

Views & Vision

The Newsletter of the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association



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Summer 2007

An Answer to Prayers: Bethel Lutheran School in St. Louis, Missouri, restores the “zest for learning” to a child who needed a place to heal.

Sandy Kalin, Principal, Bethel Lutheran School, Saint Louis, Missouri

A family came to Bethel Lutheran School several years ago, seeking a good education and a place where their child could heal

emotionally. Sadly, their son had been to three schools previously and was a shadow of his former self. He was falling behind in school, was disruptive in

class, unhappy and angry. The family was getting no positive answer that could explain his sudden change in behavior and were told to let their child sit at home. To this family that was NOT an option. When they found Bethel Lutheran School, they felt that they had found the answer to their prayers. After laying it on the line with the principal about their son's behavior and all of

the issues they were experiencing, the family felt that they were finally given a chance. Almost immediately, their son



Mrs. Kalin, Jordon & his Mom, Candace

began to improve in school and has grown tremendously over the last three years. He is excited about school, is learning, and making friends again. The family feels as if they have been given back their son, whom they thought was lost.

Today, the family extends their heart-felt thanks to Bethel Lutheran School, the staff, and all those who have made it possible for

their son to stay at the school. Financially, it has been a struggle for them, therefore they also thank the scholarship fund for providing funds for

their son's education. Bethel Lutheran School, located in St. Louis MO and founded in 1951, provides Christian education for Bethel Lutheran Church members and others in their community. It has in its mission statement, "... dedicated to providing high-quality education in a

Christian environment and culturally diverse setting for grades preschool through eighth grade." The school provides an environment which offers all children the opportunity to develop and grow spiritually, intellectually, socially, physically and emotionally. In 2005, the school was awarded national accreditation through ELEA (Evangelical Lutheran Education Association).

There is always need for financial aid. Limited scholarships are provided through Bethel Lutheran School to students in need through the support of others. Contributions from Bethel Lutheran Church and the Building Blocks Scholarship Fund (a division of the Lutheran Elementary School Association in the St. Louis area) have helped many children attend or stay in a Lutheran School. We thank all those for their support of our ELCA schools.

Sandy Kalin serves as Principal of Bethel Lutheran School in St. Louis, Missouri, and can be reached at mrsk@bethelkids.org.

***“Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”
Matthew 19:1***

Notes From National . . . Great Ideas on Parent Orientation From Early Childhood Directors

Gayle Denny, ELEA Executive Director

Recently, questions regarding Parent Orientation and Graduation were posted on the ELEAMembers email chat, and some of the answers were amazing - hope you find some new ideas to try out!

Q. For the past several years we have held a Parent Orientation meeting for new parents before school starts in the fall. At this meeting we go through our Parent Handbook in detail and a couple of teachers give a brief overview of our curriculum. This has been working well, but I was kind of wanting some new and fresh ideas. Anybody doing anything that has worked well?

*Kathy Dale, Children's Day Out
Topeka, Kansas*

A. I haven't tried this one, but I plan to at our next Parent Orientation: To help parents understand the importance of open ended art curriculum, you set up two classrooms with art supplies. One of them has a teacher leading a very structured class with specific step by step cookie cutter type project and the other room is open ended projects just creating with art supplies. You also set up classrooms in a similar manner with language art supplies, blocks and building toys, musical instruments, etc. Let the parents play for a while before the actual "lecture" of open house. Then you have a great personal experience to pull in when talking with the parents [about developmentally appropriate activities]. It also exposes the parents to the things their children will be doing while in your care.

