are aligned, the distinctive purpose and efforts of the organization are realized.

9. Spiritual Development. Nothing is more important in defining excellence in a Lutheran school than evidence of students growing in their relationship with their Savior, Jesus Christ. Immersed in an environment that daily models the love of Christ, children can witness what it means to be a follower of Jesus. As they learn more of Him, they will begin to respond in words and actions to the great love He has for them. This response will reveal a genuine concern and care for other people and an attitude of service-mindedness.

Spiritual development in excellent Lutheran schools aligns the dynamic of *commitment* with the dynamic of *response*.

More information on each component can be found on the Lutheran School Portal,

National Tab. Lutheran schools can take each component and use the benchmarks to determine where they stand in relationship to meeting the excellence component.

Leadership Is a Key Component

Leadership is still the key component in a Lutheran school becoming the "School of Choice." It is important for principals to understand this as they develop a vision for their school to move it forward to meet the needs of its students. The following standards have been identified as indicators of quality in schools:

- Leadership that places student and adult learning at the center of schools.
- Expectations and commitment to high standards of academic performance.
- Safe and secure learning environments for students.
- Curriculum and instruction tied to school and student learning goals.
- Collaborative learning community for adults.
- An engaged community.
- All focused on Jesus Christ!

More information on each standard can be found at www.naesp.com -- "Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do."

Our Lutheran schools with strong leadership, a strong pastor/principal relationship, and a congregation that sees the school as a valued ministry are getting larger. In the 2006-07 School Year Statistic report two elementary schools had enrollments over 800 students. In addition, three more elementary schools had enrollments over 700 students. One high school (grades 9-12) had an enrollment over 1,200 students. Two schools with grades 7-12 and PK-12 had enrollments over 1,100 students.

The Focus Remains on Christ-Centered Teaching

Lutheran schools are becoming creative in their offerings. This is evidenced by "on-line learning," "lap-top schools," Classical education, and other special curriculum

offering. In addition there have been five Lutheran schools named "National Blue Ribbon Schools."

While the above discussion is important and relevant, it is also important to keep in mind what Lutheran schools represent.

- Christ-centered teaching, rooted in God's Word and Lutheran doctrine (We teach Christ crucified).
- Integrating the Christian faith intentionally and deliberately in all areas of the curriculum.
- Staffing with teachers qualified for and active in the Commissioned Ministry of the LCMS.
- Focused on Christian outreach and mission.
- Jesus Christ forms the heart, the core, the foundation for the Lutheran Christian worldview and for the teaching that grows from it.
- What teachers teach in Lutheran schools is different because Jesus is at the heart of the whole enterprise.
- Teachers in Lutheran schools teach that absolute truth exists and that it comes from God.
- Right and wrong ... determined by God and revealed in His unchanging law.
- That evil entered the world through Satan.
- Humankind by nature is sinful.
- This world is temporary.
- God wants everyone to be saved.
- God gives the gift of salvation by grace through faith.

In the coming years if a Lutheran school is to remain healthy and grow, it will need to meet the needs of its constituents. It will need to become the "School of Choice" in the community where it is located. It will believe all students can and will succeed. The focus will remain on teaching Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The outreach potential for our Lutheran congregations that operate a school is enormous. Since the 1991-92 School Year (1991-92 through June 2007), 43,595 children have been baptized as a result of attending a Lutheran school!

ROSS E. STUEBER

Where Do We Go From Here? The Future of Lutheran Secondary Schools



• Illustration by Laura Knibbe •

ISSUES

"I'm a coach—a high school golf and basketball coach. That means more than you might think. Coaching is a job. But it's also an identity. To my players I'm a mentor, an encourager, a disciplinarian and a strategist all rolled into one. Most important, I'm an example. I show my kids how to win games and how to be people of faith and integrity. That's actually the part of my work I love best. My office is messy with papers, schedules, books, sports equipment and even a few awards, including my induction into the state's Basketball Hall of Fame. But nothing means more than watching my players at graduation, seeing them transformed from nervous freshmen into responsible young adults, ready to step out into the world with confidence." Now that she's in her forty-first year of teaching, does she plan on retiring? "Not anytime soon. I already do what I love!" Karen, Ohio's winningest basketball coach has almost 650 victories on the court, but her proudest achievement is her relationship with her students. "Watching them grow in their faith is the most rewarding thing for me."

