

# Views & Vision

The Newsletter of the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association



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## ELEA Accreditation at Grace Lutheran School - "The Past, The Present, The Future"

Hugh Kress, Principal, Grace Lutheran School, River Forest, Illinois

### The Past...

Grace Lutheran School in River Forest, Illinois has served children and families for 111 years. It began as a one-room branch school of St. John's Lutheran Church and School in Forest Park. It later became the laboratory of Concordia Teachers College which continued into the 1970's. During the past three decades it has operated as an independent Lutheran School, moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a changing constituency, sources of faculty and staff, and financial base.

### The Present...

The school houses 237 students from preschool through eighth grade and is mainly supported through parental contributions and fees, with significant support from the congregation. It



Accreditation Team On Site at Grace

remains the single largest mission of the congregation in terms of budget, staffing and building usage. A major addition and remodeling in 1999 upgraded and expanded space for all congregational programs, including the school. A concentrated effort had been made to clarify the mission of the congregation, but not of the school. To address this, the administration selected the newly authored ELEA elementary school accreditation process. Its national standards assess the present status of the school in all areas, affirm its strengths and successes, and identify

areas for improvement. An extensive self-study was produced; the process culminated with a five day on site visit by an ELEA team in November of 2006. In February of this year a

stakeholders report was published and distributed throughout the congregation and families of the school. This report contained a summary of the self-study, the findings of the visiting

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Observing Daily Happenings at Grace

### Views & Vision

Editor: Gayle Denny

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## ELEA Accreditation at Grace Lutheran School, continued

team, and the long-term improvement plan. This document can be downloaded and viewed through the web site of Grace Lutheran Church and School [www.graceriverforest.org/download/school/accreditation](http://www.graceriverforest.org/download/school/accreditation)

### The Future...

Admittedly, the accreditation process demands a commitment of time, energy, and money. The rewards far outweigh the investment. More than just the beautiful plaque that greets everyone in the office, the school has received



ELEA Accreditation Team Members

affirmation that it is a school of excellence from first the faculty and study committees, then the visiting team, and finally the ELEA. Even more important it provides a roadmap for focused continuous improvement for the next six years. This has already reaped benefits as some much-discussed improvements have already been implemented. Examples of these are a high quality school brochure, the alignment of the school mission statement with that of the congregation, and repair of the hand held scanner in the school library. In the coming years improvements include some difficult issues such as

reviewing and planning how the school is financed, upgrading and maintaining technology equipment and curriculum to maximize instruction in high tech skills. Grace Lutheran School is ready to move into the next decade as a place equipped and dedicated to preparing future leaders in body, mind and spirit.



**Hugh Kress,  
Principal of  
Grace  
Lutheran  
School**

*Hugh Kress serves as principal of Grace Lutheran School, River Forest, Illinois, and as an ELEA National Board Member. He can be reached at [hkress@graceriverforest.org](mailto:hkress@graceriverforest.org).*



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## Notes From National . . . Gayle Denny, ELEA Executive Director

### Frequently Asked Questions Regarding ELEA Employee Benefits Plans

**Q: I forgot to sign up myself and our church staff for the free \$3,000 Accidental Death & Dismemberment Policy when it was offered last fall. Can I still get it?**

A: All those who signed up by October 1, 2006, have been given this policy (if you haven't received an emailed copy of the policy, please contact Nancy Bond Insurance Services at nancy@nbondinsurance.com or call us at 800-500-7644 and we can mail a hard copy.) If you didn't sign up by October 1, there will be a new open enrollment period during the month of September 2007. An enrollment form will be available on our website - [www.eleanational.org](http://www.eleanational.org) by September 1, or you can call us at 800-500-7644 and we can fax or mail a copy to you. The only enrollees eligible before September 1 will be new hires or newly joining ELEA members. If you have newly hired employees and already have the plan, you may email or fax their name, birthdate and the name of their beneficiary to nancy@nbondinsurance.com or 866-899-8559.