*Keisha Hall, APPLE Seeds
Preschool, Fuquay-Varina, NC*

A. I have for years shown a slide program that demonstrates our play-based philosophy. It holds their attention while I speak about each slide and they can see what children are learning in each area of the room. They also know up front that, if they want a very academic program, that's not what we offer. They also like to see their children or friends' children in the slides. I have also done some overheads about brain research and discussed how children are making the connections. Each year we have a schoolwide theme - one year it was a growing theme. I read them a delightful book, "Mrs. Spritzer's Garden", and each parent received a clear little gift bag with a small flowerpot, little baggie of dirt and bag of seeds to remind them what children need to grow: love, patience, Jesus, etc., and how important it is for us to help plant the seeds of faith. This year our theme was "making Connections" and our logo was a triangle with parents, children, and teachers each written on a side with a cross in the middle. At the Parent Orientation, in their folder of information, each family received a cardboard puzzle piece of a person (purchased at Holcomb's Teacher Store). The family was to decorate their person any way they wish with their family name on it and return it to school. Some were extremely creative. A parent put the pieces together to create a large puzzle where every family and staff was "connected". It was posted in the hallway. Each year, when parents arrive, they pick up their folder with their child's name sorted by class. Teachers are upstairs too. We go over the information quickly but I try to hit the main points since I usually have a good turnout and need to share the information

while I have them all there. I try to keep it under an hour. Parents then go downstairs to meet the teachers and see the classrooms. They sign up for snacks, initial the parent roster, etc. Some classrooms have the parents write a note to their child for the first day individually or on a large mural on the wall. It is very welcoming that first day. I enjoy the Parent Orientation and feel it is a great opportunity to set the tone for the year.

*Sherri Bishop, Christ Lutheran
Children's Center
Columbus, Ohio*

A. As the parents come in for orientation, we have slides showing from the previous year. The first hour the parents spend with the children, getting them familiar with the classroom, bathrooms, outside play area, etc., and then the children stay with the teacher for a snack. They can converse and get to know one another. Some teachers take their class on the play yard as well. The parent orientation lasts about an hour during this time.

*Mary VonDoeren
TLC Preschool
Ventura, California*

A. At our school I use this night as a marketing tool for increased enrollment in two ways. I print coupons for referrals good for dollars off the next month's tuition fee for the family doing the referral and a discount for the new student fee for the family that was referred. I use a cutoff date (usually good for the month of September) and limit one per family. Also as a

Notes from National, continued . . .

marketing tool, I hand out pens to use during the orientation or key chains in the shape of a heart with our school's name, address and phone number and a slogan such as "Your child is the heart of Trinity Lutheran Preschool" or "Learning is fun at . . ." I ask parents to keep that item with them this year so they will always have our information handy when they need to call us or to give to someone when they refer others to our program. At that time I also ask parents to take out their cell phones and add the school's name and phone number in their cell phone book list. This helps them to contact us wherever they might be in an emergency.

*Kris Dudak, Trinity Lutheran Preschool & Kindergarten
Lynnwood, Washington*

- Q. We are having our first "Moving On" Achievement recognition program this year. We are not calling it graduation or using caps and gowns. The teachers felt that a recognition of the four year old class that would no longer be with us next year would be a nice addition to our program. As the year winds down and I'm running out of steam my mind is also running out of creativity and ideas. Does anyone have suggestions in the way of: 1) comments or readings appropriate for director to begin with? 2) Musical selections to be played in the background while the children come forward?

*Martha Rotter, Director
Tiny Tots Preschool
Livonia, Michigan*

- A. We host an end of the year BBQ for everyone - we provide the BBQ food and parents bring side dishes. We meet at a local park with a big climbing toy and we

rent a bounce house. The staff's husbands are roped into cooking. Each classroom has prepared books for the kids all year long that contain pictures, artwork and information we have gathered. After eating, the kids do a short presentation and then teachers pass out the books to parents and certificates to the kids. It is a lot of fun and fairly easy to pull together. The families really enjoy it and it is a nice way to end the school year. It is great to see and enjoy the friendships that have been formed by both parents and children over our time together.

