

VIEWS & VISION

FALL 2005

THANK YOU, KRIS FINLEY

GAYLE DENNY, ELEA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mark Your Calendar!

September 17, 2005 - ELEA Network 5 (Texas) Education Conference at Faith Lutheran Church in Flower Mound, TX. Contact Ann VanLoenen at 972-691-5491 or avanloenen@faithflowermound.org for more information.

September 29, 2005 - ELEA Network 20 (LSSCH) - Fall Administrator's Meeting. Contact Alan Feddersen at 818-956-1485 or afeddersen@lssch.org for more information.

October 5-9, 2005 - ELEA National Board of Directors Meeting/Training in Phoenix, AZ.

October 14, 2005 - LSA - Lutheran Schools Association - New York/New Jersey - Professional Development Day for Early Childhood Directors. Contact Marlene Lund at 212-665-5599 or marlenelund@mindspring.com for more information.

October 26, 2005 - ELEA Network 4 (Minnesota) - Director's Meeting. Contact Brenda Jensen at 507-451-8247 or brendaj@tlcowatonna.org for more information.

October 27, 2005 - ELEA Network 1 (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon & Washington) Pastor/Director Conference at Trinity Lutheran Preschool & Childcare, Tacoma, WA. Contact Karen Beasley at 206-546-0320 or flutpresch@msn.com for more information.

November 8, 2005 - LSA - Lutheran Schools Association - New York/New Jersey - Professional Development Day for all Teachers. Contact Marlene Lund at 212-665-5599 for more information.

Visit www.eleanational.org and click on "What's New" for more upcoming events!

When I started in my position as National Director for Resources for ELEA (now known as Executive Director) in September of 1999, I had no office, no equipment, no one to train me, and no idea what the position was really supposed to look like. What I did have were twelve boxes of files, shipped to me in Washington by the former Director in California; an ELEA bank account with barely enough funds to cover my first few paychecks; a desire to see this organization grow and meet the increasing needs of its members; and Kris Finley.

By pure coincidence, Kris, the newly elected ELEA National Board President, lived approximately five miles from me and we knew each other professionally as former ELEA Network 1 board members and fellow early childhood directors. The Board President could have lived anywhere in the country, as could the director. I don't believe it was luck—I believe it was God's hand, knowing that the team of President and Director that would reenergize ELEA would need to work closely together.

ELEA had always been an excellent source of connections and services to schools and early childhood programs of the ELCA, but it had recently gone through a restructuring process and a financial slump. It would take blind faith and a lot of hard work to increase services, provide infrastructure to the national organization and the networks, and try to meet the real needs of its

members. It would take leadership like that provided by Kris Finley.

Presiding over meetings was just a small part of what Kris did over the past six years as an ELEA volunteer. She has devoted countless unpaid hours giving input and ideas to a myriad of projects, including the development of a National Board Manual; Network Guidelines; school promotional materials; new print resources; and the video training library.

Kris and I do not always agree—in fact there have been some times when we finally had to agree to disagree, since neither one of us was inclined to budge. Some say that is a sign of strong leadership.

ELEA's National Board is a working board, asking far more from its members and particularly its officers than a traditional board of directors. Kris has met that challenge and set the standard for those to follow.

Her presence at our meetings and work sessions, along with our at least weekly phone calls, which replaced our more frequent face-to-face visits after my move to Arizona in December of 2003, will be deeply missed by all—most certainly by me.

Kris has retired from the National Board, along with the Network 1 board, as of June 30, 2005. She continues to be passionate about her work with children as director of Trinity Lutheran Preschool & Kindergarten in Lynnwood, Washington, and we wish her all the best.



