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To See Ourselves as Others See Us

Two rabbis were discussing Scottish poet Robert Burns’s famous lines: “O wad some Power the giftie gie us, To see ourselvs as ither see us!” Both agreed that seeing ourselves as others see us would be a terrible gift indeed, but their reasons were distinctly different. The first did not wish to know what people really thought of him, fearing that their perceptions would not be nearly as positive as he wanted to believe they were. The second rabbi’s reason was just the opposite. “When I walk into a room, people stand up,” he said. “I know how inappropriate that really is. If I saw myself the way they see me, I too would wrongly believe I was worthy of being stood up for.”

The two rabbis’ fears notwithstanding, seeing ourselves as others see us strikes me as worthwhile for any number of reasons. Most simply put, any school that does not look after its good reputation will have major trouble continuing its mission. I should say first, however, that I’m not talking about becoming the kind of focus-grouped, market analysis driven institutions that ask, “What would you like us to be?” then promptly attempt to remake themselves to fit the market’s appetites. Certainly, as Joel Koerschen reminds us in this issue, Lutheran schools need to market themselves in order to compete for students from families who have a variety of educational options. But other’s perceptions of us can never be allowed to define or drive our mission.

Understanding how others see us can, however, be crucial in determining whether we are achieving that mission, whether we are in fact living out the faith and ideals we subscribe to. In this sense, whether others—especially those who don’t share our faith commitments and philosophical orientation—like what they see when they look at us is much less important than whether their perceptions of who we are match up with who we strive to be.

A useful analogy can be made to the gap between how Americans see themselves and how much of the rest of the world sees Americans. It’s a lesson I first learned as a ninth grader when I moved from Michigan to Ontario, Canada, and discovered to my astonishment that the world is not divided into two groups: Americans and those who wish they were Americans. It’s worth asking, to what extent do we as a nation live up to our self-image as generous and benevolent world leaders, “the land of the free and the home of the brave,” rather than the arrogant and materialistic bullies recent surveys of world opinion depict us to be? A similar perception problem often faces Missouri Synod Lutherans, especially given the national publicity surrounding the recent contretemps in the LCMS over Rev. David Benke’s
participation in the post-9/11 prayer service at Yankee Stadium. Many of us wear bumper stickers on our minivans proclaiming “Lutheran Schools Care a Lot,” but too often the harsh and unloving ways in which we settle our differences—be they theological disputes or squabbles about carpeting the church offices—must leave many scratching their heads at this claim.

For those who would strive to “see themselves as other see them,” Jan Garrett of Western Kentucky University offers a sound piece of advice: “We have to see ourselves reflectively, first of all as other persons might see us. Robert Burns was right that it would be a great gift ‘to see ourselves as others see us.’ But it is also vital to see ourselves as an all-seeing God might see us, and to ask whether we are succeeding in making something admirable of ourselves.” Here the earliest Christians provide an exceptional model, displaying to the world their devotion to God and to each other, their joy, warmth, and hospitality: “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people” (Acts 2: 46-47). The early Church won the world’s approbation through love of God and service to others, through establishing a compassionate, just, and equitable God-centered community.

Some years ago, I asked a colleague who was leaving Concordia University for a position as a public school administrator if he might be willing to use his transition as the basis for an article for Lutheran Education. I envisioned an article entitled something like “On the Outside Looking Back In.” Bob had served faithfully in Lutheran schools for many years, first as a elementary teacher and principal and then our faculty. I thought that his new vantage point in the public schools might offer a perspective on Lutheran education that has become invisible to those of us who have inhabited this sphere for many years. As the saying goes, “A fish doesn’t know it breathes under water.” What, I wondered, might one suddenly notice about the atmosphere we breathe in Lutheran education once one had left this milieu behind?