*Krista Alexander
KLC Bright Beginnings
Klamath Falls, OR*

- A. Here at First Lutheran, we didn't want to single out the children going to kindergarten with a "graduation ceremony", as they will have so many other graduations throughout their school careers. However, I wanted to somehow finish the year with a bang! So EVERYONE is invited to our end-of-the-year Spring Sing. It is a potluck dinner, starting at 6:00 p.m., right when we close for the day. We have a very multi-cultural community in our center, so we have lots of interesting dishes coming! There are over 250 people coming, so we take over the Fellowship Hall, the Parish Hall, and the courtyard in between, for the meal. Everyone enjoys visiting with the other parents as they eat. Then, the parents are excused to go find a seat in the sanctuary, and we gather the children together for a quick rehearsal. Standing on risers up in front, each class performs 2 of their favorite songs of the year, and we sing one or two songs together. We have a Kindermusik teacher, so she has the classes demonstrate a couple of songs they have worked on.

And then we finish up the evening by showing a powerpoint slide show of the year. We make sure each child is up on the screen in at least 4 - 5 pictures. Sometimes, I put the powerpoint together, and sometimes I have a mom that volunteers . . . It's a big job, with over 120 kids! Oh, and a new element. We have had a studio teacher the last two years that works with the kids on bigger, long-term art experiences, and she has set up an art show/gallery, that the parents can wander through that evening as well. This has worked really well for us. It puts a nice finish on the school year, and we don't have the issues of what do you do with the children that are not moving on to Kindergarten. EVERYONE has a good time and celebrates the year.

*Shirley Becker
First Lutheran Early Education Center, Torrance, California*

Those of you who do not provide an email address are missing out on some great sharing among administrators - send us your email address!

ELEA's Purpose Statement

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

Bullying: Who Needs Another Article On That?



Melvin Kieschnick, Extended Staff, Wheat Ridge Ministries

Bullying is certainly not an issue that Lutheran centers and schools have avoided. Early childhood centers have policies in place and teachers are taught how to ensure that bullying is confronted when it occurs among the children. Principals of Lutheran elementary and high schools are addressing the emerging problem of using the Internet as the latest vehicle for vicious, hurtful and unchristian bullying. (For resources see www.elca.org/schools/resources/teachers/bullying.html).

Yet there is another form of bullying that we have been slower to address: adults bullying other adults. There may well be a parent at your school who is a bully. She or he shows up on campus or at parent meetings and uses threats, put-downs, and ridicule. Her very presence on campus causes a ripple of anxiety to flow through the staff.

While rare, it is also true that occasionally the director/principal or

even the pastor resorts to bullying the staff. This happens when the one doing the bullying uses his or her position, authority, experience or clerical collar to create fear, to intimidate or verbally abuse another. Mere physical presence can have a bullying effect when it causes another to feel threatened, put down, diminished or fearful.

I speak from experience. While I was a Lutheran school principal I once permitted a teacher to bully me for a six-year period. She was a strong woman. She dressed severely. She was older and more experienced than I. She spoke her mind defiantly and reinforced her spoken word with hand written letters of admonishment. Her mere presence influenced the atmosphere of our staff meetings. Her husband was Board Chairman. For six years she intimidated not only me, but also other staff members, especially the younger female teachers. I failed in my

responsibilities as a school leader. I wanted to “keep the peace”. I didn’t want open confrontation. I didn’t want to lose the commitment, hard work and expertise of this teacher. So I capitulated in silence and complained about it at home to my spouse.

And in the process I was not fair to the bully, to her colleagues, to myself or to the Christian values of our school. Finally, the confrontation came. She got into my face in front of my office door. She demanded an immediate change on a school procedure. She said that if her idea would not be immediately accepted she would resign. I stood by our policy, accepted her resignation effective immediately and had it all in writing within 24 hours. Our school lost a deeply committed teacher and we gained a lot more than we lost. The whole atmosphere of the school was more peaceful. Faculty discussions were more open. Younger teachers felt more accepted. Our school became a healthier place.