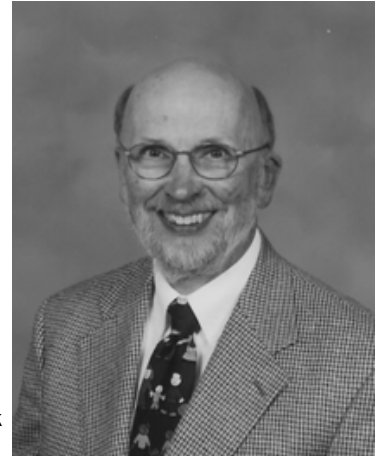
Kris Finley, Former Board President

She leaves at a time when ELEA is healthy—membership has grown from 303 schools and centers to over 500 in the six-year period of her leadership. We have increased our resource mailings to members from one per year to three, and have added a myriad of other membership benefits. If you are not familiar with all of our benefits, visit our website at www.eleanational.org or call the national office at 800-500-7644.

Our new National Board President, Mary Ann Pollock from Baltimore, Maryland, brings greetings found on Page 2 of this issue, and as of this writing, we are busy preparing for a National Board meeting in October. Mary Ann is an excellent replacement for Kris, and I look forward to working with her, as does the entire Board. We all wish to THANK YOU, KRIS!

Gayle Denny, Executive Director of ELEA, can be reached at eleanational@cs.com.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE RECIPIENT OF THE 2005 DONALD A. VETTER EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AWARD,



Dr. James Mahler

The Evangelical Lutheran Education Association had long wanted a way to honor individuals who have provided extraordinary achievements and contributions distinguished by long-standing commitment to the values of ELEA. The Executive Director and National Board fulfilled their desire to establish such an award in 2004, and presented the first award to Marilyn Stalheim, Director of Westwood Early Childhood Center in St. Louis Park, Minnesota in October of 2004 at the ELCA/ELEA National Administrator's Conference in Anaheim.

The namesake of the award, Donald A. Vetter (1919–2002), was known to many as “Mr. Lutheran Schools” and was an individual who devoted his adult life to the ministry of Lutheran education and was the first Executive Director of ELEA at its inception.

The award is intended to draw attention to the value of Lutheran schools and early childhood centers, to identify high standards of

excellence, and to inspire others to ministry in such a setting.

ELEA is proud to announce the 2005 recipient of this prestigious award, Dr. James Mahler of Willmar, Minnesota. Dr. Mahler's educational accomplishments include a B.S. in Education from Concordia University in River Forest, Illinois; an M.A. in Guidance from Columbia University's Teachers College in New York City, New York; an Ed.D. in School Psychology from Columbia University, and School Psychologist credential in both New Jersey and New York.

He served most recently as Professor in the School of Education at California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, California, prior to his retirement in 2004. His professional experience also includes serving as teacher and administrator in several Lutheran schools, school psychologist in several public school systems, and assistant professorship at Concordia University, River For-

est, Illinois.

Dr. Mahler was a founding member, continuing advisory member, author of constitution and major supporter of Lutheran Schools of Southern California & Hawaii (LSSCH), which is Network 20 of ELEA, as well as being an active participant in and major supporter of ELEA nationally for many years.

He has consistently provided leadership in working to improve Lutheran education and extend the base of individuals benefiting from Lutheran education, students and educators alike. His accomplishments are extensive and impressive, but they do not fully reflect the man. Jim's life and career have been characterized by an indefatigable commitment to ministry in and for Lutheran education. Soft spoken and unassuming, Jim was always ready to assist others, to quietly encourage and support. He is widely respected and loved by his peers and colleagues. He is a

deserving recipient of this award who clearly reflects many of the gifts Don Vetter exemplified.

Julie Sieger, former Executive Director of ELEA who has known Dr. Mahler for 23 years states, “All in all I can't think of anyone in the ELCA more worthy of this recognition than Jim Mahler.”

Dr. Mahler will be presented with the award at the October 2005 ELEA National Board meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. Letters and cards of congratulations may be sent to the ELEA National Office to be presented at that time. Congratulations to a worthy recipient!

