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Here I Sit...Feeling Like a Heel

By O. John Zillman

Early on in the day, by 9:00 a.m., I could tell things weren't going to go as planned. It was Sunday. Mothers' Day. An early morning blustery, windblown mid-spring rain threatened to continue dumping on the events of the day which, this year, centered on my niece's Confirmation. So, no regular St. Paul service for us today as the schedule called for a pre-service Confirmation and Mothers' Day brunch at a restaurant near where my brother and his family attend church—out in the Land Beyond the Tollway. We'd planned to leave at 10 a.m. but, with the weather, I knew we'd be running late. Again.

As most fathers of my generation likely experience, deference in terms of being the spiritual head of the family is accepted at the philosophical level, but the actual logistics of Sunday mornings are in the hands and on the timetable of others devolving into something like:

“If you cannot rouse the wicked with the Judgment's dread alarms,

You can sit out in the driveway, fuming while the engine warms...”

We could get up at 4 a.m. on Sundays and still not get into the pew before the pastor starts the announcements—and we live five blocks from church.

So while others were up and getting ready, I made a quick dash to the corner station for gas, then over to the grocery/drug store to pick up a “To My Wife” Mothers' Day card. I had planned to do this the day before but had spent the day doing yard work and it just didn't get done. Her Mothers' Day gift from me this year was a redbud tree and since it didn't work well as a corsage, I planted it in the back yard instead, which took most of Saturday afternoon. At any rate, I had a *plan* by which *I* could be on time—always a handy excuse—as long as everything fell neatly into place.

A quick shower, shave and into my standard church duds: navy blue blazer, khaki slacks (grey wool in the winter) a button-down shirt, muted tie and tasseled loafers. Ready in twenty minutes flat and five minutes before the anticipated departure time. I love it when a plan comes together.

We needed to leave by 10 a.m. “C’mon let’s hit the road—it’s raining and blowing and it’s going to take more time!” I grabbed one of the Walther Lutheran High School golf outing freebie umbrellas off the coat rack for maximum coverage, threw on a coat and we were out the door—five minutes later than we had originally wanted to leave.

Interstate 88 was pretty clear of traffic but the wind and rain made it slower going than usual. My wife and Elder Daughter were chatting; I was in the pilot’s seat—adjusting front and rear wipers, all-wheel drive, fog lights, being careful of hydroplaning, monitoring airspeed, rate of climb, turn and bank indicators... calmly taking care of matters on the flight deck when, as I reached over to activate the rear window and side mirror defroster gizmos, I happened to glance down and...*unthinkable disaster!* I noticed that on my right foot was a *burgundy* colored loafer—with the tassel and the little fan-shaped leather trim thingy like you see on golf shoes and...I *made* myself look...on my left foot, a single tassel-no-trim-thingy *black* loafer. My be-on-time and totally in-control plan had a flaw I hadn’t counted on: a dimly lit bedroom on a gloomy, rainy Sunday morning. It was too late to abort the mission and I couldn’t imagine what kind of smokescreen I’d have to make up to turn around and drive back home to change one shoe—or the other.

I’ve always taken pride in my ability to meet unforeseen emergencies: somehow my Inner Boy Scout always takes over. I can find my way through miles of wintry forest relying on a compass to get me back to camp before dusk, canoe a flash-flooding river in the dark, start a campfire in the rain or fix a balky camping lantern with a safety pin and a spoon but this...THIS was not going to be easy.

What to do. Mile markers clipped by in the wind-whipped spray as I strategized. Long term goals crossed my mind, such as maybe it was time to listen to Youngest Daughter when she chided me for always buying the same kind of shoes, same maker, same style but different color. Always made sense to me

before, but maybe I'd reached some kind of strange watershed here.

For the short run, though, the most important thing would be to have a fallback position with ready responses if, in fact, this fashion *faux pas* were discovered. "Oh. That. Well, I couldn't decide which pair to wear." Or, "Yeah, and I've got another pair just like them at home." It *did* occur to me that this was probably the one day in my life when the phrase, "Well, John, now it seems as though the shoe is on the other foot" would not apply to me because, well, it *was* the other shoe on the other foot so I'm way ahead of you, pal, and...never mind.

I quickly resolved that a major objective of the day would be to get through all of this without my younger sister noticing as she would be the one to NEVER let me forget it and that it would just give her a permanent edge in the long-term but low-key rivalry between us, she being a Valparaiso grad and all.

Arriving at the restaurant for the brunch, and since the rain had subsided, I carried my coat—not like one usually does, draped over one's arm—but by the collar so it was kind of covering my right trouser leg all the way down just low enough to hide my right/wrong shoe. (The black loafer, on the left, actually went well with this outfit, I had on a black belt and so I figured that I'd try to look at least laterally dapper.) I was careful not to hold it directly in front of me however so as not to arouse any suspicions concerning wardrobe malfunctions of any other variety.

We got into the lobby, greeted the Moms of the Day, said hello to my brother's in-laws who were in town for the service and proceeded into the banquet hall. It was a long walk through a too brightly lit room, holding my coat in front of my right leg. We found our seats and, thankfully, the place was well-set with long tablecloths. I sat between my mother—who, if she noticed, wouldn't blow my cover because, after all, she had been most responsible for teaching me to dress myself and this would reflect badly on her—and my wife who quickly became engaged in animated conversation with my sister-in-law. Safe on the right; busy on the left.

Time for the buffet. I guessed correctly that everyone in the place was more concerned about keeping their mothers happy than looking at other people's shoes, so I *very politely* let

everyone at the table go ahead of me, got in line, filled my plate and returned to the table. So far; so good. Feeling confident, I even got up for seconds—after all, this was one of those rare occasions upon which my brother was picking up the tab *and* I could have corned-beef hash which is just one of the odd food preferences that I've acquired over a lifetime. My wife has never tried it, although she always asks me how it tastes: "Like corned beef hash; want some?" "No, thanks."

Photos taken, gifts opened, gotta' get to church. Ten minutes later, I *very politely* dropped my wife and daughter off at the entrance of the church—"Gee, looks like it might rain again, so I'll drop you here."—so I could park and walk alone across the parking lot without anyone but a few hurried parents and fourteen year-old confirmands seeing my shoes. Fourteen-year-olds only look at their own shoes anyway and their moms were too busy to notice as they tried to keep neatly pressed white gowns from flying off hangers on the way in.

Into the sanctuary and into the back row of the pews. Good. For once I was happy to be a classic Missouri Synod Lutheran in terms of the seating arrangements. I placed my mismatched feet back under me beneath the pew and was careful that when I adjusted my sitting position, to always keep the burgundy loafer in a shadow so it would appear to be black like the other one. I didn't cross my legs as I usually do so. As other families came in, I actually found myself looking at other men's shoes as if hoping to silently bond with at least one other absent-minded guy. ("Their eyes locked, sharing the horrible secret, but their facial expressions remained cool and unflinching like the professionals that they knew themselves to be. The code had to remain unbroken for they knew full well what was at stake—a black and a burgundy tasseled loafer; a brown and a black cap-toe oxford—four mismatched shoes; two desperate men. It made no difference now. Focus, *focus* on the mission. They had each instantly known the other's mind but they knew they could not speak of these things—ever.")

The service was very nice. Beaming parents, happy grandparents and restless siblings, cousins and friends filled the space and focused on the processional of tall, nearly willowy girls and shorter but well-scrubbed boys—several of whom reminded me of my own pubescent Confirmation photo with

oddly combed hair, not quite ready for that first shave—all smartly choreographed by ushers and Confirmation Coordinators from the back of the church.

An attractive young couple sat directly in front of us, Mom on the left, Dad on the right and a red-haired, towheaded nine year old between them. They kept his attention on the service with “Look—look at your brother. Can you see him now? It won’t be long until *you’re* up there” looks and nudges. No one but *my* brother seated next to me noticed when, sitting down after the Gospel reading, I accidentally dropped my service bulletin which slid down to the seat of the pew behind them, past the point of no return, precisely to the spot upon which Attractive Young Couple Mom promptly sat. I looked at him and shrugged,

“Remember that I have commanded you to be determined and confident! Do not be afraid or discouraged, for I, the Lord, your God am with you wherever you go!” Joshua 1:9

motioned to him to borrow his bulletin for the number of the next hymn. Apparently young Tow-Head’s attention had been diverted by my clumsiness

and after a few determined tugs, handed my errant and slightly rumpled program to his mother. Mom smilingly turned and with eyes that asked, “Would this be yours?” handed it to me. I shrugged again, took it sheepishly and pulled my feet back further under the pew.

With a surname like mine, my family can always relax for most of any kind of service or ceremony for which one of our number is lined up. (This is also the reason why, when a new semester begins, I take attendance beginning with the end of the roster.) One by one, A through W, the young catechumens rose, walked forward and knelt while the rest of the kids in their pew did the inchworm slide in unison—up, over, sit—toward the center aisle. Then, finally, it was my niece’s turn and after the Confirmation blessing, her confirmation verse—Joshua 1:9—resonated through the sanctuary:

“Remember that I have commanded you to be determined and confident! Do not be afraid or discouraged, for I, the Lord, your God am with you wherever you go!”