**Q: I understand there is a new 403(b) retirement plan available to ELEA members, but I've misplaced the mailing. I want to learn more - HELP!**

A: ELEA is very excited about a national 403(b) retirement plan utilizing American Funds, one of the nation's oldest mutual fund families serving investors since 1931. American Funds ranks

among the nation's three largest mutual fund families in the United States with more than \$700 billion in investments and over 35 million shareholder accounts. The financial representative for ELEA's American Funds plan is Matthew L. Birkett of Wachovia Securities. Matthew's phone number is 800-400-1177 and his email address is [matthew.birkett@wachoviasec.com](mailto:matthew.birkett@wachoviasec.com) Matthew can assist in any way possible to help you get you and/or your employees started investing for your future.

**Q: I feel scared because I'm 50 years old and haven't done anything yet toward my retirement, and we all know that most church workers don't make a lot of money and will have only Social Security to rely on. Is it too late for me?**

A: It's never too late. Don't be afraid. You can start small (as little as \$25.00 per month) tax-deferred and you'll be surprised how quickly your nest egg will grow. In addition to individual employees being able to contribute up to \$15,500 (\$20,500 if you're over 50) per year tax-deferred, employers can make another contribution on your behalf which we encourage all schools and centers to do. This is a voluntary plan, meaning only those who choose to participate need do so - it does not require the entire employee group to do so. Those individuals with certain other types of retirement accounts can roll them over to the 403(b) as well. There is only a \$10.00 set-up fee to get you started - it doesn't get any better than this!

**Q: I really messed up. I just found my paperwork regarding the ELEA Life and Disability insurance plans which indicated a cut-off date for enrollment of November 17, 2006. This looks like a too-**

**good-to-be-true opportunity with no medical underwriting. Can I still purchase this insurance?**

A: At this time, the open enrollment which waives medical questions is closed, but due to overwhelming questions such as this one, we are working with the carrier, Reliance Standard Insurance, to allow us to have one more open enrollment without medical qualification. However, you can enroll at any time, but you must answer all of the medical questions asked in order to be approved. If you are in good health, it won't be a problem. It's very important that we achieve a higher percentage of participation overall, since fewer people than expected turned their paperwork in on time and we wouldn't want to lose the opportunity to offer these excellent policies at incredibly low prices. My own personal experience is that I went from paying \$202.00 per month for a premium on an individual disability policy with a different carrier to now paying \$29.90 for exactly the same coverage - same waiting period, same percentage of salary covered, etc. You can't beat that! Like the 403(b), the life and disability plans are voluntary - the entire school community does NOT need to participate.

**Q: As an administrator, I'm obviously very busy - do I really have to share this information with my employees?**

A: YES - you do! You are our contact on behalf of the entire school and church community. Many of the forms referred to above are available on our website at [www.eleanational.org](http://www.eleanational.org) or call for information.

# To Team or Not To Team . . .

**Dr. Richard Herman, President  
WheatRidge Ministries, Itasca, Illinois**



Which of the following most accurately describes the faculty of your school:

- We are a group of individuals who each have our own classroom. For the most part, we work independently. We come together occasionally...usually whenever a major problem needs to be addressed. Once or twice a year we get together for a social occasion. Our faculty meets briefly each month for the purpose of sharing information and coordinating calendars.
- We are a cohesive unit, with a high degree of communication and interdependence. We often work together in small units or as an entire faculty. The input and perspective of each faculty member is valued. We don't make every decision by consensus, but we are usually clear about who has responsibility for a decision and what our role is in the process. We enjoy being together and we especially appreciate regular gatherings for devotions and prayer.

In all likelihood, your faculty falls somewhere between these descriptions. As a faculty member or school administrator, you may have days when your vision of the perfect faculty is a faculty of one person – you! On other days, you likely praise God on your way home from school for the great gift of colleagues and friends who care for you and support you.

It's popular these days to use the word “team” to describe the work force in organizations. This raises some interesting questions. Does every group of individuals who work in the same office or on the same faculty qualify as a team? Is it possible to work together without being a team? What behaviors and attitudes take place in teams that are not present in every group?