GREETINGS FROM THE NEW ELEA PRESIDENT, MARYANN POLLOCK

It is indeed an honor and privilege to have been elected as president of the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association National Board of Directors. It is also a very humbling experience! The ELEA, as you know, is a membership organization which serves ELCA schools and early childhood centers. I believe it is our mandate to provide you, the members, with the services you want and need to support the very important work you do to provide a Lutheran education to the youngest of God's children.

I bring to my position many years of experience as a teacher and administrator in public, independent, and Lutheran schools. It has always been important to me to serve in my congregation, often as a member of the congregation council, several times as president, and chair of many committees. I also bring the experience of serving on committees at the synod level. I have served on the National Board of ELEA for several years representing Network 11. As a member of the “reinvention team” of the ELEA's accreditation process, I have had a chance to understand what the very best of our schools and early childhood centers should offer. This has also allowed me to visit schools in various parts of the country to get a

“feel” of our overall organization and those we serve. I believe this varied background gives me a unique perspective for the position as president.

As I write this article, we are awaiting the Churchwide Assembly which most likely will approve a restructuring plan for all of the ELCA. We do know that there will be changes at the ELCA churchwide level as to where schools and early childhood centers fit into this greater structure. We do not know what, if any, changes that may require the ELEA to make. Be assured that we will keep you updated.

Please feel free to contact me with any concerns or suggestions. I am retired, so the information is my home: maryannkpollock@comcast.net or phone me at 410-255-4947.

God's peace to all of you as you work with His precious children.

Mary Ann Pollock



EQUALIZING BENEFITS: WHAT TO DO . . . WHAT TO DO?

TERRI L. OLSON, HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
CONSULTANT, EZNET BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

To be competitive as an employer in today's market, offering a strong employee benefit package is a must. But how can you be fair to all employees when their needs are so different? One employee may be single with no dependents. One may be covered under a spouse's health plan and decline your coverage. Another may be divorced with four children and have an ex-husband who doesn't pay child support. Each employee has varying needs. How can you pay \$600 a month in benefits for one and only \$300 a month for another without feeling that you must treat all employees equally?

Most employers offer the same benefits to all of their eligible employees, but don't provide a cash value to those whose benefit package costs less than others. There is no legal require-

ment to provide the same cash value of benefits to your employees, only the same options among those with equivalent status. So, an employee who is covered under a spouse's plan isn't entitled to any cash value of benefits that s/he's waived.

If you feel an obligation to offer a comparable cash value benefit plan, a cafeteria plan is a great option. In a cafeteria plan, employees select from a menu of plan options: health, dental, dental with orthodontics, supplementary life insurance, cancer insurance, etc. They are given a set dollar amount each month and purchase the benefits that best suit their needs with those dollars. Any excess is deducted from their paycheck. For example, a single employee may use her benefit dollars to purchase a comprehensive health plan plus a long term care plan. A single

mother whose children are covered for health and dental under their father's insurance may opt for supplemental life, long term disability and cancer insurance plans for herself. At open enrollment, employees can change coverage options as their life circumstances change. Of course, offering a 125 Plan with tax-free insurance deductions, medical reimbursement and daycare options makes their personal income stretch even more.

Do you still prefer to pay your employees the cash value difference of their benefits? Just make sure you are doing it properly through payroll. Paying an employee "under the table" is illegal and can lead to fines and a future "relationship" with the IRS! Any compensation to an employee must be paid through payroll. Token awards such as a

small cash gift or gift card for perfect attendance are an exception. However, an ongoing "bonus" or supplemental income paid monthly is subject to taxation.

Do you have other Human Resources questions that puzzle you or keep you up at night? EZNET Business Solutions (through ELEA's Benefits Administrator Nancy Bond Insurance Services) offers HR consulting services as part of their payroll package. No need to search the Internet to understand State and Federal regulations or wonder how you should best counsel an employee whose performance has declined. Just make a call to EZNET and we'll help navigate you through those HR issues the EZ way!