I wish I’d had the skills to come up with a better win-win solution. I regret I did not address the situation sooner. But this I affirm: Bullying, even by a veteran teacher is an unacceptable behavior in a Lutheran school. It needs to be addressed and stopped. The benefits of dealing with it exceeds the costs. Only then can our schools be places of health and hope in the name of the healing Christ.

Dr. Melvin Kieschnick, the 2006 recipient of ELEA’s Donald A. Vetter Educational Service Award, retired Lutheran educator, and Extended Staff for Wheat Ridge Ministries, Itasca, Illinois, can be reached at mel@kieschnick.org.

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Looking Back . . . Gayle Denny, ELEA Executive Director

It became obvious to me that it was indeed time to clean house at the office. Too many file folders jammed into too many file drawers, often with very little organization. I always start out, like I am sure most of you do, with a good system and a neat office, but too much work being done in too little time eventually creates chaos.

I always find a "gem" or two when I sort through files - makes me wonder why I don't do it more often. The following story was written in a school newsletter about this time of year:

"We at St. John's have much to be thankful for at the end of another school year. We have been spared

serious sickness, epidemics, floods, droughts, storms, hunger, and who can recount what other misfortunes. We have so many things that boys and girls, and grown-ups in war torn countries cannot enjoy. To think of what we have is to make us thankful. Last, but not least, we must count it a privilege to have been able to hear and learn the Word of God 185 days of the year. We may think and complain at times that all teaching and preaching the Word of God is in vain and shows no appreciable effects. Nevertheless, we have His assurance: 'My Word shall not return to Me void.'

The purpose of the Christian school is to pro-

vide our children with a proper and well-balanced 'diet' to give them what they need for a proper healthy development of the intellect and the soul - to fit them for life, to equip them for the battle against evil, to make them useful citizens of the highest order in the Church and the State, to preserve them unto life eternal."

What you need to know about this article, entitled "Looking Back" is that it was written in the St. John's School News, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, Rural Route #2, in June of 1942. ELEA's former pastoral advisor and board member, Reverend Ray Orth from Michigan, had sent some wonderfully old gems in a mailing to me

a few years ago, and they, of course, were what I discovered in my cleaning frenzy.

Thank you, Pastor Ray, for sending this wonderful piece which reminds us that sharing God's word and doing His work is timeless. The purpose of a Christian school in 1942 is essentially the same as the purpose of a Christian school in 2007 - not much has changed in 65 years.

Let us never forget to "fit them for life, equip them for the battle against evil, make them useful citizens of the highest order in the Church and the State, and preserve them unto life eternal."

Amen.



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- Patricia Garrett, Enumclaw, WA
- Trinity Lutheran School, Marysville, OH
- Good Shepherd Preschool, Olympia, WA
- Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Marysville, WA
- Michael & Brenda Jensen, Owatonna, MN
- Steven & Susan Ryan, Peoria, AZ
- Ken & Nancy O'Neal, Arcadia, CA

2008 SAT & OLSAT Elementary Testing Dates

March 31 - April 30, 2008

Early Childhood Screening Materials: "FirstSTeP Developmental Screening for Preschoolers" and "Greenspan Developmental Inventory" may be purchased and administered at any time during the year. Visit www.eleanational.org and click on "Testing".

The User I.D. and password needed to access testing material information and order forms is mailed to you each November - be sure to read this important mail when it arrives.

Watch For Upcoming Mailings!

Those of you who did not take advantage of the FREE \$3,000 Accidental Death & Dismemberment Insurance policy through Reliance Standard Insurance when it was offered last fall, will have another opportunity.

Watch for this important mailing - there will be another open enrollment period during the month of September. If you did NOT sign up for this free policy during last fall's open enrollment, you will be receiving a mailing. If you DID sign up, you will not receive another mailing. If you do currently have coverage and wish to add new employees, just contact Nancy Bond Insurance Services at 866-899-8559, ext. 106 or nancy@nbondinsurance.com.