For a variety of reasons, that article was never written, but the question it poses has been on my mind often lately. This issue of Lutheran Education will be my last official act of service to Concordia University. This fall I will find myself “on the outside looking back in,” as I join the faculty of a college affiliated with the Presbyterian Church. I will always cherish the two decades I have spent in the Lutheran teaching ministry. I rejoice that God has seen fit to allow me, first in the Lutheran high school classroom and for the past ten years on this campus, to be part of the vital work of forming hearts and minds for Christian service. For the past six years I have also been privileged to edit this journal, “the oldest continuously published education journal in the United States” as I never tire of telling people. I am grateful for the many fine teachers, scholars, and writers I have been blessed to work with. And I pray that on my watch Lutheran Education has remained faithful to its mission: helping to expand or clarify the vision of all in Lutheran education as we strive together to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to build the kingdom of Heaven.φ
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The operation of Lutheran early childhood centers, elementary schools, and high schools across the United States requires a large investment on the part of congregations, school leaders, parents, and others who are part of the school community. Significant among these resources are the thousands of people who invest their time and energy by serving on the boards and committees that govern these schools. Yet, in many communities, the role of the school board continues to be misunderstood. Many board members are unsure of their responsibilities and how to carry them out. School parents, congregation members, and teachers often lack a common understanding of the purpose of the school board. They place pressure on boards to act in various, sometimes contradictory, ways.

This article explores some of the reasons why confusion over the role and function of the Lutheran school board may exist. It reviews the basic purposes of governing boards and relates these to the unique position of Lutheran school boards within the structure of a sponsoring congregation. Finally, this article offers some suggestions to help assure school board effectiveness.
A Question of Value

Governing boards are a staple of most public and private institutions in the United States. One of the requirements to qualify as a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization is the existence of a governing board. Boards are assumed to provide credibility to the institutions they serve. They fulfill a legal role by serving as the official representative of the institution in many official transactions, such as loans, contracts, and grants. In essence, governing boards are considered to have ultimate authority over the organization’s activities.

The process of recruiting, selecting, and nurturing a board requires significant time and energy. And, due to the nature of its structure, board management and decision-making can be complex processes that slow down and complicate the efforts of the organization. Because this is so, board members, administrators, and others sometimes question the value of the board. This is true not only in Lutheran schools, but also in other organizations and agencies. In many organizations, the board is viewed in a way similar to

In many organizations, the board is viewed in a way similar to an appendix, a part of the body without apparent purpose but capable of serious inconvenience (Robinson, 2001, p.12).

A board’s value is more apparent when there is a problem. For nonprofit organizations to operate with the public’s consent and with its support, someone must be understood to be acting with the public’s interest firmly in mind (Robinson, 2001, p.8). People who utilize the services or products of an organization, or who support it financially, expect oversight by an objective and informed group.

Robinson (2001) suggests that, while not always appreciated, a board is valuable in several ways: It is the place where responsibility for maintaining accountability and safeguarding trust resides. It provides “transparency,” keeping the operation of the organization and the actions of its leaders in the public view. It provides the capacity to bring diversity and balance to the organization’s leadership. It is a source of advocacy for the mission of the organization. And, it has the power to gather resources needed by the organization (pp. 7-12).

Serving in Trust

The National Association of Independent Schools refers to board members of its
member schools as trustees (Independent School Management, 1992, p. 7). Robert Greenleaf (1991) describes the trustee role in this way: "Trustees are accountable to all parties at interest for the best performance of the institution in the service of the needs of all constituencies and society at large. They are the holders of the charter of public trust for the institution" (p. 6).

The concept of holding the good of the institution "in trust" applies to the core values and ideals of the institution. "Trustees hold in trust something much deeper and elusive—the legacy of the institution. Legacy includes the dreams of the institution’s founders and its history of accomplishments and failures. It includes deeply-held values and beliefs which have shaped its character over the years" (Broholm & Johnson, 1993, pp. 40-41).

Holding in trust the basic ideals of the organization is not a new concept. The Great Law of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy states, "In our every deliberation we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations" (Broholm & Johnson, 1993, p. 54). Referring to the trustee role of today’s school boards, Independent School Management (1992) states that the job of the school board member is to make decisions in such a way that your current students’ children will be able to come to your school and experience your school’s mission 20-30 years from today (p. 7).

Keeping the public trust is also the reason a board invests in oversight and supervision. Robinson (2001) contends that "Behind that trust is the perfectly reasonable assumption that someone somewhere is keeping track of things, is assuring themselves, and by extension, the rest of us, that things are in order. This reassurance is truly reassuring only when it comes from a person who appears to have nothing to gain from offering it" (p. 9). Broholm and Johnson (1993) concur: "The degree to which board and staff can build trust will influence the organization’s ability to build trust with its publics” (p. 49).