Confidence. Courage. Fearlessness. Knowing that God is bigger than anything that may come your way or chase you around, more loving than any person in your life can possibly be though they try, more sure than anything that can go wrong in your life from the inconsequential disappointment to the truly sad or frightening. You are well cared for by a God who dearly loves you. These are the words that, as the pastor had said in his sermon, were the gifts and the story that the Holy Spirit was inscribing on the book of their young hearts this day, just as had been written on the hearts of those present at Pentecost. With the sound of a mighty wind, He had come to rest on each with a power, continuing right down through time, blustering and breezing its way right into that church, onto and into all of us gathered there on that Mothers' Day afternoon.

More pictures, goodbyes and a walk outside to the cars, me with my coat behind everyone else. The rain had gone but the wind was still cool and strong from the northeast. When we got home, I carefully put my shoes away in the closet, reuniting each with its proper mate. But it occurred to me that while the (yet undiscovered) error in my ensemble was inadvertent, perhaps the day's weather had not been an accident at all. *LEJ*

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Confirmation—A Developmental Understanding

by David L. Rueter

There is an old joke that includes the idea that all you need to do to get rid of rats (or bats, depending on the version you hear) out of your church building is baptize them if you are a Baptist or confirm them if you are a Lutheran. As is the case with many forms of humor, there is all too much truth included to make one a bit uncomfortable while laughing. It is generally expected that a number of our students whom we confirmed this past spring, will never again be seen in our ministries. If this is known, the question is what can be done about it? I believe a portion of the answer lies in how we understand our students from a developmental perspective.

Foundations

When discussing a practice of the church with as rich a history and emotional a connection as Confirmation, one must take care in what is said and how it is stated. For the past several years I have been wrestling with the nature, purpose, and educational practices that go into the curricular development of the catechetical process for junior high youth. Increasingly my consideration of this topic has been expanded to encompass not merely the practices that make up Confirmation instruction, but also the nurture of the family prior to the start of formal instruction. Further I have begun wondering if what we have had handed down to us in the 21st Century is a practice of Confirmation that is both in line with Scripture as well as our best understanding of developmental psychology. To that end, I offer this, my attempt at a developmental understanding of Confirmation.

To begin, it would be best if we made sure that we as author and reader alike are on the same page with what is meant by a developmental understanding of Confirmation. By this I mean to ask questions related to the appropriateness of the questions

we ask of young people when we confirm them with respect to the state of psychological and spiritual development that they generally are in at the time. What will not be undertaken here is a critique of the doctrinal content of catechetical instruction. It will be assumed that the instruction under discussion includes the totality of the Six Chief Parts as Luther set them out in his classic Small Catechism. What will be under examination will be the manner in which that doctrinal content is communicated and understood by early teens in the traditional seventh and eighth grade levels.

There are I believe three critical questions when considering one's educational approach to Confirmation instruction.

1. What outcomes do we desire from Confirmation Instruction?
2. Where are our students developmentally?
3. Are the outcomes we desire developmentally appropriate for our students?

As you can see these three critical questions naturally build one on top of the other. Once one has been able to articulate the outcomes desired of students in Confirmation then an assessment of their development will confirm if the outcomes chosen are appropriate for them.

The integration of Christian educational practices with research from developmental psychology ought to be entered into with a certain amount of caution. The presuppositions that typically are a part of the framework from which developmental psychologists conduct their research are at times diametrically opposed to a theistic worldview. A few of the more common presuppositions are:

1. Atheistic rather than theistic.
2. Reductionism rather than constructivism (religious inclinations are reduced to arising out of base inclinations).
3. Determinism rather than freedom.
4. Individualism rather than interdependence.
5. Self-centered morality rather than God centered.
6. Subjectivism rather than realism.

This is not to say that very useful information has been synthesized by the theorists that will be discussed below, rather that when considering the whole of their work, some caution

ought to be taken and an understanding of the presuppositions from which they conducted their work can provide just that. With this in mind developmental psychology can be integrated with Confirmation instructional practices with appropriate caution.

Theorists

Jean Piaget (1896-1980)

Piaget's theory of children's intellectual development places the traditional Confirmation student in what he called the formal operational stage (Singer, p. 26). He posited that starting around age 11 children begin to think logically and develop the ability to reason abstractly. In this way they begin to be able to form generalizations based on prior experience. Prior to this development, children have in the concrete operational stage begun to think logically, though only with respect to objects and events (p. 22). The ages related to this transition are not nearly as fixed as Piaget supposed, yet, the question posed from his research can help us in understanding our approach with our students.

Students might recognize that Jesus is God, but not be able to unpack the nuances of the Trinity until they are in Confirmation.

For example, introducing God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can be done sooner than the traditional Confirmation age. Students might recognize that Jesus is God, but not be able to unpack the nuances of the Trinity until they are in Confirmation. However introducing the divinity of Christ along with the Father and Holy Spirit provides the necessary underpinning to consider the more abstract nature of the Trinity as a whole. In this way, the general concept is known earlier, even before abstraction is possible.

A further example can be found in the recitation of the Lord's Prayer. There is simply no reason to believe that children must wait until seventh grade to consider the use of this prayer. When our Associate Pastor attempted to teach his 3 year old daughter the Lord's Prayer, she followed his instruction to repeat after him. When he began "Our Father", she followed with "who art in heaven." She did not need to be taught the prayer as she

had already learned it by participating in worship. This form of corporate prayer was already an active part of her young life. At her age, in Piaget's pre-operational stage, she is not ready yet to make too much application of this prayer, but the general form of the prayer acts as a spiritual imprint on her young mind and spirit so that when she is older, her further, deepening considerations of the contours and context of the prayer's petitions will have richer meaning to her along with the familiarity and comfort of its language. While in the concrete operational stage, she will be able to begin connecting this prayer with prayer in general using it as a model prayer for her own prayers. Then in Confirmation that continued use of the Lord's Prayer will aid in her abstract application of the individual petitions understanding what God gives to us and what we need from God.

Erik Erikson (1902-1994)

According to the work of Erik Erikson, (1980) the teenage years that most Confirmation students enter into during their course of study is marked by the struggle between Identity vs. Role Confusion (p. 94). It is during this time that students are "desperately seeking for a satisfactory sense of belonging" (Erikson, p. 95). At the time in which we are engaging our students in study and questions related to their future in the Body of Christ, they are working out issues related to fidelity and loyalty. These internal struggles match well with the typical stated outcomes of Confirmation instruction. However since this stage as defined by Erikson lasts from approximately age 12 to age 18, seeking a conclusion at 14 years of age might be premature.

As witnessed in youth ministries across the country, adolescence is a time when young people try on a variety of identities before settling upon one that they believe most resonates with their own core being. Erikson, himself, recognized that our culture offers such commercial fare that facilitates more than ample opportunities to hide in multiple identities, thus failing to reach an authentic true self (p. 100). He posits that "this can be counteracted only by a system of education that transmits values and goals which determinedly aspire beyond mere 'functioning' and 'making the grade'" (Erikson, p. 100). Though intended as a recommendation for traditional school education, the educational

process of Confirmation does provide for values formation as Erikson recommends. The challenge remains however, that by prematurely drawing the educational process to a conclusion the actual developmental process of identity formation is left unguided by the best educational process that the church brings to bear on this issue.

Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987)

In the matrix of the six stages of moral judgment developed by Lawrence Kohlberg, Confirmation students are generally found in Stage 3 which is a part of Level II – Conventional (Powers, 1989). It is during this stage that students find themselves very much concerned with the expectations of others and conformity with the group of which they desire to be a part. A part of

We can confuse a lack of deep questioning with assent to what is being taught rather than a lack of deeper reflection...

this conformity concerns conformity to authority figures. The good boy/good girl attitude involves “the need to be a good person ... caring for others ... (and the) desire to maintain rules and authority which support stereotypically good behavior” (p. 8). While in this stage, it can be relatively

simple to encourage right behavior in a manner that fails to provide time to reflect upon the purposes behind it. As Christian leaders engaging in Confirmation instruction, we can confuse a lack of deep questioning with assent to what is being taught rather than a lack of deeper reflection upon the content that we have presented.

Upon entering Kohlberg’s Stage 4, students move beyond mere good/bad thinking toward a more nuanced understanding of how moral questions are answered. They move beyond a black and white understanding of the world and begin to uncover that various shades of grey that make understanding the Ten Commandments, for example, far more complicated. For some Confirmation students these grey shaded questions begin to surface, especially in the eighth grade. They are beginning the process of applying the definitions of moral imperatives to their own lives. As students are at various points in this transition,

not all of a given class will be engaged by the more advanced questions that some students find themselves wrestling with. Understanding this, the use of small groups in Confirmation instruction can provide the necessary space and time during which these grey area questions can be unpacked with those students who desire such engagement, while those students less interested and less prepared to deal with such questions can be engaged in other matters.

James Fowler

Connecting child development with faith development James Fowler (1981) has concluded that students in Confirmation classes generally have what he calls “Synthetic-Conventional” faith. It is during this time of instruction in the faith that they move from “Mythic-Literal” faith entering into a more abstract conception of faith as they enter into early adolescence. This stage (Stage 3) is characterized by conformity (p. 75). As we teach the contents of the faith to our students, we apply our own pressure upon that concern with conformity.

In this stage, a person begins to consider why he/she believes as he/she does. One pulls together various parts of faith and tends to conform to the majority, and students perceive that they are rewarded or punished for following rules laid down by the proper authority (the church or Bible). As noted above, we as Confirmation instructors exert a pressure on our students toward conformity. Their peers exert an even greater pressure in this regard. We are able to reflect deeply upon the methods by which we attempt to exert a positive pressure. Their peers tend not to be nearly as reflective or deliberate. The much discussed additional shaping that pop culture provides in concert with their peers sets a potential tone that runs counter to that of our own.