Several years ago, Wheat Ridge Ministries, with assistance from a gifted organizational development consultant, Les Stroh (Cornerstone), attempted to address these questions by developing a list of qualities of effective teams. Reflecting our interest in whole person wellness, we referred to these qualities as elements of healthy teams. Since that time, we have sponsored workshops for church leaders to help them explore these elements and to apply them in their workplace.

Consider the following elements and how well they describe the work and interactions of your school faculty:

**Charter** – The members of healthy teams are able to articulate the reason for the team's existence. They understand their purpose as a team and this common understanding informs all the work done by the team.

**Conflict Management** – Healthy teams don't avoid conflict. They realize that conflict is necessary to develop creative and innovative ideas and solutions. Instead, healthy teams manage conflict as it arises so that it doesn't escalate to the point where it damages the effectiveness of the team.

**Decision Making** – Healthy teams have at their disposal several decision-making processes. Team members are clear about which process is appropriate in a particular situation and who is responsible for making the decision.

**Feedback** – Members of healthy teams give open and honest feedback to other team members about the impact other's behavior is having on them.

**Norms** – Healthy teams take time to discuss and determine normative behavior for the team. They hold each other accountable to these norms.

**Role Definition** – In healthy teams, there is clarity regarding the role or roles each person plays on the team. There is appreciation for the contribution of each person to the team's effectiveness.

**Spiritual Renewal** – Healthy teams recognize the core elements of the team's spiritual nature and work toward the spiritual development of each team member. In Lutheran schools, this includes consistent opportunities for team participation in Bible study and prayer.

**Synergy** – Members of healthy teams truly believe that the results are better working together than they would be if everyone worked at a task separately. Put another way, team members believe that the whole of their team is greater than the sum of its individual members!

These elements are not an “all or nothing” proposition. Just as is the case with our growth as individuals, most teams are somewhere along a continuum in terms of the health of their team in each area. At the same time, considering each of these elements can take a team down the road of deep and healthy conversation about the goals of the team and the value individuals place on working together.

In the end, God's conclusion about the nature of the human beings He created certainly holds true for Lutheran school faculties ...“it is not good for man to be alone.” In spite of all the challenges and ups and downs that are part of living and working together in community, the blessings of doing so are great and abundant. As you consider your faculty's health, take time to thank God for the opportunity to work together with colleagues and friends who share your passion and vision for ministry to children and family!

## ELEA Thanks Its Donors!

ELEA would not be able to provide the types of programs and benefits that it does for its members without the generous support of donors who donate to our Annual Fund as well as the School Extension Fund. Membership dues alone do not balance our budget - your gifts are necessary and much appreciated! We wish to thank donors over the past year, including:

- Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Marysville, WA
- Sherri Bishop, Columbus, OH
- Glenn Bracht, Brooklyn Park, MN
- Margaret Chereek, Glendale, CA
- Christ Lutheran Child Care Center, Belfair, WA
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- Larry & Sue Deisher, Edmonds, WA
- Mike & Gayle Denny, Goodyear, AZ
- Alan Feddersen, Glendale, CA
- Patricia Garrett, Enumclaw, WA
- Hugh Kress, River Forest, IL
- Leif Ericson Day School, Brooklyn, NY
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- Marge Robison, Austin, TX
- SMART Tuition, New York, NY
- Solomon Lutheran Church & School, Woodville, OH
- St. John's Christian Preschool, Bellevue, OH
- Trinity Lutheran Preschool, Enumclaw, WA
- Trinity Lutheran School, Marysville, OH

### The Donald A. Vetter Educational Service Award

The ELEA National Board is seeking nominations for the fourth annual Donald A. Vetter educational Service Award. One nomination may be made from each ELEA Network by June 1, 2007. This award is granted annually to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to Lutheran education and who is deemed a worthy model for those committed to exemplary service in Lutheran education.