Karen Wittrock, Lutheran High West, Rocky River, Ohio.
Guideposts, January 2008

What makes a Lutheran high school? It's the teachers! Karen Wittrock is one example of nearly 2,000 teachers in our Lutheran high schools we could have referenced for this article on Lutheran high schools. Visit with a student or graduate of a Lutheran high

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school, and they will soon start talking about the teachers who made a difference for them as they went through high school. The theme remains constant—they experienced a relational ministry focused on their faith and integrity. They experienced mentoring and modeling from teachers who have not only a knowledge of God's Word, but people who have been moved by God's Holy Spirit to a life of servant leadership in a Christian school.

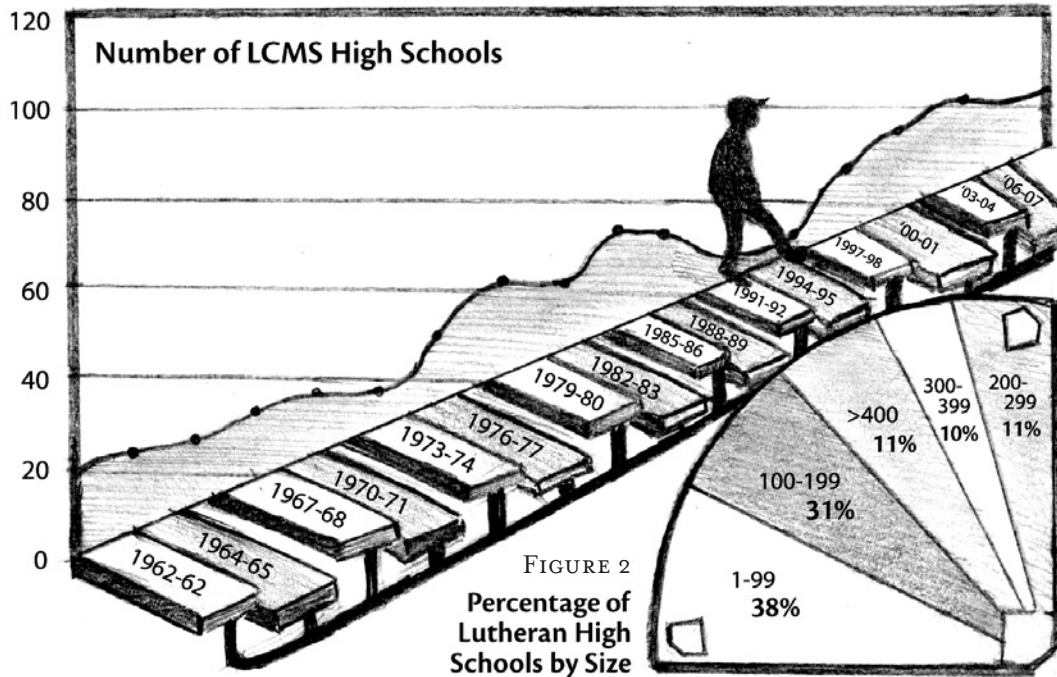
The teachers and administrators in our Lutheran high schools today come from a broad array of experiences and preparation. Many have graduated from one of our Concordia universities and always taught in a Lutheran school. Still others have taught or led in other settings, and have found a new calling in the Lutheran high school setting. Others have attended local and state colleges or universities and have a desire to use their skills in a Christian setting.

Between 50 and 60 percent of the teachers in the Lutheran high schools of the LCMS are synodically certified. They have either earned their bachelor's degree with a Lutheran Teacher's Diploma at one of our schools in the Concordia University System or completed the colloquy program in order to be certified. The number of men and women teachers is about equal.

Integration of faith and learning in all subjects and programs of the high school is central to what great teachers do in a Lutheran high school. While every school incorporates daily/weekly chapel and devotions, all teachers are expected to plan lessons and activities that integrate the faith into the educational experiences of their students. Servant events, concerts, athletic contests, drama presentations, art displays, and student council activities give evidence of this integration of faith and learning for students.