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Paradigm Leaders

Pastor Steven Goodwin, ELEA Pastoral Advisor

During a recent visit to Hawaii I had several opportunities to go snorkeling amid the beautiful coastal reefs of the Pacific. What an intriguing world of vibrantly colored fish, and bizarrely shaped creatures. There were canyons and tunnels in the coral to explore for eternity. There were creatures that banded together to form a living barrier as a coral reef. Simply astonishing. For a few hours I entered another world entirely different than my own. Swimming along the surface with my masked face immersed I was aware of being on the boundary between two worlds, the world I know on land and the one that exists beneath the waves of the great ocean.

What would it be like to have gills and live our whole lives under the sea? I try to imagine breathing water and it is beyond my grasp. I try to picture my world with filtered light instead of direct sunshine, or to have water above instead of the atmosphere. Everything in my world would be different.

Stretching our minds in such a mental exercise is an apt illustration of paradigm. Our paradigm of life revolves around life on land, breathing air, and getting tanned from the sun. But life exists beneath the sea too, a wholly other paradigm.

Each of us carries as a kind of mental framework for our thinking a paradigm of what the Church is, how it should function, and what its mission in the world looks like. This paradigm is an entire worldview that invisibly governs and shapes our thinking about the Church. All of us have very set ideas of how worship ought to be, how members are added to the congregation, who does what ministry, and so on. Our paradigm, which most scholars call the "Christendom" paradigm, still sees the Church as a dominant force in our community, nation, and world.

The children and youth along with the majority of their parents live underwater, so to speak. That is to say, they have a vastly different paradigm

of Church. The new paradigm is calling for less formal worship, higher commitment among believers, less interest in church as bureaucracy in favor of a more organic organization with less emphasis on who are clergy and who are laity.

The paradigm for Christian ministry in the 21st century is shifting. Trying to compare the old paradigm with the new is like humans who live on land trying to imagine life underwater: it seems inconceivable, foreign, and even, wrong!

The children in your care are growing up with a very different paradigm of Church than you possess now. We already are starting to feel this in the twentysomethings who cannot understand us nor we them. They want not only worship to be radically different but they also are demanding a fundamentally different kind of church than the generations that have gone before them. And so our congregations find themselves amidst the greatest paradigm shift in at least 500 years. Conflict, dissension, stagnation and, perhaps worst of all, disinterest have resulted from our failure to recognize and adjust to this paradigm shift. Youth and young adults who have grown up being deeply loved and cared for by their Lutheran congregations are abandoning our tradition in favor of non-denominational churches operating out of this new paradigm. This is the canary-in-the-coal-mine warning to us from God.

Here is where you as educators can truly be a blessing to the congregations of which you are a part. You work everyday with children, youth and their families. You see firsthand, everyday, the changing needs of these new believers. You have a calling from God to help the leaders of your congregation understand this new generation. You can assist your church's leaders to understand the pressing need to examine anew our fundamental paradigm. No doubt, this

will make long-standing Christians feel like you are asking them to move from land to live underwater. It will take time and patience to help them understand these upcoming generations.

It is your calling as teachers of the Scriptures to remind older believers that God has successfully transitioned His church through such paradigm changes many times before. The Church of Jerusalem had to change its paradigm from a Jewish orientation to Paul's paradigm of openness to the Gentiles. The Church moved from an underground movement in the catacombs of Rome to cathedrals of Europe. And now, once again, God is calling us to shift paradigms of ministry so we can evangelize a generation of post-moderns who think radically different than us.

I pray that Christ will strengthen you to be the bridge between the paradigms that your congregation so desperately needs. Life underwater won't be so bad!

The Reverend Dr. Steven Goodwin is pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Chino, CA, and serves as Pastoral Advisor for the ELEA National Board. He can be reached at compurev@aol.com.



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