While a board is in a trust relationship with variety of groups, its most important responsibility is to a special group of people who John Carver (1990) refers to as "owners" (p. 17). In the "for profit" world, owners are the stockholders who value the company and its products or services and who have made a financial investment in it. In the "not-for-profit" world, including Lutheran congregations and schools, the concept of ownership is slightly different. People do not own a not-for-profit organization by purchasing stock. They do so by investing time, talent, and resources to help the institution fulfill its mission.

In many Lutheran schools, the members of the congregation are owners of the school. In addition, however, there may be others—school parents, friends,
grandparents—who aren’t members of the congregation but who can be considered “moral owners” (Carver, 1990, p.17), stakeholders whose involvement goes beyond self-interest to a genuine desire to see the school carry out its mission successfully.

Stated simply, a governing board is a group of people representative of the institution’s owners. These owners place the good of the institution “in trust” to those who serve as board members. When board members earn the trust of owners and other stakeholders, the value of the organization is enhanced. The degree to which board and staff can build trust will influence the organization’s ability to build trust with its publics (Broholm & Johnson, 1993, p. 49).

Fulfilling the Trustee Role

Being entrusted with the welfare of an institution can be a daunting task! The challenge to a group of volunteers, operating as a single entity called a board, to fulfill this responsibility is great. To meet the challenge requires board to be able to differentiate its role from those who serve the institution as paid or volunteer staff.

To fulfill its role as trustee, a board must concentrate its efforts on many “big picture” concerns. A board’s primary purpose is to ensure that the organization achieves what it should and avoids what is unacceptable (Carver & Carver, 1997, p. 16). This requires a board to take time to define the mission of the organization and the outcomes it expects as a result of its efforts. A board must also define what behavior or activity is not acceptable as the mission is pursued. And, of course, it must also take time to consider how to monitor and measure these things.

The trustee role, then, requires a far different kind of activity than what is expected of staff members. Broholm and Johnson (1993) describe the difference in the following way: “The board is a reflective body by virtue of its structure and distance from the daily action. This gives board members an overview perspective as compared to staff, which can be found in a more active role. By being removed from the frenetic daily action of the organization and having the larger perspective that distance provides, trustee boards are in a unique place to provide wise counsel to staff” (p. 6).

Broholm and Johnson (1993) use the illustration of a banquet hall with a balcony to describe the vantage point from which a board should operate. A board is located in the balcony, observing the action below:

Because its fundamental posture is designed for reflection, not action, the board is in a unique position to ask those questions which probe the assumptions about values and purpose. Questions are asked such as: Who is being served and how? How do we balance the legitimate interests of our stakeholders with
our own self-preservation? . . . In short, by virtue of its balcony position, the board provides a hospitable space for reflection on what the organization holds in trust from the community that chartered it, and how that trust may be fulfilled in the future. (p. 24)

Acting as trustee of the organization’s future, a board’s activities reflect the values and perspectives of the organization’s owners. There is an abundance of information and literature available to boards regarding appropriate tasks and roles. Robinson (2001) suggests that a board’s role includes several dimensions: legal activities related to assuring that the organization stays true to its stated goals and is compliant with the laws that govern and regulate it, functional activities related to accomplishing the work of the organization, and symbolic activities through which a board conveys the credibility of the organization (pp. 29-38).

The Challenge of Achieving Trust

The concept of a board acting on behalf of a larger group of people to assure the good of an organization is not difficult to grasp. As in many things, however, the devil is in the details. Boards face a variety of challenges as they attempt to carry out their responsibilities. These include:

- Acting as one: A board is composed of individuals. However, a board speaks with one voice. The dynamics and skills necessary to arrive at a singular expression of values and perspectives are complex.
- Being representative without representing: The interests and opinions of board members are expected to be representative of those of all the organization’s owners. A great challenge faced by board members is to avoid the temptation to represent a particular interest, rather than pursuing what is best for everyone served by the organization. “When trustees view themselves as custodians, referees, or lobbyists, they give up the most important task of trusteeship, which is responsibility for the vision of the organization” (Warford, 2000, p. 6).
Exploring the Value of Lutheran School Boards

- Avoiding micro-management: A governing board is an organization's final authority. Using this authority wisely requires the discipline to avoid direct management of activities and tasks that are better accomplished by staff. Robert Greenleaf (1991) states the challenge in the following way: “The essential definition of the trustee role is that trustees, as a body, hold all the ultimate (legal) authority. However they do not use power operationally, that is, they do not administer. They use their legal power to secure information and to monitor and to control the operational use of power. This is the central issue of trusteeship: trustees hold ultimate power but they do not use it operationally. Yet they are responsible for its use” (pp. 11-12).