Toll free phone 877/303-ENET

NEW EMPLOYEE BENEFITS OPPORTUNITY!

Under the umbrella of ELEA Employee Benefits Plans, administered by Nancy Bond Insurance Services, are several "sub-benefits", and a new one that we are VERY excited about is BenefitProtect. We have found for several years that, although many of our member schools and early childhood centers would like to be able to provide full medical benefits for their employees, they simply cannot afford it. Nancy and her staff at NBIS have searched out a number of lower-cost, lower-benefit possibilities and found what we think is the best available at this time—BenefitProtect.

This is NOT full medical insurance. It is a limited medical reimbursement plan which is individually issued (you do not need a certain number of participants or a "group"). BenefitProtect is issued regardless of pre-existing conditions and there are no co-pays. This may be the perfect solution for school and center employees who currently have no medical coverage and cannot afford, or are unable to obtain due to prior illness, a full medical plan.

Although there are three levels of plans available, and they can be purchased just for an individual employee or can include spouse and/or children, one example would be Plan 2, for Employee only, which would have a premium of \$148.45 per month. For this amount, the employee would receive:

- ā \$75.00 per doctor's office visit up to a maximum of four visits per year,
- ā Coverage of one physical, eye exam, hearing exam, dental check and flu shot per year,
- ā Hospitalization coverage at \$5,000 for the first six days in hospital, then \$100 per day up to 180 days,
- ā Up to \$3,000 in surgery and anesthesia benefits,
- ā \$50,000 in accidental death benefit,
- ā Benefits for emergency care, x-rays, ambulance, private duty nurse, rehab, lost time, etc.
- ā More!

As a free gift to each of our ELEA members, our new partners at BenefitProtect have provided each employee with a PharmaCare prescription card, offering discounts which may amount to significant savings if you do not have good prescription coverage through your medical insurance. Five of these cards have been mailed with each renewal or new membership—look for them in the packet with your certificate and membership I.D. cards. Just call or email our office to receive as many additional cards as you would like—800-500-7644 or eleanational@cs.com. This is NOT tied to the purchase of any BenefitProtect product—just a complimentary card to let you know who the folks at BenefitProtect are.

For more information on BenefitProtect, call 866-305-4779—the special ELEA line they have set up for us. For more info on all medical plans, retirement, or any other ELEA employee benefit product, call Nancy Bond Insurance Services at 866-899-8559. Keep your staff happy—think BENEFITS!

TEN HEALTHY EXERCISES FOR DIRECTORS AND PRINCIPALS (TO BUILD STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS WITH PASTORS)

MEL KIESCHNICK, WHEAT RIDGE MINISTRIES



Here are ten suggested exercises guaranteed to build stronger relationships between directors/principals and their pastors. Like all exercise programs it is important that they be done on a regular basis. Also, again like any good exercise program, it's better to start today rather than to postpone until tomorrow or next week. Positive results may or may not be obvious in the first month, but will be obvious even to others if done throughout one full school term.

1. TAKE A HIKE - Take a walk to and into your pastor's office at least once a week. This exercise is effective only if the pastor is actually in his/her office when you go there. This may take considerable effort on your part but that's a part of the discipline. Just say, "Hi" or bring good news, or wish God's blessings. The important thing is that you take the initiative and walk those steps.

2. SLOWLY LOOK UP - This exercise can be done with eyes open or eyes shut. The object is to keep looking until you see a future, a preferred future for your school/center. See how it can be bigger, or richer, or more inclusive, or more Christian, or pay better salaries, or how it can help kids grow even better. After looking up and seeing the vision, tell your pastor about it when you take Step 1 above.

3. STAND UP STRAIGHT - Stand tall. Stand proud. Keep the chest out. Be an advocate for your school, your kids, your staff, and your parents. Make sure that your pastor occasionally sees you standing up. S/he will know that you are proud of your ministry and that you will advocate

loudly, assertively, persistently for the cause of setting each of your children free in Jesus Christ, enabling each one to more nearly become all that God intends them to be.