Confirmation instructors exert a pressure on our students toward conformity. Their peers exert an even greater pressure.

What gets interesting is when students begin to move deeper into stage 3. The influence of peers increases while the influence of other more traditional authority figures is reduced, at least as

seen in the immediate circumstances of life. If the Confirmation instructors exert pressure in a formative way such that the later rejection of this influence is not overly reactionary, there is a greater chance of a return to the appreciation of this wisdom by the student. What I believe makes the difference is avoiding abusing the conforming influence when we have it, and instead considering that influence to be a precious gift from God for proper stewardship and care just as all other such gifts of God are treated. The difficulty of this situation is that all too often we do not recognize this fact and proceed under the false assumption that merely presenting the material and receiving affirmative responses to that presentation is enough. Students at this age are likely to simply acquiesce without much depth of understanding or personal integration of the contents of the Christian faith. If we take this defensive posture as true understanding and true faith, we fail in our calling. This may well be a better time to introduce content for discussion and dissection rather than a time for the presentation of closed doctrines to which students may ascribe. More to come on this thought.

Balswic, King, and Reimer

In an attempt to provide a conception of human development that does not rely as heavily upon Neo-Orthodoxy as had Fowler's work, Balswick, King, and Reimer published *The Reciprocating Self* in 2005. The concept of the reciprocating self as defined by their work is the self that, in all its uniqueness and fullness of being, engages fully in relationship with another in all its particularity (Balswick, King, & Reimer, p. 21). Similar to the concept of self-differentiation, the reciprocating self is both fully relationally connected while remaining psychologically distinct from those around him/her. They assert, that the reciprocating self can be nurtured best when:

1. personal relationships are characterized by a *covenant* (unconditional love) commitment rather than a conditional commitment
2. when the response to failure in relationship is characterized by *gracing* rather than shaming
3. when persons in relationship use their power, giftedness and resources to *empower* rather than to control the other

4. when the relationship is characterized by an openness that can lead to *intimacy* rather than isolation. (Balswick, King, & Reimer, p. 51)

They envision the interplay of these four components as a cyclical exchange where the increase in each component provides the impetus for an increase in other areas, thus spiraling toward mature reciprocating self.

Within the framework of the reciprocating self, Confirmation students are confronting “emerging particularity”, “emerging relationality” and “thriving” (Balswick, King, & Reimer, pp. 178-182). The meaning of “emerging particularity” can be seen in the interplay between identity and differentiation. It is during this time that our students are distinguishing themselves from the identity of their families. They are exploring the beliefs that have been handed to them and coming to terms with what it will mean for them to retain or reject those beliefs. Thus students wrestle with the development of a self that can remain in relationship with his/her own parents, while renegotiating the terms by which

This does not of course mean that we are left with nothing to do, rather we are to remain faithful in a supportive role.

this relationship will take place. “During this process, young people may experiment with different identities, they may explore different belief systems and try out different worldviews” (p. 179). Once again a word of caution is necessary for those who tend to

be less than comfortable with watching their students question the very foundation of the Christian faith. Disturbing as it might be to watch, this exploration is a part of the process of the development of the adult reciprocating self. This does not of course mean that we are left with nothing to do, rather we are to remain faithful in a supportive role, providing guidance and answers as our students’ questions surface and are explored.

“Emerging relationality” entails an understanding that “to an adolescent, relationships are not just something, they are everything” (Balswick, King, & Reimer, p. 180). Any one in youth ministry knows this by the ever repeated question of “but who is going to be there?” Our students are motivated not by what activities are programmed or what lessons are taught

nearly as much as they are motivated by the peers with whom they engage in those that we offer. Though at times this concern might appear self important the authors stress that, rather than being self-absorbed, adolescents are deeply concerned with the plight of others (p. 181), both those with whom they are in direct relationship and those whose concerns are known to them in a more global manner. All of this coalesces into a “thriving” self:

A thriving young person is a youth who makes the most of his or her own potential and circumstances, has a meaningful and satisfying life, actively contributes to the common good and is on the pathway to a hopeful future...They not only have a sense of meaning and personal fulfillment, but they demonstrate a commitment to the community or society in which they live. (Balswick, King, & Reimer, p. 182)

Could this not serve as a partial goal for our Confirmation instruction? Without foregoing the doctrinal imperatives of our instruction, the formation of a student who functions as a reciprocating self engaged in care of those around him/her would be a student fully connected to the heart of Christ. One of the key things to remember with regard to the development of the reciprocating self in adolescence is that it is a process (Balswick, King, & Reimer, p. 183). Our students in Confirmation may be on their way through this emergence, but clearly they are far from their destination. With this in my a few recommendations for the practice of Confirmation can be postulated.

Recommendations for Practice

Walt Mueller (2007) asserts that “One of the developmental tasks of adolescence is discovering who you are as an individual. When our kids suppress and deny their God-created individuality in an attempt to conform, they can’t help but feel worse about themselves” (p. 266). To this end, we have explored what developmental theorists have found with regard to the development of our students in this very critical and challenging developmental task. The goal in this endeavor has not been to establish what ought to be taught to our young people. The course of study for Lutheran youth in Confirmation is well established and truly foundational. Rather the purpose here is to explore just how the content of our faith can best be taught to our students, so that they can discover their identity in Christ.

Taking a cue from Richard Osmer's (1996) *Confirmation*, which suggests that students not have mandated starting time rather that they be allowed to work their way through Confirmation instruction as they are developmentally ready for it (p. 195), I would like to offer the following three recommendations for a practice of Confirmation that is in line with what we know about our student's development at this age.

1. Content Younger
2. Depth Greater/Mentor Longer
3. Pledge Later.

Content Younger

Children begin to develop "procedural memory" (Balswick, King, & Reimer, p. 150) when they are school age. It is at this time that they are able not only to place events in their own lives in order, but they are able to place other lists, such as the alphabet and basic math tables in their memory for later usage. Thus I would suggest that the Six Chief Parts should be introduced into Sunday school starting in first grade. Beginning with the Lord's Prayer which, if the child has been regular with parents in worship, will already be familiar; the students will be capable of learning the list of the 10 Commandments. More abstract content such as the Sacraments and Apostle's Creed can be held in reserve until fourth grade, when they enter Fowler's mythic-literal second stage of faith. It is at this time that the use of story helps teach the Apostle's Creed as the story of our creation, salvation, and faith in God (Fowler, p. 136).

Depth Greater/Mentor Longer

By introducing the content of the faith that makes up traditional Confirmation instruction prior to the formal start of Confirmation, a student's time in Confirmation can be used to increase their depth of understand of that content. The ability to think abstractly along with the desire to explore and understand for themselves the faith of their families should be taken into account as an asset for a quality Confirmation program, rather than be seen as something to work against. One method that can be used to accomplish this would be to offer shorter courses for students from seventh through tenth grade on each of the Six Chief parts. Courses should be no longer than 4-8 weeks at a stretch, but could be two to three hours in length if a variety

of teaching methods is used to help students move from surface level inquiry toward a deeper exploration. Rather than spending time drilling students on what the Ten Commandments are, instructional time should be used to inquire along with students as to the nature and nuance of each commandment and their impact as a whole on our lives. The Sacraments can be unpacked not as doctrinal points only, but rather as a functioning part of church life.

An added feature of these courses as well as the support offered between sessions and courses can include the use of mentors. Students upon entering the seventh grade could be provided with a mentor, someone with a prior connection to the student or their family if possible, but certainly one with their own deepening and growing walk with Christ. With the help of this mentor students would have time during each session of the short courses to discuss what the larger group has been learning about with their mentor. In this way, the instructional methods are varied while a spiritual direction-type relationship is fostered that will help guide the student through the entire process, also helping to ensure that students progress neither too fast, nor too slowly through the courses.

Pledge Later

Students could take the courses on the Six Chief Parts at a pace they are ready for and make their Confirmation by tenth grade or sooner if ready. In this way, students do not rush, nor become stuck in the program failing to progress or be challenged to really consider the claims of the faith. The traditional seventh grade start for this work is appropriate as students are moving into a stage in their development where they are able to abstractly consider issues related to faith. However rather than mandating a particular start, students who are not yet ready upon entering into the seventh grade should be encouraged to only begin when they and their mentor believe that they are sufficiently ready.

On the back end of instruction, students should not be rushed toward completion. Rather they should be encouraged to take their time to really consider what kind of a promise they are being asked to make before God, their family, and congregation. This means that for students who require additional time to keep up in school, that they might need a longer amount of time to

allow them to be able to give the necessary time toward this process. Their parents, pastor, Director of Christian Education, and mentor work with them in order to maintain an appropriate pace for their learning and maturation in the faith.

Concluding Thoughts

Arthur Repp stated that “The history of Confirmation in the Lutheran Church clearly shows that no one type of Confirmation has won acceptance everywhere at any time” (p. 155). Though in the Lutheran Church, we have been solid on our understanding of what we are to teach to our children, the open question of how best to provide that instruction has been wrestled with since the time of Luther. What I have suggested is but an approach. It is an approach that attempts to take into account the learning that can be found in the work of developmental theorists. The hope is that by applying such knowledge our students will not merely retain the facts of the faith with greater efficiency, but also that through our instruction and the work of the Holy Spirit that our students would build the foundation for a lifelong growing and vibrant faith in God, rather than making a quick exit from church life immediately after they are confirmed. Isn’t that what Confirmation is really all about? **LEJ**

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What Teachers Can Do When Overindulged Children Come to School

by David J. Bredehoff and Chelsae K. Armao

Parents want the best for their children, but sometimes they give too much, they overindulge. What then is overindulgence? How does overindulgence affect children? As a teacher, what does overindulgence mean for you and your classroom? How should you respond to overindulged students? If overindulgence has a negative impact on children and can affect the classroom, teachers need the ability to make effective and positive changes to prevent it. The authors have three goals in mind for this article: first, we will define overindulgence; second, we will describe the research on how overindulgence affects children; and third we will offer suggestions on how teachers and schools can respond to overindulgence. Let's start by considering the following cases of overindulgence.