All students experience the study of God's Word through the regular course of studies. A typical student will study Old Testament, New Testament, Christian doctrine, and the application of God's Word to life issues and current topics as they progress through the

FIGURE 1



religion curriculum during their years at a Lutheran high school.

Teachers in Lutheran high schools are often multi-skilled and trained to teach in multiple subject areas. Fifty percent of the LCMS high schools have less than 130 students. In order to effectively offer a high school curriculum, the teachers in these schools are required to teach multiple courses and be involved in several school activities as a coach or coordinator.

Some schools have incorporated the professional learning communities model for staff growth and development. The learning communities model is developed after the work of Richard DuFour. The model is based on the belief that teachers will do whatever it takes to ensure that all students achieve the agreed upon standards. "A ten-year study found, whenever we found an effective school, without exception, that school has been part of a collaborative professional learning community." (DuFour).

In this model, teachers focus on four key questions. What do we want students to know, be able to do, and believe? How will we tell if they do? What will we do when students do not learn? What will we do when students do learn?

Collaboration and action research are hallmarks of this model. Great Lutheran high school teachers make collaboration and sharing central to their work in a

professional learning community. They recognize that you can no longer just each do your own thing. Sharing resources, collaborative efforts, and breaking down silos are essential in a school.

Number of LCMS High Schools

There are 103 Lutheran high schools in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod today, an increase of 38 over the last 10 years. The last time there was a large increase over a 10-year span was from 1974 to 1984, when 35 new schools were started. In each case there were actually a few more starts of Lutheran high schools, but some schools also closed during those decades. There were 20 LCMS high schools in 1962.

Of the 103 high schools, 39 have less than 100 students. Schools opened within the last 10 years account for 23 of these schools. Another 32 schools (12 opened within the last 10 years) have between 100 and 199 students. The other 32 schools range in size from 302 to 1,327 students in grades 9-12. [see FIG.1]

These Lutheran high schools are located in 25 states. Illinois has 14; California 11; Wisconsin nine; and Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, and Texas each has eight. One of our schools is in Hong Kong and another in Shanghai. Fifty-nine of these schools are located in the upper Midwest part of the country. [see FIG.2]

FIGURE 3



Other Lutheran High Schools

Relationships with Congregations

Most (88) of the LCMS high schools are operated by associations of congregations. Single congregations operate 11 of the high schools. Two are connected to our LCMS missions work and two are associations not owned and operated by congregations.

Congregations that are members of a high school association, or operate their own high school, often do so because it fits their mission. They view their school(s) as one of the strategic ways in which they can achieve their mission.

Over 19,600 students are enrolled in grades 9-12 in LCMS Lutheran high schools. That is an increase of 4,000 students over the last 10 years.

Seven of the largest 15 high schools in 1997-98 declined in enrollment by an average of

136 students per school over the last 10 years. Six of these schools are located in the upper Midwest. The other eight schools increased an average of 132 students per school. Orange Lutheran grew from 646 students to 1,327! Faith Lutheran in Las Vegas grew by 422 students during that same time period.

Trends

Enrollment patterns of the last 10 years indicate some challenges and insights into the future for Lutheran high schools. Areas in the South, West, and Asia continue to grow in opportunities for Lutheran education. Large cities in the upper Midwest have experienced the closing of many churches and schools in the last 30 years. Lutheran high schools located in these cities have been affected. Some were closed. Most of the students traditionally came from Lutheran elementary schools in the immediate area. Without those schools and congregations the flow of students to the high schools slowed dramatically.

Other high schools downsized and continue to operate. They struggle with another issue: funding. Congregational funding at the average Lutheran high school covers about seven percent of the operational costs. Almost 70 percent of the costs are covered by tuition and fees. In most of these schools the percentage of costs covered by tuition and fees is higher than in other schools. The cost per student now averages about \$8,500. The number of students enrolled in any one year can impact the budget significantly. Fewer students mean fewer dollars. Fewer dollars lead to struggles for boards and faculties. The congregations near these high schools also struggle for funding to maintain their ministries in an urban environment.