4. STICK YOUR NECK OUT - Be willing to risk. You're doing it for the sake of your kids, your staff, your school families, and your congregations. Never live by the mantra, "Come weal; come woe; my status is quo." Tell your pastor about your risks. Ask him/her to join you in risking for the sake of greater ministry.

5. HOLD YOUR HANDS PALMS UP - Don't be afraid to say to your pastor, "I come asking. I ask for your presence in our school. I ask for your advocacy with the congregation and its boards. I ask for your time with the school staff, kids and families." Tell your pastor that you can't do it as well without his/her support. Be bold in seeking partnership and support.

6. DO THE BENCH PRESS - Sometimes you need to push against an obstacle. Doing so increases strength. Be willing to confront even your pastor. Remember to be assertive, not aggressive; gentle not bossy; considerate not selfish; and don't try to do 20 bench presses all in the same conversation!

7. SHAKE YOUR HEAD UP AND DOWN and mean it. Show genuine empathy for the heavy demands,

which total congregational ministry places upon your pastor. Understand time restraints. Agree with your pastor when she shares her joys, pains, frustrations, hopes and dreams.

8. MOVE YOUR JAW UP AND DOWN - Say the words. Tell your pastor how much you value him/her. Let her/him know that her/his pastoral concern for you is appreciated. Say in public that whoever is listening will know that your school/center and its mission is integral to the mission of the congregation. Tell others how much you appreciate your pastor's theological input, prayers, advocacy, ministry to school families, and references to school ministry in sermons and public prayers.

9. REACH FOR THE CHECK - The pastor must know that you and your school are financially responsible. Your budgets are accurate. Your fee collections are on time. Your FICA insurance

payments are paid. Your share of expenses between school and congregation are being met as mutually agreed upon. And at the end of term actually take your pastor to a nice restaurant, have a good meal and a good conversation and at the end literally pick up the check.

10. DO DEEP KNEE BENDS. - Bend your knees daily before the Lord. Thank God for faithful pastors. Ask God to grant them health and hope in the name of the healing Christ.

P.S. Of course, there are 10 similar exercises for pastors, but today's topic is "principals and directors".

Mel Kieschnick has served Lutheran education both nationally and internationally. Now retired, he serves as a Staff Associate for Wheat Ridge Ministries. He can be reached at melkieschnick@adelphia.net

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ELEA 2005-2006 BUDGET

ELEA operates on a July 1—June 30 fiscal year. The following is the budgeted income and expenses for the current year, enabling you as members to see where our funds come and how your membership dollars are used. Please feel free to contact the National Office at 800-500-7644 or eleanational@cs.com if you have any questions, or email our Board Treasurer, Susan Ryan, at susan4kids@cox.net.

Income

Corporate Relationship	9,600.00
Annual Fund (Kisses for Kids, gifts)	7,000.00
Resource Material Income (print & video)	6,000.00
Membership Dues	83,250.00
Grants	12,000.00
Miscellaneous (interest, advertising, etc.)	<u>2,700.00</u>
TOTAL INCOME	120,550.00

Expenses

Financial Services	1,177.00
Continuing Ed/Association Memberships	1,250.00
Office Expenses (supplies, phone, rent, etc.)	17,140.00
Member Programs (mailings, web site, etc.)	8,400.00
Publications (Views & Vision, On Board)	7,500.00
Payroll (Director & Office Assistant)	80,408.00
Miscellaneous	750.00
Reserves	<u>3,500.00</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	120,125.00

Net Income for Year **425.00**



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The 2006 2nd Bi-Annual
ELCA/ELEA National Administrator &
Pastor Conference

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information to come!*



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READY, SET, GO!