Case #1: The Failing Student

It is Friday afternoon and after a long difficult week teaching fifth grade you are exhausted and ready to go home for the weekend. As you are about to leave for home, you get a phone call from an angry parent. He feels you are unfair in the way you are grading his daughter and wants you to change her grade. He threatens to take the matter to the administration if you do not comply. What should you do?

Case #2: The Over-involved Parent

You start each school day by checking email. Recently, a mother of one of your second graders has been emailing and demanding that you report her son's assignments and progress daily. If you do not respond to her immediately, she gets upset. Everyday she wants to know in great detail how her son is doing in your class. What should you do?

Case #3: The Over-the-Top Prom

You are at a faculty meeting before the up-coming high school prom. One of your colleagues raises the concern that

prom has ballooned into a lavish extravaganza of limos, tuxedos, dresses, dinners and parties costing in some cases as much as \$3,000 per student. She wonders aloud, “Should we do something to restrain students’ parents from spending more every year?”

Addressing the needs of students is part of the educator’s job, but fulfilling all the wishes of children could be encouraging overindulgence. The Overindulgence Project (Clarke, Dawson & Bredehoft, 2007) studied childhood overindulgence and subsequent problems in adulthood (for more information concerning the Overindulgence Project see <http://www.overindulgence.info/AboutOurResearch.htm>). Overindulgence is more than being permissive with children and giving them too much, it also includes not having rules or enforcing rules (Bredehoft, Mennicke, Potter & Clarke, 1998; Clarke, Dawson & Bredehoft, 2004).

Overindulgence Defined

Bredehoft et al. (1998) define overindulgence as giving children too much, too soon and too long. It involves giving experiences that are not appropriate for their age, interests or talents, and meets the adult’s needs rather than the child’s. Overindulgence can also include using a disproportionate amount of family resources, or doing something or having so much that it actually does harm to the child.

Overindulgence...
meets the adult’s
needs rather than
the child’s.

Overindulgence is also much more than spoiling. This definition of overindulgence identifies three types of overindulgence.

The three types of overindulgence include giving too much, over-nurturing, and too little structure (Bredehoft & Leach, 2006; Clarke, Dawson & Bredehoft, 2004). Having too much can come not only in the form of material possessions, but can be seen when parents schedule children for too many activities. Toys, clothes, privileges, entertainment, sports, and camps all fall under the category of giving too much. Over-nurture can involve over-loving (smothering), giving too much attention, or doing things for children that they should do for themselves. Having no chores, no rules, not enforcing the rules, and not expecting children to learn skills are all examples of soft structure. These three types of overindulgence can interact to affect child development.

Are children more overindulged today? Statistics on the amount of money children spend annually raise the question of whether children are more overindulged today than in the past. For example, children 18 and under spend \$150 billion dollars each year; Americans under age 25 are spending five times more money than their parents did at that age; U.S. teens spend on average \$80.00 per shopping trip to the mall (Ewold, 2003); and experts figure the annual tween-age (5-12 yr. olds) buying power at about \$85 billion (Strauss, 2004).

Parents Who Overindulge Their Children

Parents who overindulge their children have certain recognizable characteristics (Walcheski, Bredehoft & Leach, 2007). One noticeable characteristic is that they feel disempowered when it comes to parenting. This can come from a lack of parenting skills or not having adequate knowledge about parenting. Parents who overindulge their children are not satisfied with parenting, nor do they value it. Further, Walcheski et al. (2007) found that the more parents overindulge their children the more likely they are to use authoritarian or permissive parenting styles (Baumrind, 1978) or both. Authoritarian and permissive parents raise children who have poorer social skills, lower self-esteem, do more poorly in school, and are more likely to be involved in problem behavior (Coopersmith, 1967; Baumrind, 1996; Buri, Louiselle, Misukanis & Mueller, 1988). When parents overindulge, their children grow up without important skills they need in adulthood (Bredehoft et al., 1998; Bredehoft & Clarke, 2006; Bredehoft & Leach, 2006).

It is important to understand that overindulgence comes from a good heart. Parents always want the best for their children, but sometimes they overdo it. As Ada Alden says, “If you water a plant too much, it dies. Even if you are watering it too much out of love, it still dies” (Clarke et al., 2004, p. 37). While the intentions may be good, the risks are serious.

Risks of Overindulgence

All three types of overindulgence were found to have negative influences affecting children into adulthood. Bredehoft et al. (1998), Bredehoft & Clarke (2006), Bredehoft & Leach (2006) found that children who are overindulged grow up to be at risk for:

- not knowing the difference between needs and wants;

- needing constant stimulation and entertainment from others;
- being deficient in life skills which interferes with performing daily tasks;
- not taking responsibility for their own actions;
- not learning important social skills which lead to interpersonal boundary issues and decision making problems;
- lower self-efficacy (a sense of feeling incapable of dealing effectively with life problems); and
- overeating, overspending, and dysfunctional thinking (increased depressive thoughts).

Paradoxically, overindulged children can develop an overblown sense of self-importance which can lead to problems at school, on the job, and/or in relationships.

The Connection between Overindulgence, Parenting, and Adult Relationships

Overindulged children face a number of disadvantages when they become parents.

Bredehoft (2006) found that the more children are overindulged the more likely they are to become parents who:

- feel ineffective;
- believe they are not in control of their own life or their child's behavior; and
- think they are not responsible for their child's actions, and that raising good children is due to fate, luck, or chance.

Overindulged children can develop an overblown sense of self-importance which can lead to problems at school, on the job, and/or in relationships.

When overindulged children grow up they are more likely to select a partner who overindulges them and vice versa. Then, both usually overindulge their children. Often there is dissatisfaction in these relationships stemming from money management problems, the belief that the partner controls the relationship, or ineffective parenting skills. Solving these issues is difficult, because adults who were overindulged as children tend to possess poor conflict resolution skills (Bredehoft et al., 1998; Bredehoft & Clarke, 2006; Walcheski et al., 2007).

How do I know if it is overindulgence?

How can teachers tell if a particular behavior on the part of an adult qualifies as overindulging a child or not? Clarke, Dawson & Bredehoft (2004) identify four crucial questions called the Test of Four: a very powerful tool used to determine if something is overindulgence. A “yes” answer to any of the Test of Four questions indicates that it probably is overindulgence. A “yes” to all four screams, “Look out! This is a risky situation. There clearly is an overindulgence problem.”

The Test of Four

1. Development? Does it interfere with the child’s/student’s development?
2. Resources? Does it use a disproportionate amount of resources (e.g., money, time, energy, focus etc.) to meet the wants, not the needs of one or more of the students/children?
3. Whose needs? Are you doing it to benefit you the teacher or his/her parent more than the student/child?
4. Possible harm? Does it potentially harm others, society, or the planet in some way?

Applying the Test of Four

Consider the angry father in case # 1 who is pressuring the teacher to change his daughter’s grade—is this overindulgence?

1. Will changing her grade get in the way of this student learning a developmental task? *Yes. If after you have reviewed her grades and have determined that no calculation errors were made, changing her grade would prevent her from learning a number of important developmental tasks (e.g., completing work, turning it in on time, doing high quality work, mastering necessary knowledge etc.).*
2. Will changing the grade use a disproportionate amount of resources (e.g., money, time, energy, focus etc.) to meet the wants, not the needs of this student and/or parent? *Yes. In this case not money, but the resources of extra time, energy, and concern will be expended by both teacher and parent.*
3. Whose needs are being met? Will changing the grade benefit the teacher, the parent, or the student? *In this*

case, changing the grade clearly meets the needs of the parent, not the developmental needs of the child. For example, it would meet the father's needs if his rescue was trying to spare her "feelings of failure and embarrassment" like he once felt in a similar situation. Further, if the teacher caved in and changed her grade it would be meeting the teacher's need to keep parents happy and not deal with conflict.

4. Does changing her grade cause harm to her, to others, to society, or to the planet in some way? *Yes. It is harmful to the student, because she is not learning both the curricular content and the developmental lessons she needs to learn and, if this type of overindulgence continues on a larger scale it may even harm the society because children will grow up and not have the knowledge and skills to function in a complex demanding adult world.*

Overindulgence and the Classroom Teacher

With more children being overindulged by parents and knowing that overindulgence poses risks to children, teachers and schools have an added responsibility for curbing overindulgence. There are changes that can be made, strategies teachers can use, and ways to respond to students who are overindulged.

How Teachers Can Respond to Students in the Classroom

Classrooms should have rules, both posted and verbally told to students. Having rules in the classroom is a way to avoid discrepancy. Making rules clear and understandable to students ensures that everyone is on the same page. Effective classroom rules support and encourage learning.