Still other high schools in this environment have survived and thrived. Three common trends emerge here. Some have moved farther from the urban area and relocated their ministry. Houston South Academy is one such example. They also expanded their ministry to include an

elementary school program in addition to their middle school and high school. The Lutheran Education Association of Houston will open a third school on the west side of the greater Houston area next year that will eventually include elementary, middle and high school education.

A second trend is that of engaging in effective marketing of the school to the community. These schools have discovered that just being there is not enough. The phrase "we are the best kept secret in the area" is not helpful to enrollment. These schools assume nothing. They engage enrollment management personnel and utilize skilled marketing experts to help get their message out to the community.

The third trend is that of leadership. Thriving schools always have great leadership. That leadership shows up in the board room, in the chief administrator's position, and in the classrooms. Great governing boards know their roles and function within established policies that give vision and identify resources to make it happen. Great administrators not only manage effectively, but they anticipate and manage change effectively.

Kouzes and Posner (1987) have documented through extensive research five key characteristics of effective leaders. Effective leaders inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, model the way, and encourage the heart. Lutheran high schools with administrators who function at the highest of these levels thrive.

Challenges for the Future

Lutheran high schools will continue to face significant challenges in the future. The School Ministry Department of the LCMS has identified 10 characteristics of excellent Lutheran schools: academic excellence, administrative performance, culture, finance, governance, instruction, master teacher, mission, spiritual development, and technology. The degree to which a school is unable or unwilling to move toward

excellence in a characteristic will determine the significance of the challenge the school will face.

Six challenges emerge as we look at our 103 Lutheran high schools today and excellence in a Lutheran high school. They are mission, spiritual development, leadership, technology, marketing and change. Some might argue that funding should be in this list. We believe that funding is an issue if you fail to address the other six.

At one point in our history many of our high schools were considered preparatory schools for church work students. Their mission was clear. Some community Lutheran high schools emerged with a mission of preparing our young people for lives of service in other vocations in addition to church work. In both cases the mission was to serve and prepare Lutheran students.

Today most of our high schools have a broad array of students. Some have a mission that invites others to know Jesus as their Savior. Some of our schools have developed in areas where the options for parents were limited to poor performing schools in the public and private sector. Doors are also opening all over Asia today for Lutheran high schools.

The first challenge for all of these schools is to keep the mission focused on a unique purpose that drives the school. It can become easy to try and become all things to all people. Whether it is to continue to develop Lutheran young men and women for service to the church and the world, or to bring others to know Jesus as their Savior, each high school must remain focused on its unique purpose.

Secondly, it is of utmost importance to provide opportunity for growth in faith by the students. During the 1990s, the Association of Lutheran Secondary Schools (ALSS) engaged Lutheran high schools in a study of faith development of young people. Schools revisited their curriculum and focused resources on the spiritual development needs of their students. Curricular changes recognized the differences for students who had attended eight years of a Lutheran

elementary school and what was needed for students who had never attended a Lutheran school until high school. The worldviews of parents and especially their teenagers challenge high schools to again engage in this study and discussion. Additional curricular shifts must be made as we teach and prepare students for 21st century skills, rather than preparing them for life with 19th and 20th century skills. The Excellence in Lutheran Schools material provides a great starting point for teachers in Lutheran high schools.

The third challenge is leadership. The growth in the number of schools in the last 10 years accompanied by the retirements of administrators in the last few years and the next five years is creating a void in experienced quality leaders for these high schools. ALSS has provided leadership training for the past 10 years in anticipation of this challenge. Boards would be well served to establish succession policies requiring administrators to develop plans for equipping and identifying future leaders for their school.

New schools present board leadership challenges. Once a new school is established and the administrator is in place, boards have difficulty moving from managers to policy leaders on behalf of the school's owners. Boards must establish regular board education agenda items to help themselves grow as policy leaders for the organization. Serving as a board member for a Lutheran high school is often a different leadership responsibility than what a typical board member has had in a congregation. All board members need regular opportunities to grow in their roles. The Excellence in Lutheran Schools material provides many helps in this area.

A fourth challenge is in the area of technology. Technology permeates the landscape today in almost any walk of life. Parents expect their schools to mirror this reality. Check out the ads in the Sunday edition of your newspaper. Observe the array of technology devices present in a home or

used by people in the workplace today. *The World is Flat*, *Wikinomics*, and *The Partnership for 21st Century Skills* point us to using technology as a lever for teaching, learning, and equipping students for life in a technological world—digital literacy. Our Lutheran high schools must embrace the effective use of technology to be recognized as excellent schools today.

