

Views & Vision

The Newsletter of the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association



The Trials, Tribulations (and JOY) of opening a Satellite Infant and Toddler Center

Shirley Becker, Director of First Lutheran Early Education Center, Torrance, California

We have now completed our first year of our satellite infant and toddler center, and we can look back on the pros, the cons, the frustrations, and the blessings.

Our center is located in Torrance, (southern) California . . . and serves a middle to upper-middle class neighborhood. We have been in existence for almost 35 years, and are on the campus of First Lutheran School, which educates 380 children every year. Over the past 10 years, we had grown the Early Education Center from a three classroom preschool serving forty 3-5 year olds a day, to a 7 classroom child care center serving 86 children a day. Part of that growth involved adding infant, toddler and two year olds classrooms. We have always had waiting

lists, and those lists grew longer as we achieved NAEYC accreditation 5 years ago.

Every space in our church/school/early ed campus is filled with classrooms, and there is

no place to grow and expand our center, in spite of our long waiting lists, and the obvious need for quality infant care in

our community. We had given up on expansion ideas, until we heard about another center that opened up satellite preschools and a light went on in our minds. A friend at a local Presbyterian church shared that they had

wanted to open up a preschool, but their plans had fallen through. A series of meetings occurred between pastors and church councils of both churches, and we established an



Shirley Becker and a few of the "Turtles"

agreement to rent their classroom for one year. And what a year it has been!

We signed the lease in June 2005, and after 2 frenzied months of building and varnishing

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Fall 2006

It's Not Too Late!

"Live, Learn & Lead in God's Amazing Grace"

A conference for all ELCA school and center administrators & pastors

October 5-7, 2006

Phoenix, Arizona

Register on-line or download printed registration materials by visiting www.eleanational.org and clicking on the "Live, Learn & Lead" link

OR

Call 800-500-7644 for more information.

Views & Vision

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Wellness Centers, Health Classes, and Lutheran Schools

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



One of the joys of serving as the president of Wheat Ridge Ministries is regularly connecting with very interesting people who have a unique and deep understanding of the connections between faith and health. One such group of people is the Inter-Lutheran Coordinating Committee on Ministerial Health and Wellness (one of the longer committee names in Lutheranism!). As the name indicates, the people on this committee represent the interests of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod in the health and well-being of Lutheran church workers.

One of the great resources developed by the ILCCMHW in recent years is a ‘wellness wheel’ that graphically describes wellness from a Christian perspective. Take a look for yourself....



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What makes this ‘wheel’ unique from similar models in the secular world is its central focus on baptism. As we are claimed by Christ through Baptism, we are free to be “well in the Lord” through life’s joys and its challenging times, in times of sickness and in times of good health. Wellness seen through this lens is a process that involves the integration

of several aspects of well-being, as indicated by the spokes of the wellness wheel. Surrounding these various aspects of wellness is spiritual well-being, which holds the wheel together.

As a former Lutheran school teacher and principal, when I look at the wellness wheel I see a school curriculum guide. Not just a ‘health class’ curriculum, but something much, much broader. In this curriculum guide, it is assumed that every part of the school day, including every subject area, is about health and wellness.

In a school guided by this curriculum, every class is a health class. Here’s what one might observe in such a school:

- Spiritual wellness is a core outcome that is nurtured intentionally throughout the school day;
- Teachers recognize that every subject area, whether it is math, or science, or English, has a place in the wellness curriculum and is taught for the sake of student well-being.
- All courses support and complement each other in addressing wellness of body, mind, and spirit from various perspectives;
- Importance is placed on living balanced lifestyles and paying attention to all aspects of personal health. This focus on balanced lifestyle is modeled consistently by faculty and staff;
- The school schedule reflects the understanding that healthy balance includes time spent alone, time with family and friends, and time in service to others;
- Students are recognized and affirmed for who (and whose) they are, not on what they do or accomplished;
- Help is available to students who

need individual assistance with important health and lifestyle issues;

- Focus is placed on the development of skills, interests, and disciplines that promote wellness over a lifetime.
- Students are helped to see self-care as a Christian’s response to God’s love – something they ‘get to do’, not something they ‘have to do.’
- Students learn that self-care is not an end in itself, but rather that being well enables one to more effectively serve others.