It is a teacher's job to set and enforce reasonable developmentally appropriate rules. At each developmental stage, it is a child's job to test the rules. Kids are going to push, and it is the teacher who decides where "no" is and to keep it there. Overindulged children not only test the rules, they push far beyond the limits. They believe the rules do not apply to them. The rules only apply to others because they believe *they are privileged*.

When creating rules, teachers should decide which rules are negotiable and which rules are nonnegotiable. Clear guidelines

and rules provide for greater consistency and predictability. With both negotiable and nonnegotiable rules students understand what is expected of them and learn to handle the consequence of breaking a rule, or falling short of a standard. Further, they will learn appropriate compliance, personal responsibility, and thinking skills. Consequences should be reasonable and implemented in a timely fashion, which will ultimately help to enforce classroom rules.

Enforcing rules teaches students important life skills and good character traits. This includes teaching respect for people and things within the classroom (e.g., fellow students, toys, books, posters, desks, or other classroom objects). Teaching students to respect others and property encourages children to take responsibility for their own actions. For example, if a student breaks something, it should be the student's responsibility to figure out how to replace it (e.g., paying for it out of their allowance). Teachers may also consider having children do chores within the classroom. Having students complete a responsibility chart encourages pride for the classroom and fosters a sense of being a contributing member of the community. Once classroom rules and expectations are clear, and respect is high among students, children can be gradually given more age appropriate freedom.

Kids are going to push...The teacher... decides where "no" is and keeps it there.

It can be challenging not to intervene every time a disagreement arises in the classroom. One way to promote both independence and satisfaction in relationships is to encourage students to solve their own problems. Allowing students to come up with solutions helps to develop good decision making and conflict resolution skills, both of which will be useful later in life. However, being over-involved in conflicts prohibits this from happening. It can become a form of overindulgence. Helping students distinguish between needs and wants is another skill vital to development. By learning to differentiate, they will also come to understand why they cannot have what they want all the time.

How the School System Can Respond to Students

Being a teacher often means being in an unpopular authority position. Teaching is not a popularity contest and understanding and being clear about this helps prevent overindulgence. Remember there are three ways to overindulge a child (too much, soft-structure, and over-nurture), and that all three can be done simultaneously. Focus on one way in which students are being overindulged. It will be easier if only one thing is changed at a time. Identify which type of overindulgence is occurring and address it, then later address other areas of concern.

Next, involve parents in the process. There are three main things parents may not realize are important for students to experience. First, many parents try to rescue their children from everything. They need to realize that it is alright for children to experience some unpleasant consequences, and that these are necessary for learning. For example, the angry father in case #1 who berates the teacher and threatens to go to the administration if his daughter's grade is not changed does not want her to experience the unpleasant consequence of poor study habits. This is an important lesson for the daughter to learn. Second, parents need to realize there will be rules that need to be followed even though their child may not want to follow them. Finally, it is important that children learn that they will not get what they want all of the time. Teachers can help parents realize that these experiences help children grow up to be healthy and responsible adults.

One additional area should be considered when making systemic changes: an on-going dialog. Within the school, teachers should encourage on-going discussions with school administrators about what changes and policies need to be established. This helps both teachers and school administrators prevent overindulgence before it happens. For example, the upset mother in case #2 who e-mails her son's teacher daily—demanding to know his assignments and progress immediately—is being unrealistic particularly when most teachers have 25-30 students per class. Teachers would be overwhelmed if all parents demanded the same responsiveness. As a school, a policy should be developed on the use of e-mail with parents. Further, involving concerned parents and students in the development and review of this policy would be helpful.

Tips for avoiding overindulgence

- Practice and use the Test of Four.
- Decide which rules are negotiable and which are nonnegotiable. Enforce rules using reasonable consequences.
- Set limits and discuss them with your students.
- Have age appropriate rules adjusting the rule to each new level of child development. Then gradually give students freedom appropriate for their age.
- Show appreciation to your students for how well they follow rules.
- Let students make decisions appropriate for their age.
- Encourage your students to solve their own problems.
- As children demonstrate greater responsibility, increase their level of freedom.
- Teach the difference between wants and needs.
- Learn to say “no.”
- Practice saying, “You have had enough for now.”
- Teach respect for people and things.
- Become a good role model for your students. “Talk the talk and walk the walk.”

The task of effectively responding to overindulgence is possible through an ongoing discussion between concerned teachers, administrators, and parents. The tools of knowing what overindulgence is, as well as how to respond allows school, teachers, and family to raise competent and well-adjusted children who will eventually become capable and successful adults. *LEJ*

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On the Necessity of Integrating Affective Education into the Regular Curriculum

by Ursula Pridgen-Ricketts

In addition to the influences of the secular world there is additional stressor that necessitates a closer look where the individual identity of a child is concerned: If a student does not have a healthy self concept this may lead to deficient achievement, the relationship between these two dynamics leading to a perpetual, circular cycle. Both of these issues together may give way to destructive behavior, all of which has the potential to permeate the entire learning community. This is why, at every chance, educational systems must engage the affect and the intellect when creating meaningful exchanges within in classroom environments.

This deficiency in student performance is forcing schools to implement more programs to improve safety, discipline and classroom behaviors (Peng & Lee, 1993). Teachers are trained to deal with the academic needs of students but their preparation often fails to address social and emotional aspects of children's lives. Children enter school expecting to have success and to feel good about themselves but may not be immediately concerned about academic outcomes. As time passes, however, they learn to care about grades but may also come to have a negative belief about the likelihood of experiencing success (Stipek, 1988).

Okwumbua, Howell, & Jones (1997) noted some of the causes for these deficiencies in their research study. Poverty and low socio-economic status of some children within public education systems has been a detractor from successful school experiences. The family structure has changed drastically over the years; for example, many children are living in foster homes or single parent homes. Drug and alcohol abuse is rampant in many of these environments. Crime rates have increased. Due to the influx of immigrants, language barriers have become an inhibitor. The training that teachers receive is not sufficient to adequately address these issues. Most importantly, the curriculum

chosen by school systems often is not culturally relevant to the learning needs of the students it seeks to teach.

This shift in focus created a need for programs, available to all students, to competently teach important life skills and to utilize a program-oriented curriculum with specified goals and objectives (Whittmer, 1993). A caring adult at school can provide important emotional nurture and guidance for students (Eichorn, 1996). Okwumbua, Howell, & Jones (1997), in a meta-analysis, suggest that prevention programs must include decision-making skills, conflict resolution training, and cultural awareness and that this can take place in advisory programs. Galassi, Gulledge, & Cox (1988) defined advisory as an arrangement whereby one adult and a classroom of children have the opportunity to interact on a scheduled daily basis in order to provide a caring environment for academic support, guidance, to communicate administrative details, to facilitate recognition, and provide activities which promote citizenship. The goal of participation in such programs is to enhance a student's self-concept, behavior and achievement. Self-concept is defined as the aspects of one's self image that are basically descriptive and nonjudgmental, that is, how one describes oneself (Beane & Lipa, 1980). Behavior can be viewed as positive or negative actions exhibited in situations and interaction, while achievement can be thought of as a complex process requiring a student to interact and construct meaning.

Historically, "guidance" was a separate component to the education process. In 1889 "moral guidance" was a curricula component of English class (Whittmer, 1993). During the 1920's and 1930's guidance and education were intertwined (Galassi, Gulledge, & Cox, 1998) as the overall view of education became thought of as "guidance for living." By mid-century, education saw a shift more towards a service-delivery model focusing on referral and follow-up in situations in which concerns were raised about a student (MacDonald & Sink, 1998). From these, then, the current goal of education has evolved into a balance between maintaining a rich curriculum while supporting all aspects of student development and growth. Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith's (2006) research suggests that school goals and activities that are associated with good character education programs also must be connected with academic achievement.

In the current environment, however, many schools hesitate to do anything that might detract from their focus on increasing academic performance. This and many other barriers prevent successful integration of affective education with core content curriculum. In many schools, two separate programs co-exist, resulting in significant discrepancies in stakeholder buy-in, which also impedes successful planning and implementation of a truly cohesive plan. The diverse needs of the various learning communities make it difficult to be consistent and, in addition, dealing with the affect often times means the structure is based in values and morals.

There are many attempts currently in place to address the necessity of affective components in the nation's schools. Character Education, advisory, behavior modifications, conflict resolution, and peer mediation are just a few of the programs currently operating in public education. The debate is whether or not they are successfully engaging the affect while supporting the intellect of the student.

Formalized attention to the character of a child involves careful balance where the teaching of traditional, recognized virtues are concerned. For example, a person who is devoted to social causes is displaying a virtue. If the devotion is extreme, wherein responsibilities are neglected, a vice is being displayed. A person who is overly involved in another's affairs is, likewise, displaying a vice. All human beings embody some combination of virtue and vice.

Individuals who display, on balance, moderation and excellence are widely judged to exemplify good character (Lerner, 2006). This concept illustrates the balance that successful education communities must foster.

Affective education embedded in core curricular education will increase student self-concept, behavior, and thus achievement. This can be done successfully if the learning community has buy-in from all of its stakeholders and also maintains avenues for vital communication. Students must be given opportunities to practice democracy, engage in decision making and in dialogue in order to explore emotions, build trust, establish rapport, to be involved in the creation of rules, and to participate in group activities while learning. The most critical component is that all learning must be connected to real

life situations. The best strategy for successful implementation of these tools is modeling by every adult involved with the teaching and learning in the learning community. If students see these virtues practiced, they are provided with a road map for their own critical engagement.