- Societal attitudes toward leaders: The days of people following their leaders blindly and faithfully are long gone. Boards must work harder and harder to earn and maintain the trust of those on whose behalf they serve.

- Lack of a common governing model: An abundance of resources exists through the National Center for Non-Profit Boards and many other helpful organizations. However, most boards operate with a blend of styles, procedures (such as Roberts Rules of Order), experiences from other boards, and tradition. The lack of a commonly understood and accepted model makes it very difficult for a board to use its time efficiently and remain focused on appropriate governance activities. Fortunately, today Carver’s (1990) “Policy Governance” model and its comprehensive approach to governance is providing assistance to a growing number of organizations.

Special Challenges for Lutheran School Boards

Lutheran school boards face all of the challenges involved in achieving trust described above. However, they also face some additional and unique challenges. One of these has to do with school board authority. Most Lutheran schools are owned and operated by a single congregation. Within the structure of the congregation, a church council or board of directors usually serves as the governing board for the congregation. Thus, the school board is in reality a subcommittee of the church council and is not a true governing body for the school.

This type of congregation structure can make it very difficult for a school board to understand the extent of its authority. A continuing challenge facing Lutheran school boards is working with the church council to clarify levels of authority. Who hires a principal? Who establishes tuition rates? Who determines teacher salary levels? Who develops classroom management policies? Questions such as these must be addressed in order for a school board to be effective.
The challenge related to authority and expectations is not limited to the church council and school board. Recent research by Stucky (2000) indicates that lack of clarity regarding roles and expectations among board members, principals, and pastors is very common.\(^1\) One could conclude that this lack of clarity is most likely in settings where church council and school board do not regularly discuss and clarify their roles and responsibilities.

The complexity of congregation decision-making structure can also affect a school board’s ability to free the principal and staff to respond quickly. Many school principals have experienced the frustration of trying to call or hire a teacher to fill a last-minute vacancy, only to be slowed by a process that requires the approval of one or two other boards and a voter’s assembly. To fulfill its role as trustee, a school board must help congregation leaders understand the need for operating procedures that are well suited for the fast-paced decisions school administrators must make.

The lack of a common governance model is, perhaps, a larger challenge for Lutheran school boards than for other organizations. Since Lutheran congregations are structured in so many different ways, it is very difficult to develop a model that fits most schools. National church body school departments work hard to provide sample policies and suggested operating procedures for Lutheran school boards. And, a growing number of Lutheran schools are adopting Policy Governance or adaptations of it. The variety of structure and tradition in schools and congregations will, however, continue to make it difficult for common governing models to emerge.

**Policy Governance**

Since more than a little mention of Carver’s (1990) Policy Governance model has been made in this article, a brief explanation of the model is in order. Carver’s model is built on the premise that a governing board represents the interest of an organization’s owners and is entrusted with the responsibility of setting and monitoring the direction of the organization. The model assumes that a board’s only employee is the CEO of the organization. The CEO hires staff as needed to pursue the outcomes established by the board (pp. 115-116).

The Carver model utilizes written policy as the voice through which a board expresses its values and perspectives. A unique feature of the model is the distinction between four types of policies. Outcome policies describe what the board

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\(^1\) Editor’s Note: The results of Stucky’s research, to which Dr. Herman refers, are the subject of a subsequent article in this issue of Lutheran Education.
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expects as results for the organization's existence and efforts. Board self-governance policies are descriptions of how the board's work will be done and the responsibilities of board members. Board-Staff relationship policies define the passing of authority from the board to the CEO and expectations regarding communication and reporting. Limitation policies, perhaps the most unique of the policy types, describe what behaviors and activities are not appropriate as the CEO pursues the organization's desired outcomes (Carver, 1990, pp. 35-39).