To learn more about the award and for information on the nomination process, please visit: <http://www.eleanational.org/vetteraward.html> or call the National Office at 800-500-7644.

The award will be presented at the October 2007 ELEA National Board Leadership Retreat.

## Dr. Mel Kieschnick receives LACE Award

The Lutheran Association of Christian Educators (LACE), an Independent Organization recognized by the ELCA is honored to announce the 2006 Educator of the Year, Dr. Mel Kieschnick, AIM. A member of Calvary Lutheran Church, Solana Beach, CA, Dr. Kieschnick was nominated by the Calvary Lutheran Church Christian Education Team for his contributions to Christian education within Lutheran schools and congregations for over 50 years.

Mel has been active in Christian education through his career which includes such calls as:

- a. Teacher and principal of a church elementary school in Tracy, CA
- b. LCMS-missionary and coordinator of education for its mission in Hong Kong
- c. Founding chair of the board of the Hong Kong International School
- d. Professor of Christian Education and pastoral leadership at Hong Kong College, Lutheran Bible Institute, Concordia Theological Seminary of Hong Kong and Lutheran Theological Seminary, Shatin, China
- e. Along with Dr. Thomas Gordon, created Clergy Effectiveness Training
- f. Executive Director of Lutheran Schools Association of New York
- g. Currently serves as a Staff Associate for Wheat Ridge Ministries
- h. Member of Christian Education Team, Calvary Lutheran, Solana Beach, CA
- i. Contributor for various journals for LEA and ELEA
- j. Serves on the Lutheran Association of Christian Educators Endowment Task Force

The Educator of the Year Award was presented to Dr. Kieschnick, AIM by LACE President Teresa Kaldor at the Partner for Nurture Event held at Trinity College, Issaquah, WA, on January 27, 2007.

**Editor's Note:** *Dr. Kieschnick was the recipient of the 2006 ELEA Donald A. Vetter Educational Service Award, presented at the October 2006 "Live, Learn & Lead in God's Amazing Grace" conference in Phoenix, Arizona. LACE is a membership organization which supports Christian educators, primarily those serving in other than weekday school or center settings; i.e. Sunday School, adult learning, Vacation Bible School, etc. ELEA values their partnership and collegiality in many areas and looks forward to developing ways to support one another's ministries.*

## The Youth & Family Institute presents MILESTONE MINISTRY Conference

A child rolls over for the very first time and the event is recorded in the baby book. A child's first step is caught on a digital camera and within minutes the milestone is shared electronically with family and friends. The marking and celebration of milestones throughout a person's life is common practice in our families. Often there are gifts involved, the sharing of wisdom and sometimes a blessing. For Lutherans there are additional milestones as well, such as our baptism, first communion and confirmation. Milestones and rites of passage are both secular and sacred. They are marked in our homes, in our congregations and in our schools.

For more than a decade The Youth and Family Institute has lifted up the intentional practice of milestones as a means for nurturing and passing on faith. Milestones are

the means to bring the presence of God to not only children, but also to families and caring adults in all generations. Most importantly Milestones Ministry transforms congregations with the vital mission of "Tending the Baptismal Journey" and keeping promises through all the ages and stages of a life centered in Christ.

This summer TYFI will gather milestone practitioners, Christian education leaders, teachers, and pastors from around the country (all those folks who have been making faith chests, baptismal quilts, taking toddlers on the "sanctuary crawl", acknowledging new drivers in worship and blessing backpacks and briefcases each fall) to share, network, learn, and be inspired. Whether you are brand new to the practice of milestones . . . or looking for new and effective ways to partner



home, congregation and school for effective faith-nurturing ministry, this national gathering is for you! Come and share milestone ideas, gain theological insights and celebrate God's presence in all the milestones throughout our life. The Youth & Family Institute staff looks forward to welcoming you to: Milestones Ministry National Conference "Home Coming 2007!" July 30-August 1 Apple Valley, MN

For more information or to register go to the web site [www.youthandfamilyinstitute.org](http://www.youthandfamilyinstitute.org). Or contact Linda Staats, Director of Milestones Ministry, [lstaats@tyfi.org](mailto:lstaats@tyfi.org) or 952-405-7312.