Finally, it is essentially that educators reflect on current developmental theories and research on the general needs and concerns of the students: If educational communities recognize that schools must teach not only “ABC and 1-2-3” but also relational life skills, the curriculum can be looked at in a more critical way, all of the facets can be examined and the result will be an effective catalyst for change. *LEJ*

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Twelve Turkish Mothers: A Reflection for the First Day of Class

by Daniel J. K. Bardy

In the Curriculum and Instruction Master of Arts Graduate Cohort Program in the College of Education at Concordia University-Chicago, much of the focus and discussion with teacher candidates is a “teacher as leader” framework of reflective practice in their various teacher, learner, and leadership roles. During their first course in the program, candidates write two reflective personal essays, among others. One is their own socio-cultural biography and one is a short essay on who and what influenced each of them to go into teaching.

Oral interpretation of the following essay “Life’s Lesson Plans: Twelve Turkish Mothers and a Philosophy of Education”, originally published by California State University, Stanislaus, in *Faculty Voices, Volume III, 2004-2005*, helps our candidates from the first day of class in their first course to begin their own reflective journeys of how they know what they know and assists them in bringing forward the “voices” of influence who helped build their character and passion for their vocation in teaching.

Twelve Turkish Mothers

Wednesday, 13 October 2004: Today, while in my intercultural communication class, shortly after one of the students, Khamphet, a young Laotian woman, had completed her “show and tell” presentation about some family artifacts she acquired after her mother’s death in 1985, I found myself talking about the death of my mother. Khamphet explained how she now has four other mothers who have taken on various mother roles in her life. I was able to connect with being “taken in” by various mothers; because through my travels I have been adopted by four mothers in Germany and no less than twelve mothers in Turkey, since the passing of my mother in 1984.

After Khamphet’s presentation, I had planned to give a lecture

on the nine levels of communication; instead, I started unfolding the story of how I came to be the son of twelve Turkish mothers. The tincture of time can be traced to November 17, 1984 where events were unfolding on two sides of the globe. On the United States side, the time was twelve noon in my home town of LaGrange, Illinois; and on the other side of the globe, in Abha, Saudi Arabia, where I was, the time was nine at night.

My mother's funeral was just beginning to get underway back home in LaGrange, while I stood fourth in line at the Saudi Arabian telephone company, reading the letter I had just retrieved from my post box at the Abha post office which turned out to be my mother's last letter. On the way home from the post office, to distract myself, I thought I would phone a friend and ask if he needed anything from Al-Hinowi's, the only supermarket in town which was next to the telephone building. The line at the public pay phone wasn't moving at all; and as I finished reading my mother's letter, I turned to the man behind me and he, looking straight into my eyes, asked, "Sprechen Sie Deutsch?"

And that's the question seed that transformed a relatively somber moment in my life to one of joy, friendship, brotherhood, love, and ultimate trust; eventually becoming an anniversary I continue to celebrate, an anniversary celebrating death and a whole new life. It was the breath of a new life with the Turkish stranger named Kazim who, in a kismet coming together second, was standing behind me in a telephone queue on that slightly chilly night in Abhatown, Saudi Arabia in mid-November 1984.

"When a boy loses his mother, where does all that love go?" I postulated to my intercultural communication class. In every culture I know, there is an inexplicable connective bond between mothers and sons. Although my mother professed she did not have a favorite among her nine children, she often favored the boy who journeyed afar.

I said to the class, "All the love that I had for my mother magically transferred over the next few years to all of the Gündoğdu family, of which I am now an honored elder. From the first time I met Kazim's mother, she has called me 'Kazim, Kazim' which is a great honor. Kazim in ancient Persian means 'Warrior, Protector,' and to honor her, I took the name Kazim as my second middle name, my Catholic confirmation name.

The first time I met the Gündoğdu family was when I departed Abha, Saudi Arabia, for the final time after six years of teaching at King Saud University, College of Education. Kazim had left in June, and I departed in the summer heat in mid July 1988. Kazim and I had planned to meet in Antalya, on the southern coast, where his family had moved in the summer of 1985.

While traveling on my own for three weeks, I contracted an intestinal virus of some sort and became weaker and much thinner. I decided it was time to head to Antalya and catch up with Kazim. After hitching a twelve hour ride with a fellow traveler, an Austrian on holiday, I arrived at the Gündoğdu home, only to find Kazim had taken a job in Istanbul. Although the family knew about me from Kazim's prior summer visits home talking about his new American brother "Den," they were not expecting me. There I was a five foot eleven inches tall American "kid," who weighed 116 pounds, standing on their front porch, in the sweltering heat of an early August day.

Luckily, Kazim's brother Huseyin spoke excellent English; and before I knew it, I was talking to Kazim in Istanbul on the telephone. For the next ten days Mother Kiraz fed me the most delicious soups, rice dishes, and breads. When I felt strong enough to travel the fourteen hour bus ride to Istanbul, I left: "Güle Güle!" Translates to "Smilingly, Smilingly," an expression in Turkish when visitors depart. Now arriving in Istanbul, a city of eleven million people, and finding Kazim and Hediye's home is a story for another day.

I never had to experience that sense of deep grievous loss when my mother died. My intuit voice spoke up that night when I heard 'Sprechen Sie Deutsch' and I responded, 'Bischen, Sprechen sie English?' Had I not crossed over the threshold of communication and responded in a friendly way, I would have undoubtedly suffered a great deal of pain and missed out on a lifelong outpouring and exchange of love for the rest of my life. Although I physically lost my mother, I inherited an entire family of love—Gündoğdu love—more than a hundredfold. Today Kazim's mother, his three sisters, the wives of his three brothers, his wife Hediye, her mother, and her five sisters all take care of me physically when I am with them and spiritually when I am a world away in the United States."

The importance of the power of Gündoğdu love, especially

of and for the Gündoğdu women, was nearly annihilated during the Armenian genocide purging between 1915-1918 and again from 1920-1923 in the late Turkish Ottoman period. The Gündoğdu tribe has combined Armenian Christian and Kurdish descendents. Kazim's Father, Ismail, is Christian Armenian and his Mother, Kiraz, is Kurdish. Nearly one and a half million Armenian and other ethnic populations were systematically massacred during these periods. The Christian population in Turkey today is less than one percent.

The oral history of the survival of the Gündoğdu family was told to me by Kazim during a visit to Turkey in 2001. I was memorizing all the names of his and his wife Hediye's brothers and sisters. His older sister Gülizar was named after his grandmother Gülizar, a child survivor of the genocide. When the soldiers came into their village of Çayirli, Erzincan, Turkey, located in the Caucasus Mountains of eastern Turkey, all were killed, leaving only his grandmother Gülizar and great uncle alive. Today, when Gündoğdu weddings are celebrated 1,200-1,500 guests attend the event, a true testament to the survival and driving force of human spirit love, Gündoğdu love.

Going into class that late Wednesday morning, at California State University, in mid autumn, I had an agenda set in my mind. Little did I know that I would talk about something I've not ever talked about: Where does a boy's love for his mother go when she dies? I feel that storytelling is an important element in my teaching, and I often say to my speech classes that good speech making is good storytelling. I learned that the greatest power tools are listening and responding with warmth and compassion. Seize those precious pearl moments; they are rare these days.

My student, Khamphet, stayed after class and thanked me for allowing her to give her presentation, although it was two weeks late. She particularly thanked me for the story I told because it was on November 17, 1985 that her mother died: one year to the day after I heard "Sprechen Sie Deutsch?" from a complete stranger standing behind me in a telephone queue at the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. As for that fabulous lecture on the 9 levels of communication, well, there's always Friday. In the tabernacle of the classroom, planned, enacted, experienced, and hidden curriculums are all in play each teachable moment.

Life's Lesson Plan: Those Who Can Do, Teach

Teaching has been part of my life since I was eight years old and in Miss Skowbo's third grade class at St. Francis Xavier School in LaGrange, Illinois. Miss Skowbo was very kind and looked and acted just like the actress Inger Stevens from the then popular television series, *The Farmer's Daughter* (Claver, 1963) all the way down to the Swedish "Yaw." It was in the third grade I decided to become a teacher. Writing on the blackboard, grading papers with a red pen, decorating students' papers with various holiday stickers, and using colored ink pads with funky angel stamps which read "Good Work," "Nice Improvement," "Keep Trying," and "Good Effort" were the coolest power tools. Prior experiences with teachers were not so kind.

I remember how in the beginning of second grade I lingered in the classroom, staying behind each afternoon not marching out in rank and file order with the others. I wanted to help fix stuff around the classroom. Sister Mary Margaret Ann put a quick stop to that.

"Mr. Bardy...I want you to think about why you don't leave school like all the rest of the students."

For the first two weeks she was tolerant of me and Jean Marie Cooney staying after school.

"Sister?" I asked, "Can I straighten the rows?"

"Yes, Mr. Bardy. Straighten the rows," she said sitting down in her creaky wooden, swivel desk arm chair.

Having finished this, I joined Jean Marie erasing the blackboards.

"Sister, would you like Jean Marie and me to go outside and clap the erasers?"

"Yes, Mr. Bardy. That would be fine." Sister Margaret Ann replied.

Hands white with chalk dust, Jean Marie and I returned to Room 5. "Is there anything else you would like us to do? Pull the window shades down? Dust the statues of Mother Mary and St. Joseph?" I eagerly suggested.

Looking up from her paper grading, Sister Margaret Ann said, "No, Mr. Bardy, Miss Cooney, you should go home now."