Concern for wellness in schools where this ‘wellness wheel’ exists is not limited to students. The wellness of faculty and staff is also promoted and supported. Fair and reasonable salary and benefits allow church workers to provide for the basic needs of self and family. Continuing education is encouraged. Quiet time for personal reflection and prayer is available each day. Church and school leaders gather together regularly for Bible study and devotions. The school climate encourages people to take the work of each day very seriously, but not to take themselves too seriously!

Likewise, help is available to parents who need help making the home a place that nourishes wellness of body, mind, and spirit. Parents learn how to promote balanced lifestyles. High value is placed on healthy eating and getting adequate amounts of sleep. Parents can learn how to pray with their children and how to involve their children in service to others. And, they receive encouragement to avoid over-programming their children’s lives,

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Notes From National . . .

Gayle Denny, ELEA Executive Director

What's New at ELEA? Lots!!

☺ The NEW ELEA Early Childhood Accreditation Self Study is now available! Based on standards developed by a team of early childhood professionals and closely aligned with standards developed by other nationally recognized accreditors, this new process is exciting. For more information, visit our website at www.eleanational.org, or call the ELEA National office at 800-500-7644.

☺ "Live, Learn & Lead in God's Amazing Grace" - it's not too late to register for this three-day extravaganza in the desert. Being held October 5-7, 2006, at the DoubleTree Guest Suites in Phoenix, Arizona, this National Administrator & Pastor Conference is co-sponsored by ELEA and the ELCA's Vocation & Education unit. These are three excellent keynote speakers:

- Dr. Nelson Strobert, Gettysburg Seminary;
- Ms. Miriam Campbell, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Burnsville, MN;
- Dr. Mary Ann Shealy, retired Lutheran educator from SC;

The conference offers 48 workshop sectionals on a variety of topics of interest to administrators and pastors (see full list on the conference website). Inspiring worship, Bible study opportunities, a banquet with great entertainment and awards, a good selection of vendors, lots of opportunities for focused discussions and networking, fun and good food round out the conference. Plan to join us to "Live, Learn & Lead in God's Amazing Grace". Registration materials available by following the conference link at www.eleanational.org or by calling the ELEA Office at 800-500-7644.

☺ The ELEA National Board is asking all member schools & centers who are in attendance at the October conference to attend a short ELEA Business Meeting being held at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, October 6, 2006. Information on new benefits and more ELEA news!

☺ **HUGE New Benefit for ELEA Members!** Effective October 1, 2006, all staff at ELEA member schools and centers who work thirty (30) hours per week or more will be given **FREE OF CHARGE** a \$3,000 Accidental Death & Dismem-

berment Insurance policy, just for being a member. You will receive a packet that will formally announce this policy, which is available for ALL church staff (janitors, church staff, pastors, too!), along with all teachers, aides, administrators, etc. A form will be included in that packet which will need to be returned to Nancy Bond Insurance Services, our ELEA Benefits Administrator, with names, birthdates and occupations of employees in order for the coverage to be effective.

In addition, we are offering group life insurance for employees, their spouses and children at amazingly affordable rates and with many options, AND long term disability insurance for employees with no medical underwriting - everyone is accepted with NO medical underwriting.

This is a great opportunity for all - but it requires that you participate during the open enrollment period to be effective 1-1-07. So . . . Open all mail from ELEA!!



Wellness Centers, Health Classes, and Lutheran Schools

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so that there is time each day to enjoy the creativity and self-discovery that comes from unstructured play and interaction with others.

There may not be a more appropriate setting or a place with more opportunity to help children understand and practice wellness than a Lutheran school. Lutheran schools exist to help parents ensure that their children experience the healing touch of Jesus, to help them grow in

their knowledge of Jesus as Lord and Savior, to help them celebrate the wonders of God's creation, and to encourage them to respond to Christ's love through lives of service to others. This makes Lutheran schools more than just schools, it makes them wellness centers!

Whether or not its time for your annual curriculum review, take a look at the wellness wheel and consider how it fits your classroom and

your school. Whether you are certified by the state to teach health or not, celebrate the fact that as a Christian teacher you are a health teacher! Let's help every Lutheran school be a wellness center and every class a health class!

Dr. Richard Herman serves as President of Wheat Ridge Ministries, Itasca, Illinois and can be reached at wrmhermanre@wheatridge.org.

Why . . . ?

Dr. Cynthia Kuck, Concordia University, River Forest, Illinois

Trends in education come and go very quickly. It's tough to know what's valuable and what is just the latest fad.