Orange Lutheran Online has been the leader for Lutheran high schools in providing another instructional model for students around the world to receive a Lutheran high school education. Students at Orange Lutheran are able to take some courses in an online environment while attending the on-land classes for other parts of the school day. Students in other Lutheran high schools around the country are able to access these same courses. Lutheran high schools of the future will also need to help students learn about how to live lives of character and faithfulness in a digital world.

It is not just the online model that needs attention from teachers and administrators. All teachers and administrators must develop skills and knowledge with technology. The Ministry Technology Mentor (MTM) Project trains workers in and exposes them to technology in support of mission and ministry in Lutheran congregations and schools. School leaders learn how to develop and implement technology plans through the training received in MTM course work.

Teachers can also sharpen their skills without leaving home. Schools in the Concordia University System (Irvine, Mequon, Portland, Seward, and St. Paul) provide e-learning opportunities for teachers today. The CUENet Colloquy program continues to provide a unique e-learning opportunity for teachers who are not yet certified by the church. Concordia University Wisconsin is about to launch a Masters in Educational Technology program. CUENet is ready to launch a new program that is intended to orient non-Lutheran teachers to basics in Lutheran theology and education.

Marketing the Lutheran high school is a fifth challenge. It may have worked in *Field of Dreams* ("If you build it, they will come."), but

it does not work when trying to fill seats in a classroom today. Whether your school is surrounded by Lutheran elementary schools or is located in the suburbs or the country, all schools must effectively market themselves to their community. Experts can provide great insight into how best to market your school. Lutheran high schools in Denver, Houston, Ft. Wayne, Maspeth, LaVerne, Rockford, and Roseville are examples of schools who have found and are using experts to help them develop their marketing skills.

Everyone at the high school must view one's self as important in the marketing process. Receptionists at the front desk send a clear message either by the phone response they make when answering a call or by the greeting of a visitor who walks into the office. Teachers play an equally important role.

The last challenge is that of addressing change. We live in a world that is in rapid change. Excellent Lutheran high schools anticipate the changes around them and prepare to meet these changes without compromising their mission. Schools that thrive in the coming decade will have leaders who help their staff and community address change in an effective way. The challenge for the boards and administrators of these schools is to know and understand the process for change.

In *Our Iceberg is Melting*, Kotter outlines the steps involved in bringing about long lasting meaningful change for an organization. First, set the stage. Create a sense of urgency by helping others see the need for change. You need a guiding team with leadership skills, credibility, communications ability, authority, analytical skills and a sense of urgency.

Second, develop a vision for the future and a strategy to make it a reality.

Third, make it happen. Make sure others understand and accept the vision and the strategy. Remove barriers so that others can help make it happen. Produce some short term visible successes. Be relentless with initiating change until it's a reality.

Finally, make it stick. Hold on to the new ways of behaving.

In Conclusion

Every age and every organization has its challenges and opportunities. We have identified several for Lutheran high schools of the LCMS. We have experienced nearly unprecedented growth in schools and students over the past 10 years. This has happened at a time when congregations and Lutheran elementary schools throughout the heartland have struggled. Yet God has opened many new doors for sharing the message of God's Word and the news of a Savior for all mankind!

The technology tools that have emerged have enabled us to teach and learn in ways not even imagined 10 years ago. The mission field has come to us. It is an exciting time to be a part of Lutheran secondary education.

What makes a Lutheran high school? It's the teachers! It's the ministry that God has placed in the minds, hearts and souls of the teachers. We are there to serve students who come to us with a variety of needs and expectations. We are there to model and mentor each other and our students as we and they grow in faith and integrity. We are there to help them grow in mind, body and spirit.

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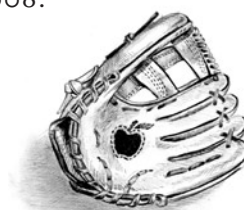
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book reviews

A Teacher of the Church.

Russ Moulds, editor

Eugene, Oregon:

Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007.