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## Generation MySpace, Candice Kelsey, Author

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

*Romans 12:2*

MySpace, a cultural phenomenon of the digital age with over 130 million members and growing, is shaping the landscape of today's youth culture. A front-page article in *The New York Times* declared, "Parents, educators and law enforcement officials are reacting with alarm to MySpace.com, the Internet hangout for teenagers and young adults, the content of which is shocking" say those who work with teenagers. The fact is that MySpace.com is the preferred nightly hang out for our Christian children, and unfortunately the MySpace culture is conforming them to this world in myriad ways.

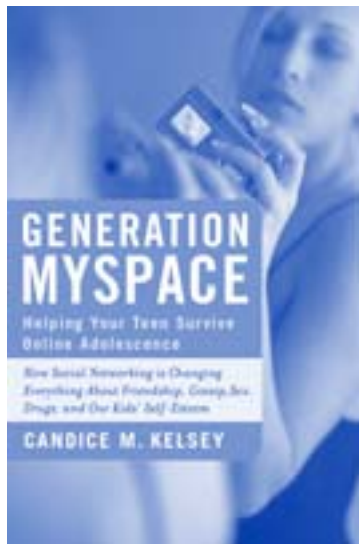
The most poignant reason Christian educators need to be plugged into MySpace is that it is an accurate indicator of who their students are becoming. MySpace provides a frightening window into the true selves of teens today, a reality that many adults are too squeamish to view. MySpace is a powerful medium that encourages teens to expose themselves

intimately in a very public space. This "cyber hangout" has become a fast pass for teens to create their own identities, most of which are influenced entirely by popular culture: girls as young as fifth grade are posing in sexually explicit photographs while boys are using language glorifying profanity and violence. Threats against teachers, discrimination against other students, intimidation, and conspiracy to commit acts of school violence are commonplace. Jim Boyce, the dean of student affairs at White River High School in Buckley, Washington, says, "MySpace has hit schools with a vengeance." As media expert Marshall McLuhan said many years ago, "the medium is the message," and this message is loud and clear: MySpace is transforming teen culture, and Christian leaders must become more savvy.

As the fallout from activities generated on MySpace continue to impact the campus life of Christian schools across the U.S., concerned leaders need the professional and insightful guidance presented in *Generation MySpace*. Teachers struggle more and more each year to connect with and reach into the lives of their students. Just as parents are slowly being replaced as a strong

influence in their child's development, so too are educators being replaced by the all-consuming cyber world. This book provides relief and grist for the engaged Christian educator. Specifically, the onslaught of gossip, bullying, disrespect for authority, and references to drugs, alcohol, and sex born out of the false sense of privacy on this site continues to plague administrators. This book provides real insight and guidance for the concerned school principal, including practical prescriptive suggestions such as sample codes of conduct. Christian school counselors deal daily with the angst of the modern teen and pre-teen. *Generation MySpace* complements what many of these teen confidante's have been discerning over the past two years – that today's youth culture is dominated by the Internet, and the result isn't pretty. Grounded in countless interviews with teens, parents, educators, and other experts, *Generation MySpace* is a comprehensive manual that will prove invaluable for the modern Christian administrator, educator, and counselor.

To order Kelsey's book, please visit her website at [www.candicekelsey.com](http://www.candicekelsey.com) or go to [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com). If you'd rather get in your car, you can visit your local Barnes and Noble or Borders books to find *Generation MySpace*.



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### SAT & OLSAT Elementary Testing Dates

**March 26 - April 26, 2007**

For more information on both the elementary and early childhood testing programs for 2007, visit [www.eleanational.org](http://www.eleanational.org) and click on "Testing"

# Evangelical Lutheran Education Association

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### ELEA's Purpose Statement

The Evangelical Lutheran Education Association promotes and supports quality, Christ-centered schools and early childhood programs of the ELCA.