One of the latest trends in education is the standards-based movement. The theory behind this movement is that if we can identify what all students, teachers, and principals should know and be able to do, then we will know if our students are achieving and if educators effectively carry out their responsibilities. Standards exist for teachers, administrators, and all areas of curricula for students from birth through university.

Standards are a hot topic in public education, but many of our Lutheran schools and early childhood education centers (ECEs) know little about them. As a result, a valuable tool goes unused.

Why standards?

Standards can offer a lot to Lutheran schools and ECE centers. They are a useful tool for school improvement, communication and marketing, and accountability.

- School improvement**
Standards clearly state what teachers, school administrators, and students should know and be able to do at each age level. Once curricular assessments and faculty evaluations are matched to appropriate standards, information resulting from such as assessments can identify school strengths and areas of needed improvement. Faculty uses this information to make changes in the school to improve it. While the standards themselves remain constant, the paths chosen to strengthen the areas for improvement uniquely reflect the goals and purposes of each school and ECE center. The result – an educational center committed to excellence and that lives out its mission and vision.

- Communication and Marketing**
While standards may be unfamiliar to many in Lutheran education, most parents have at least heard of them through the news media. From their viewpoint, standards in some vague way equate to school quality. Although parents may not understand or have any in-depth knowledge about standards, the fact that a school knows about and uses them often leads parents to label the school or ECE center as “good”. Including information that a school or ECE center is standards-based in publicity materials helps parents understand it is committed to quality and is, at the very least, as good as the local public schools.

Standards also create a common understanding of what is expected at each age/grade level and of each faculty member. This helps students focus on learning and enables parents to actively support that learning. Because there are clear expectations, a school or ECE center can communicate its story and document its successes to the communities it serves.

“One of the latest trends in education is the standards-based movement.”

- Accountability**
Standards create a road map for assessment. They identify what should be assessed but do not dictate the type of assessment to be used. Information from assessments can be used to guide hiring decisions, curricular revisions, board decision-

making, and policy changes. Because information and data result from assessment, they can be made public and be used as verification of the school's/ECE center's quality to parents, boards, and the congregation.



Getting started

The first step to becoming a standards-based school or ECE center is familiarity with the standards themselves. Standards can be found at the following websites by inputting the word **standards** into each of the site's search bars:

ECE – all standards: www.naeyc.org
 Science: www.nsta.org
 Principals: www.npbea.org
 Music: www.menc.org
 Teachers: www.ccss.org
 Math: www.nctm.org
 Language arts: www.ncte.org
 Social studies: www.ncss.org
 Art: www.artteacherconnection.com
 Reading: www.reading.org
 PE: www.education-world.com

ELEA also offers extensive help through its elementary and early childhood accreditation processes. For additional information on accreditation, contact Gayle Denny at ELEANational@cs.com or at 800-500-7644.

Since schools and ECEs typically identify at least one curricular area to be reviewed every academic year, integration of standards into the curriculum can occur easily and with a minimum amount of effort as the faculty conducts its review. By consulting the standards, the faculty can make sound curricular choices based on the best wisdom of the

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Dr. Melvin Kieschnick Chosen as 2006 Recipient of the Donald A. Better Educational Service Award

His list of accomplishments, honors and experience is wide and varied. The colleague nominating him for this award stated, "Mel epitomizes the servant leader as defined by Robert Greenleaf . . . Someone who by their leadership asks the question - do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? . . . He is truly a gift of God and deserves this recognition through the ELEA."

ELEA is proud to honor Dr. Kieschnick through the Donald A. Vetter Educational Service Award, established in 2004 to identify persons who have provided

extraordinary achievements and contributions distinguished by long-standing commitment to the values of ELEA.

The Vetter Award will be presented to Dr. Kieschnick at an October 6, 2006 banquet as part of the ELCA/ELEA, "Live, Learn & Lead in God's Amazing Grace" National Administrator & Pastor Conference being held in Phoenix, Arizona, October 5-7.

There were three very fine nominees for this year's award, and the selection committee studied the nominations and supporting materials carefully before making their decision. Congratulations to Dr. Melvin Kieschnick!



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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.

Why . . . ?, continued from Page 4

profession rather than making such decisions based on the personal preferences of 1- 2 faculty members. Over time, the school's/ECE center's entire curriculum (except for religion) and the school's approach to assessing faculty and administrator effectiveness can evolve into being standards-based.