I would like to begin this review with a disclaimer. Russ Moulds and I are members of the same faculty. I have great respect for his educational expertise and dedication to the mission and ministry of the church, and, if you happen to have a copy of his book, you will notice that a recommendation which I wrote has been included on the back cover.

I felt it important to state my personal biases not just because it may allow you to consider my review with a more critical eye, but also to make you aware that as I reviewed this book, I had some understanding of the heart and character of the editor which led me to search for consistency and congruence between what I read and what I knew of Moulds (actually, I am blessed to have some familiarity with all the authors). Coincidentally, a central theme that emerged from Moulds and the various authors throughout the book was that of consistency and congruence.

In Moulds' chapters, he does what he does best in the classroom—pose questions. His problem-posing seems to encourage the reader to watch for congruence between how the teachers of the church (and the church as institution) carry out their ministry, and God's intent for that ministry. As is the case in many of Professor Moulds' classes, the individual is always close to Scripture or the Lutheran Confessions in any discussion of how we should live. Blanco and Heinitz do an excellent job of expanding one's understanding of Scripture on the topic, while Pragman and Carter focus on the Lutheran Confessions.

So consistency reigns throughout the text, but a distinctive Lutheran twist is added to that consistency. A short way into the book one becomes increasingly aware of the tension that the authors see between the right and left-hand kingdoms when considering the role of the teacher of the church. While Moulds focuses on the tension most often, one can also see it in Fryar's and Janzow's work relative to the place of the priesthood of all believers in considering the call to public ministry. This tension does not represent a

lack of consistency, but rather a perspective that retains a consistency with Lutheran doctrine while considering a ministry within the church that often seems burdened by the pressures of the left-hand kingdom.

Identification of this tension is key to the study of the topic, for it is how we respond to this tension that has great impact on the future of the calling as the teacher of the church. Don't those of us who are in the public ministry in the church often wrestle with the issues of societal norms and expectations and the distinctiveness of the mission of the Church? Has our view of the teacher of the church become clouded primarily by those factors associated with forces outside of the church? The text is concerned primarily with helping us look at how congruent our practices are with our prime calling to those things that represent the right-hand kingdom. Moulds states on page 52: "Our problem lies not with employing our left-hand strategy but with neglecting our right-hand strategy—or minimalizing it to stereotypic and formulaic content in devotions, religion lessons and chapels—and, by default, letting the left-hand strategy predominate."

If Moulds is right, the question that stayed with me most when reading the text was "who should read it?" While a future church professional, a college undergraduate for example, would likely benefit from the book, many are blissfully unaware of the many inconsistencies they will likely find when entering their roles as teachers of the church. However, I think the best audience is those who manage our schools and lead our churches—principals and pastors. Perhaps some for too long have been elevating the left-hand kingdom at the expense of the right. Perhaps they have forgotten the necessary and Lutheran tension that must exist, which this book will serve to bring back into view.

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Teachers and the Law (7th edition).

Louis Fischer, David Schimmel,

and Leslie R. Stellman. Boston:

Allyn and Bacon/Pearson

Publishing, 2005.

In an increasingly litigious society we are all susceptible to the stress and trauma of legal action taken against us by another person who feels that we have wronged him or her. Educators, even those in small Lutheran and private schools, are not immune to this. While we may not become an actor in a legal battle that rises to the level of the Supreme Court, we need to be aware of the responsibilities and limitations of our position as teachers and administrators in schools—Lutheran, private and public.

Teachers and the Law is an invaluable resource not only for teachers but also for administrators and others who are confronted with situations that raise "red flags" and could easily become the subject of legal action. The book, used as a text in the master's level "School Law" course at Concordia University, Nebraska, covers key areas of interest to and impact upon students, parents and teachers. But don't let the fact that it is used as a text scare you away from adding it to your professional library.

The authors approach the topics in a question/answer style that provides an easy-to-read format for those not familiar with legal jargon. The two sections of the book focus on the legal aspects of teaching and the parameters of teachers' and students' rights. Topics in the section on legal aspects of teaching include contracts, employment security, collective bargaining, liability, slander and libel, child abuse reporting and copyright laws. The second section on teachers' and students' rights includes freedom of expression, religious freedom, personal conduct rights, due process rights, discrimination, special rights for students with disabilities and non-English-speaking students, control of student records, personal appearance, and school choice issues. The appendices of the book include selected provisions of the U.S. Constitution that impact education and educators, a brief summary of civil rights laws affecting schools, an annotated list of legal resources for educators, a topic and court case index, and an extensive glossary for those who are not familiar with legal language.