SUSAN RYAN, ELEA NATIONAL BOARD MEMBER—NETWORK 3

It's a high energy time of year. You and the children in your classroom have been training for quite some time for the exciting learning that will take place over the next few months. All have anticipated the start!

Whether you are an Early Childhood professional working in a year-round program or you are returning to a part-year position, this time of late summer often provides a new beginning— a new physical space, a new group of children and/or a new commitment to blessing each child with the joy of learning.

Recent education and child development related resources report that early childhood teachers are increasingly concerned with growing classroom management problems. One of the critical components of a well managed classroom is the classroom environment. The following is intended to be used to reflect on the environment you provide children.

1. How does this space meet the needs of the children that arrive here eager to learn and communicate with each other?
2. Is it a comfortable, warm, busy place where children can feel secure yet challenged for learning?
3. How does our environment show that each child is valued as a unique, competent individual with a desire to learn?
4. Do we provide time for children to choose what, how and when they want to learn?
5. Are all classroom staff sensitive to the personal, developmental, academic, creative, social and emotional needs of each child? How do you increase your awareness?
6. Is the physical environment set up so that children can manipulate, explore, experiment, try out different roles, problem solve, order, organize, and interact with other children and adults?
7. Do the learning centers in the classroom provide activities that are open-ended and multi-level, promoting an atmosphere conducive to individual differences and varying learning styles of children?
8. Does the physical environment include:
 - distinct centers in order to make choices clear to children
 - materials on low shelves, in containers, and on hooks so children can access them independently
 - shelves that are neat and uncluttered
 - a wide variety of learning materials that promote learning in every area of the room
 - regular rotation of materials to keep children's interest
 - similar materials are grouped together to teach children to sort and classify – developing math skills
 - containers and shelves that are thoughtfully labeled (assisting early literacy skill while aiding clean-up time)

Many early childhood classrooms are becoming more and more commercial and less reflective of the natural beauty of God's creation. Children are natural explorers and investigators. Can we commit to providing "real" in their environment and experiences? An excellent resource for any professional early childhood library is "[Designs for Living and Learning Transforming Early Childhood Environments](#)" by Deb Curtis and Margie Carter.

Cultivate your own understanding of the wonderful developmental design of children. Celebrate the young scientist, author, illustrator, musician, mathematician, entertainer and caretaker that lie within. Reflect in the children's environment a value for God's precious design—*each child*.

PLEASE SHARE THIS ARTICLE WITH YOUR CLASSROOM TEACHERS !

Susan Ryan is a former ELCA early childhood center director and currently teaches early childhood education and serves as Children's Center Coordinator at Paradise Valley Community College, Phoenix, Arizona. She can be reached at susan4kids@cox.net.

MORATORIUM LIFTED ON ELEA'S SCHOOL EXTENSION FUND!

ELEA is one again able to make grants from its School Extension Fund, due to the generosity of schools donating their chapel offerings, and a gift from the ELCA. This fund was established in 1973 to provide seed money for starting a Lutheran elementary school. Since the establishment of the School Extension Fund, ELEA has provided seed money for 17 schools. The last monies were disbursed in 1999, with giving low and a moratorium placed on grants ever since. The fund has now been built up to allow for three \$1,000 gifts to be given. These funds are for "hard" expenses, such as books, fencing, equipment, etc., and not for salary or "soft" costs.

Although we hope to be able to extend the fund to early childhood programs in the future, these grants are for Kindergarten and up only. Remember - these funds come from your giving, so please include the School Extension Fund in your congregation's benevolence plans. Applications may be downloaded from the ELEA website at www.eleanational.org or by calling the National Office at 800-500-7644.

ELEA's Purpose Statement

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

WORKING TOGETHER FOR GOD'S CHILDREN

Please read, check, and pass on:

- Pastor
- Superintendent or Exec. Dir.
- Principal
- ECE Director
- School Board Chair
- Teachers

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Views & Vision

Editor: Gayle Denny

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