Making the move to becoming standards-based makes sense. Such a move supports improvement efforts, improves communication, and increases accountability. Children benefit from stronger programs and stronger faculty. As professionals, that makes it worth our time and effort!

Dr. Cynthia Kuck serves as a faculty member at Concordia University, River Forest, Illinois' College of Education and can be reached at crfkuckcl@curf.edu. She was instrumental in the development of ELEA's new Elementary Accreditation process. Thank you, Dr. Kuck!

The Trials, Tribulations (and JOY) of opening a Satellite Infant and Toddler Center, *continued from Page 1*

furniture, room dividers, painting, shopping, scrubbing, and fence building, we were open for business in September 2005. A big grand opening ceremony was planned following church one Sunday, with both congregations present and celebrating our joint ecumenical partnership in this venture. The Presbyterian bishop and the LSSCH network head were there to bless this safe, attractive and stimulating environment for little ones.

Things we learned:

- Many of the children on our waiting lists did not want to go to this new center, as they did not want to drive another 10 minutes to get there. It takes time for word to spread about the new location. So we were not full for the first 6 months of the school year.
- Families that had two children to enroll in our center did not want to have one child in the satellite center and one on our main campus, thus compounding our difficulties filling the second site.
- The facility was designed for infants and **toddlers**, but the families applying needed care for **two year olds**. So we filled our toddler class with two year olds (since we needed income to pay our bills), which frustrated the staff because the environment was not ideal for that age group.
- It was difficult to find quality teachers to staff this new location in addition to our existing site. Suddenly we had



30 teacher positions instead of 22 to keep filled and happy! We spent much of the first 2/3 of the year understaffed.

- We learned that subs are really important to have at a second smaller location because we can't just move teachers around to cover the missing teachers as we can do at our larger location.
- The host church was at first very hesitant about our use of their beautiful grassy courtyard for a playyard. There were challenges about where to put up a shed to store our outdoor equipment,

and expectations that all equipment would be put out of site every evening. Putting a sand box in proved to be a challenge in diplomacy.

- When the children grew too big for the

satellite center, the concern became what to do with them the next school year. They had to be assimilated into our main campus, which left us very little room for new children from the community.

More trouble than it is worth? Read on...the joys are plentiful!

- One of our Toddler Teachers, Miss Sandy, agreed to move to the new campus as the Site Supervisor. She turned out to be such a blessing in reaching our goals. As a detail-oriented professional, she and her husband spent countless hours turning that room into an environment that is

especially appropriate and nurturing for little ones. She trained her staff to keep the place immaculate, while at the same time offer stimulating and challenging activities for each child daily.

- Sandy was accepted by the local Junior College to be a Mentor Teacher, and she has three student teachers that she is training as she works. This Infant Toddler Center is known throughout the early childhood professional community now as a shining example of what a superior infant program should look like.
- Once we had the center fully staffed, it runs like a well-oiled machine. Each teacher plays her part in keeping the place interesting for children, clean, safe, and a haven for the parents. Our parents at this center think the world of our satellite center, and treat the teachers as queens.
- After our host church, St. Mark's, got used to having us on their very quiet campus, they relaxed their restrictions about the outdoor play yard. We still clean it all up for the weekend, but can leave the big structures out during the week. The staff there delights in coming over to visit the babies and check out what is growing in our garden containers.

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The Trials, Tribulations (and JOY) of opening a Satellite Infant and Toddler Center, *continued from Page 6*

- To our surprise, the center not only broke even, but showed a profit this first year! We know that some of this is because our main campus helped out with purchases and administrative overhead, and because we were not fully staffed all year. But it was still a major encouragement to the school and finance boards!
- Both churches are enjoying the partnership. Together we are reaching out to the local community to meet a very strong need for these young families.

Over all, it has been a rewarding year. We still have to figure out how to accommodate the extra children once they move on to our twos and

threes classrooms. One possibility is to rent another classroom from our satellite host, St. Mark's, and renovate it and a second playground for older children. We will need to negotiate and research further options.

Would I do it again? Despite the extra work for me and my administrative assistant, I would say, "Yes!" The joys of helping families find the perfect place for their little one are so rewarding. I love to visit the satellite center and see how smoothly and beautifully it is run, and what a wonderful environment it is for the children there. I encourage any of you with similar wait list problems to consider the possibility!

Shirley Becker serves as Director of First Lutheran Early Childhood Center in Torrance, California, and can be reached at beckers@flchurch.org.



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