Learning from the Best: Growing Greatness in the Christian School. Gene Frost. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Christian Schools International (CSI); Colorado Springs: Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), 2007.

The focus of *Teachers and the Law* is not to make one a legal expert, but to provide an avenue whereby the education practitioner can find initial answers to concerns that are raised in the day-to-day operation of schools and classrooms. Landmark court cases at both the Circuit Court and Supreme Court levels are referenced, and the impact of those decisions is explained in layman's terms. While one may not be spellbound in reading the book, it is an easy read and the question/answer format allows the reader to search for specific areas of interest or need.

As educators we know the great responsibility we have in raising the next generation of young people who are entrusted to us in our schools and classrooms. We need to do so in a morally and legally responsible way. We need to remember three important words that provide the legal framework for what we do on a day-to-day basis—policy, supervision, documentation. *Teachers and the Law* can provide substance for that framework as important questions are asked and answered in an understandable way. Looking carefully at what we do through the eyes of legal experts assists us in writing effective policy, understanding the importance of proper supervision, and knowing what and when we should document for future verification in our Lutheran schools.

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"What does it take to become a great Christian secondary school, and why do so few institutions achieve greatness?" In his book, *Learning from the Best: Growing Greatness in the Christian School*, author Gene Frost tackles these two questions and arrives at answers supported by research.

Frost's study of great Christian schools began in response to the book, *Good to Great*, by Jim Collins. Collins' best selling book was written regarding the corporate world primarily, but the opening lines of the book are, "We don't have great schools, principally because we have good schools" (page 12). The use of schools as a first example led to the Zondervan study and this book by Frost. Frost's research is an attempt to apply the concepts of greatness outlined in Collins' original work. He established criteria for qualifying schools including: secondary schools with an enrollment over 300, schools exemplifying greatness in the eyes of the major associations in which private Christian schools are members, and schools interested in doing the work necessary to participate in the study.

Frost's original plan was to study the ten most promising applicants, but with so many applications from schools doing great things, his study was revised. It was decided that the 12 schools selected would be divided into two groups—seven would be considered for the comprehensive study of the six good-to-great concepts, and five would be studied for particular best practices that resulted in part from being a great school (pages 14–15). Once the parameters were defined, the ensuing research revealed that indeed the great Christian schools demonstrated the same concepts outlined in Collins' work. Those six key concepts include:

Level 5 Leadership: Leaders who blend personal humility and unrelenting determination, consistently giving away all the credit and accepting all the blame.

First Who, Then What: Get the right people, and then make the right plans.

Confronting the Brutal Facts: Listen to the bad news, take it seriously, deal with it without focusing blame and solve the problems.

The Hedgehog Concept: Know what you're passionate about, know what you're better at doing than anyone else, and make money doing it. Intersecting those three principles is necessary for success.

Technology Accelerators: Use technology as a tool to accelerate momentum already created by a solid Hedgehog Concept.

The Flywheel: Continue to do the right things to move forward, no matter how long it may take, and once the wheel begins to turn it will become nearly unstoppable.

Frost continues in his writing to pinpoint a number of schools that have established best practice in key areas of operation. The final chapters describe a school with a Level 5 Leader (Ch. 8), a school with an exemplary curriculum (Ch. 9), one with a teacher modeling the Flywheel concept at work (Ch. 10), a school applying best business world practices (Ch. 11) and finally a school that transformed discipline, thereby transforming the environment of the entire school (Ch. 12). (The latter school is Lutheran High North, Detroit, where Dr. Steve Buuck serves as administrator.)

While the research conducted for this study included schools with an enrollment of 300 or greater, the concepts are still applicable, even for the more typical smaller Lutheran secondary school. For administrators, teachers, board members and even parents involved in the success of secondary schools, *Learning from the Best: Growing Greatness in the Christian School* is an excellent resource in advancing schools from good to great.

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