About the third week into this "after school teacher groupie

gig,” Sister Mary Margaret Ann came back one afternoon from walking the rest of the rank and file, uniformed, gender separated lines of fellow classmates to the edge of the St. Francis Xavier playground, and without warning she said, “Mr. Bardy I want you to stand in that corner and Miss Cooney, you stand in that corner. I want you to think about why you don’t leave school like all the rest of the students.”

Who said, “A good deed should never go unpunished?”

During those moments of second grade, standing in the corner of Room 5 at St. Francis Xavier School in LaGrange, Illinois, I started to take inventory of how teachers use their power to intimidate and humiliate a student and when teachers are supportive and praiseworthy of even a modest gain of learning.

The Daniel Joseph Kazim Bardy, Ed.D. Philosophy Mission

Making positive fruitful connections with students of all ages and abilities is the basis of the Bardy philosophy of education. Individuals who are preparing to be educators, as well as those who are seasoned educators, journey through fifteen universal questions each semester. These question seeds of thought and discourse include:

- How do we know what we know?
- What is knowledge?
- What is individual?
- What is society?
- What is method?
- How do we teach?
- What is democracy?
- What is learning?
- What is curriculum?
- What is the nature of teaching?
- What is truth?
- What is consciousness?
- What is technology?
- What is education?
- What is communication?

All of these consciousness dynamics constitute one large shifting matrix in the quest for shared meaning between and among a learning community.

These fifteen underlying questions are visited through the Bardy (2005) education mission statement which reads: “The Daniel Joseph Kazim Bardy, Ed.D. (2005) aim of education guides the learner through a series of strategies which build upon the individual’s existing ‘construct’ of knowledge moving him or her toward the greatest potential to become self-discoverers, problem solvers, and self-actualized citizens, within an environment of cooperation and respect.”

Having flexible lesson plans and making meandering side trips in the course of learning are very much a luxury these days. Teachers have a finite time line with what seems to be an infinite amount of information and “knowledge” to get through each day. Once in a while though, a teachable moment very unexpectedly becomes a welcome pearl of wisdom in the sea of knowledge you are pouring into the empty vessels wading in front of you. Such was the case of a teachable moment on a late Wednesday morning class, October 13, 2004 when a gem of a jewel washed ashore and enveloped learners...at California State University, Stanislaus.

This essay is a tribute to: Kazim’s Family: Father Ismail, Mother Kiraz, Sister Gülizar, Brother Kazim, Sister Sevim, Sister Husniye, Brother Huseyin, his wife Deniz, Brother Zeynal, his wife Zeynep, Brother Okan, his wife Çidem. Hediye’s Family: Father Hasan, Mother Leyla, Sister Hediye, Sister Sevgi, her husband Vasel, Sister Nürge, her husband Çan, Sister Bürgle, her husband Ali, Sister Adalet, her husband George, Sister Çidem, her husband Genges, and Brother Erol. **LEJ**

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Part 2: Positive Beliefs

Everyone has problems. What's his problem? What's *your* problem?

In a previous issue of *LEJ* (Volume 141.4 to be exact), problem solving was described as dealing with “a question or situation that requires a novel or non-routine reaction on the part of the solver” (Polya, 1976). In that issue we explored the positive attitudes or dispositions which can help a teacher deal with those questions and situations that are part of every educator's existence. Teachers have to be willing to make the effort to confront the challenges that arise in the classroom and to exhibit qualities that may keep the challenges from appearing in the first place.

Another factor which influences a person's problem solving abilities is the person's belief system. In contrast to dispositions, which are opinions or tendencies, beliefs, to the individual at least, are facts. These beliefs may or may not be true, but a person generally thinks of them as more than opinions. Examples of beliefs might be, “I'm really good at drawing” or “Calculators should not be allowed in the classroom.” In mathematics a child will be more successful at solving problems if s/he believes that problems are solvable and that s/he is a competent problem solver. The same is true of teachers who deal with daily problems in their classrooms.

As it turns out, beliefs and dispositions can become somewhat intertwined. Positive beliefs can lead to positive dispositions. Demonstrating a positive disposition simply because “it's the right thing to do” can lead to a shift toward more positive beliefs. For example, a teacher might implement some developmentally appropriate practices because of an experience in a workshop or graduate course. The resulting success can foster the teacher's belief that even immature children can be successful, and, as a result, the teacher will be more likely, or favorably disposed, to try such practices in the future.

The beliefs considered here concern teachers' views of themselves as professionals and of their students' ability to learn and succeed. Positive beliefs in both of these areas are necessary for teachers to be competent problem solvers. For Lutheran teachers, as well as those of other faiths, positive beliefs in both areas come from one central belief, which makes the others possible.

Belief that we are all children of God

On days when nothing seems to be going right, I like to reflect on three passages from Scripture. The first speaks of our origins. King David wrote the following words of praise in Psalm 139:13-14 (New Revised Standard Version).

For it was you [the Lord] who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

As part of God's creation, we know that, even in our imperfection, that we were formed as individuals, precious in His sight. Our Heavenly Father has loved us from the very beginning!

The second comes from Paul's speech to the Athenians as recorded in Acts 17:28. "In him, we live and move and have our being."

Since we are God's children, all of our problem-solving activities are possible through Him.

The third passage (Psalm 138:8) seems to speak directly to everyone whose professional lives are dedicated to service.

The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

This verse can be particularly comforting in difficult times. If we truly believe that we are called to teach, then our Father will direct our ministries so that we can best serve His divine purposes. This can give us the confidence to approach problems while holding a strong belief in our children, as described below.

Belief in each student's ability to learn

If a teacher holds a firm belief that a student's ability to learn is dependent on his/her learning style, gender, race, ethnicity,

religion, economic status, or disabilities, the effect of that belief on the children will be noticeable. Zeichner and Hoeft (1996) point out that the lack of success among some groups of students is less a result of inferior teaching methods than it is of a teacher's generally negative beliefs and low expectations concerning those students' ability to learn. Good teaching, teaching that is engaging and that otherwise appeals to a variety of learning styles, can still miss the mark if the teacher holds a belief that poor or minority children are somehow incapable of success. The belief may be a result of a lack of understanding of the students' native culture, but this subtle prejudice can be as damaging as outright racism (Denbo *et al.*, 1995). Mager (1968) describes the fear and anxiety that result from such teacher-held beliefs as "universal aversives", which may cause children to avoid learning altogether.

Piaget's theories on how children construct knowledge (Piaget, 1952 & 1959) and Gardner's work on multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983; Silver, Strong, & Perini, 2000) have caused educators to rethink their beliefs of how children learn. Although these theories are now widely taught in education courses, universities also make efforts to expose their teacher candidates to diverse groups of learners through direct field experiences, in addition to reading assignments and class discussions (Persell, 1989; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). The point of all this is that all children are capable of learning if we teachers are willing to make the effort to meet those children on their own terms.

All of us who teach in Lutheran schools are familiar with the instances that Jesus showed his love for children and with the dire warnings to those who might cause a child to falter (Matt. 18:1-6). These examples, together with the words of the Great Commission, teach us that all children, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, exceptionality or parenting, are precious in His sight. On difficult days, we can lean on our God to give us strength to persevere in efforts to teach children who might otherwise be forgotten.

Our initial training and our continued professional development can enable us to hold a belief in our own abilities.

Belief in oneself as a competent professional

Teachers who view themselves as competent professionals will expect a positive outcome when meeting the challenges of working with students, parents and administrators. This doesn't mean that we should become arrogant or resist suggestions from others. The key is to help the others, the parents and administrators, remember that all parties are working for what is best for the students in the classroom. Teachers do have special training that enables them to develop plans for helping those students, and they should be willing and expected to share their insights in a professional manner.

One of the challenges for new teachers and teacher candidates is making the move from a preoccupation with themselves and their own preferences to a focus on the needs, preferences, and well-being of others, particularly the students in their classroom (Goodlad, 1994; Stengle & Tom, 1996). There is also a tendency for some new teachers to see their college education as just learning a set of technical skills, appropriate for merely "getting the job done." Veteran teachers can also struggle with a lack of professional identity. Motivational speaker and author Harry Wong (Wong & Wong, 1998) deplores the fact that many teachers tend to see themselves as "just teachers." Instead, all teachers should be encouraged to see themselves as leaders, ready to take on new challenges and strive for high standards.

On the days when belief in ourselves is difficult, we can always look to the most important belief.

Belief in our God

Those of us who teach in Lutheran schools have the added advantage of being called to a vocation. We can be confident that, just as we were guided to enter the teaching ministry, we will continue to be led to make good choices as we encounter the daily problems with students, parents, and our colleagues. Our efforts will not always be perfect, but we do have a loving Father who will forgive us our mistakes at the end of the day and allow us to have a fresh start the next morning. Belief in this love is quite possibly the most important problem solving tool that a teacher can possess. *LEJ*

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Administrative Talk ... When the Wayward Student Is Sent to the Principal

By Glen Kuck

“Mr. Principal, I’ve been sent to your office by my teacher because of something I did in class a few minutes ago. My teacher was totally right in sending me to you. I was completely wrong, and I want to apologize to you. My actions were harmful to my classmates, my teacher, and you.

“I realize that there should be consequences for my inappropriate behavior. I know that you’re a fair man, and I also know that it’s never easy for a principal to know how best to deal with inappropriate actions such as mine. I hope, though, that you will deal with me harshly so that I can better learn from this experience. Please avoid the temptation to go easy on me. I want to feel the full weight of the law so I can be reminded of the responsibilities I have as a student in this school.

“Additionally, please call my parents at your earliest convenience to inform them of my act of indiscretion. It is my hope that they will also chastise me firmly. I will have a formal letter of apology for my classmates, my teacher, and you tomorrow when I arrive at school.”

No, this is not an actual quote from a recalcitrant student. While it’s possible that somewhere in the world some student at some point may have said something similar to the above, it hasn’t yet happened in my corner of the world.

Students are far more likely to react with words of denial, accusation, blame-shifting, defensiveness, anger, or perhaps with no words at all—just plain silence. Students are a lot like adults in that regard. So how should a principal react when a student is brought to his office because of a misdeed?

A few thoughts on what to avoid:

Don't say or do anything in haste or out of anger. Principals need to remember that the way they handle their frustrations may well be imitated by the student when they are called upon to handle future frustrations in their own lives. Calm, measured words by the principal provide a powerful model for the child. Children may close their ears to advice, but they keep their eyes open to example.

Don't ask the student why he did what he did. After being caught, a student is not in a philosophical mood. Attempts to get the student to respond insightfully to the "why" question are more likely to produce responses that get in the way of progress. Seldom will such a question result in a solution to the problem.

Don't resurrect old problems that have since been resolved. Remember, the principal's job is to work toward improving the student's behavior, not to build a case against him that will stand up in a court of law.

There is no value in repeating a criticism of the student's actions. Say it once, then move the discussion in the direction of a solution.

In his book *Teachers Change Lives 24/7*, Jim Burgett discusses the importance of focusing on the inappropriateness of the act, not the stupidity of the person. He points out the value of emphasizing to the student that he is bright, that he is appreciated, and that experience has shown that he is capable of better performance. Doing so makes it easier for the offending student to see his mistakes and to want to work toward improvement. He feels better about himself and is therefore more likely to treat others with respect. As Burgett says, "...By separating the behavior from the person, he (the adult) can actually correct one while building the other" (p. 25).

After a discussion of the problem, the principal may want to involve the student in crafting a solution. If a plan of action can be formulated with input from the student, there will probably be a greater commitment on the part of the student than if one is simply thrust upon him by the principal.

Lastly, it's important for the student to be reminded that there are consequences for inappropriate behavior. Forgiveness by the principal and punishment are not mutually exclusive.

Before closing, it should be noted that suggesting the above courses of action makes me feel like a hypocrite. I have too often been guilty of the kinds of things that I've suggested above should be avoided. I'm too often hasty in my judgments, I too often ask the student why he did what he did, I resurrect problems from the past, I repeat my criticisms, and I focus on the foolishness of the person, not the act.

However, once in a while I get it right. Those occasions that I think I've handled well almost always involve my willingness to speak calmly from the perspective of an older child of God to a younger child of God. I seem to do a better job of letting the student know that I like him and appreciate having him in the school. Maybe I am better at allowing the student to see that we are on the same side. And perhaps I do a better job of recalling what it was like to be young. **LEJ**

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Today's Lutheran Educator... Who Will be Here Tomorrow?

by Jonathan C. Laabs

Summer is a tremendous time of opportunity for Lutheran educators: a time of reflection, a time of growth, a time of service, a time of planning, a time of new priorities and, for a growing number, a time of transition. Movement from one position to another typically takes place at this time of year. For some, this new position is a relocation of Lutheran education ministry. For too many who serve in Lutheran education capacities, however, the transition is to move out of Lutheran education altogether.

Many reasons for leaving Lutheran education have been cited in recent years, including pressure to earn a better income for the family, dissatisfaction with specific elements of teaching ministry, position closings, and the desire to pursue a new career. In the general field of education, it is well documented that some 50% of all new teachers leave the profession within five years. The cumulative effect of these departures from classroom and parish education ministries is a significant growing need for new educators in our Lutheran schools and congregations worldwide.

A number of new approaches to bringing qualified individuals into the Lutheran education field have been introduced recently to meet some of the needs. Teachers who have had experience outside the Lutheran system are being locally recruited to join the staffs of Lutheran schools. LEA's Lutheran Educator Opportunity Center (LEOC) provides an opportunity for individuals who are seeking positions to identify potential employers and acts as a place where schools and congregations can post available positions for public viewing. International teacher exchanges and short and long term service opportunities encourage consideration of serving fulltime in overseas capacities. All of the above approaches and others are used as means of supporting the foundational calling of educators to Lutheran

ministry to carry out the mission of the educational institution.

At the core of preparation for Lutheran education ministry continues to be the institutions of higher education operated by the Lutheran church denominations. Colleges and universities such as those in the Concordia University System and Valparaiso University provide quality well-rounded programs of liberal arts education with emphases in various areas related to church vocations at the bachelors, masters and doctoral levels. “Who will be here tomorrow” depends a great deal on those whom we support attending these institutions today. Among the questions those of us currently serving in Lutheran education settings need to ask to ensure the future of quality Lutheran education is “What am I doing to encourage young people (of all ages) to consider Lutheran education ministry as their chosen vocation?”

While you are contemplating the question, join me in congratulating the individuals who have been selected this year by Lutheran Education Association for their distinguished service and ministry in a variety of areas. I wonder who was responsible for encouraging each of these individuals to answer God’s call to Lutheran education ministry?

Neil Sandfort, St. Charles, MO, *Christus Magister*

Dari Hartmann, Mt. Prospect, IL, *Master DCE*

Alaina Kleinbeck, St. Charles, MO, *Outstanding New DCE*

Esther Jow, Orange, CA,

Distinguished Lutheran Early Childhood Administrator

Janet Leet, Webster grove, MO,

Distinguished Lutheran Elementary Administrator

Carol Koenig, St. Charles, MO,

Distinguished Lutheran Early Childhood Teacher

James Van Dellen, Wauwatosa, WI,

Distinguished Lutheran Elementary Teacher

Shelley Davis, Salt Lake City, UT,

Distinguished Lutheran Secondary Teacher

May God continue to fill your ministry with joy, and help us all to seek out those whom will fill our positions of Lutheran education ministry in years to come.

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Multiplying Ministries...Wit, Wisdom, Wrinkles...and Wows

by Rich Bimler

I am convinced that the Lord loves older people more and more. Why? Because He's making so many more of us each day.

That is why it is crucial that Lutheran educators get a grip on the emerging "tsunami" of mass aging. The world population increases with a net addition of nearly 1 million people age 60 or older every month. Now that's a lot of old folks!

The implications are obvious: more challenges in health care, more caregivers needed, increasing medical costs, housing implications, financial concerns, ethical decisions...and on and on. However, with these challenges come many opportunities and blessings as well: more older adults to get involved in school and church life, more people of wisdom to share the Story of God's love in Christ, more opportunities for generations to learn from each other, more mentors available to rub ministry shoulders with young people...and on and on.

I recently heard about a public high school who sponsored their Senior Prom with a creative little twist: Instead of only inviting juniors and seniors and their dates to attend, they also invited older "Grandma and Grandpa" couples to come for the fun and festivities. They took literally the name, Senior Prom, and gathered as many older adults as possible for a super Senior Prom celebration.

(I did not hear any reports, however, in terms of how long the older adults managed to stay up that night.)

Psalm 145:4 says it so well: "One generation will commend Your works to another; they will tell of Your mighty acts." What a great statement of the role of all of God's people, regardless of age. What a great way of focusing all of God's people on "telling the Story of Jesus and His love" for all! Notice that the Psalm does not suggest that only older folks (or younger folks) should teach others, but rather that all people of every age are enabled by the Spirit to share their faith-stories.

So, where do we go from here? What's the point?

Let's first start with the title of this article: "Wit, Wisdom, Wrinkles...and Wows!" I remember hearing about a nurse in Portland, Maine, who was honored for her leadership in long-term care nursing. She acknowledged this award by stating that she felt fortunate that her job gave her the three W's: wit, wisdom, and wrinkles. Good answer, don't you think? I sensed from this that she certainly enjoyed her position, grew her sense of humor while serving others, shared her experiences as a mentor of younger nurses, and celebrated growing older each day. What a great attitude towards life. What a great way to be in ministry each day with older adults, as well as with people of all ages.

I personally added the fourth W: Wow! Lutheran educators have a built-in "Wow" system because of the Resurrection, because we know that we live on "this side" of Christ's death and Resurrection. As you and I continue to use our wisdom to teach others, as we continue to laugh at ourselves and help little kids and big kids do the same, as we celebrate the gift of aging in our own lives (wrinkles and all) we are also able to be intentional about sharing the "Wow" of being loved and forgiven and blessed by the Lord as His baptized and chosen persons. The Wow of life is what makes Lutheran education worth while. The Wow of life is what makes a difference in the lives of others, as we share our own wit, wisdom, and wrinkles.

What kind of "Wow's" are popping up in your life? Watch for them! Name them! Tell others about them! And if you sense that you sometimes are short of "Wow's," go out and look for them! My guess is that most of our "Wow's" are found in relationships with other people. Coincidence? I think not!

The Lord is providing each of us with so many people around us, young and old, that we will never run out of finding and helping others to find the "Wowness" of life in the Lord. My encouragement right now is for each of us to become more aware and sensitive to the older adults around us. Do not forget the young folks, but instead, bring the older generations together with the younger generations...and watch out for flying "Wow's."

Use your Wit...Share your Wisdom...and celebrate your Wrinkles...as we all continue to grow gracefully...in the Wowness of our Lord. **LEJ**

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