A valuable contribution made by this model is that it pushes boards to focus on the big picture, by focusing first on broad policy statements and then writing additional, narrower policies, as necessary for the board to be clearly understood. The CEO is free to use any acceptable means to pursue desired outcomes that aren't prohibited by these policy statements. By taking a broad focus first, boards more easily avoid the temptation to micro-manage by writing specific policies that are more appropriately developed by the CEO or staff.

Because of its focus on a single governing body, Policy Governance is most naturally implemented when a school operates independently, or is owned by an association of congregations. The model cannot be fully implemented in schools governed by a single congregation, unless the entire congregation uses the model. It is certainly possible, however, to adapt the principles of Policy Governance for use within the limits of the school board's authority.

Meeting the Challenge of School Board Effectiveness

Maintaining the value of a school board as an instrument of trust requires consistent effort by board members and the school administrator. As with any other commitment to excellence, board effectiveness requires time, education, and diligence. Regardless of its governing structure, a school board can do things to build its value to the school community. Here are just a few:

- **Keep it simple:** Prioritize what is most important for the board to accomplish. Concentrate on the basics—the outcomes of school ministry, monitoring progress toward these outcomes, and establishing boundaries for the principal and staff to operate within.
- **Empower the principal:** Develop policies to guide the efforts of the principal and provide freedom to operate creatively within them. Don't try to micro-manage the day-to-day business of the school.
- **Stay in touch with owners:** Never forget that a board operates in trust to its owners. Find ways for the board to listen to the vision, concerns, and needs of the people the board represents.
Determine levels of authority: Take the lead in working with the church council or other appropriate leaders to determine the extent and limits of the school board’s authority. Be sure all board discussions and actions take place within the confines of these limits.

Establish board self-governance policies: A board is more efficient and effective when it develops specific policies to guide how it conducts its business.

Invest in board education: Maintaining the trust of owners and others in the school community requires skill. Schedule board education sessions during regular or special board meetings. Consider an annual board retreat. Host a board workshop for neighboring schools.

Be a model faith community: A Lutheran school board has a wonderful opportunity to model faith-based leadership in the way its members carry out their work. Take time to care for one another, to pray together and to seek God’s help in listening, discerning and making wise decisions.

A Lutheran school board has a wonderful opportunity to model faith-based leadership in the way its members carry out their work. Take time to care for one another, to pray together and to seek God’s help in listening, discerning and making wise decisions.

Conclusion

Despite the difficulties and frustrations that can occasionally arise as boards do their work, the board role is generally accepted as valuable and necessary to the successful operation of many organizations, including Lutheran schools and congregations. Broholm and Johnson (1993) provide a reminder of the value a board provides: Trustees do have a critical role in the development of trust-worthy institutions. They build trust by understanding their role and using their power wisely; by setting boundaries for staff which are creative, not oppressive; by serving as mentors to the organization, and creating hospitable space for in-depth reflection. Trustees help create trustworthy organizations by holding, fulfilling and building public trust in the institution. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, trustees build trust by becoming valid symbols of trust themselves. (p. 53)
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Those touched by the ministry of Lutheran schools are blessed by people who work tirelessly on their behalf by serving on Lutheran school boards and committees. A Lutheran school board brings much value to the school as a trustee of the school’s mission and as it helps establish trust in that mission. Keep these valuable leaders in your prayers as they continue to meet the many challenges of school governance!

References


The Role of the School Board: 
Do We Agree?

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The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) has always advocated Christian day schools. One of the major missions of the LCMS, according to its constitution, is the furtherance of Christian parochial schools and comprehensive instruction in confirmation. Noting the emphasis placed on education by the forerunners of the Missouri Synod, Siering (1997) observes that the Saxon immigrants arriving in St. Louis in 1839 established schools even before they built a church building.

Although the governance of each varies, the Missouri Synod’s elementary schools rely on leadership from three essential sources: the school board, the school principal, and the school pastor. Each plays an important role in carrying out the mission of the schools (Board for Parish Services, 1987).

Typically, a school board is responsible for defining policy and ensuring the implementation of policy (Board for Parish Services, 1987). Policies regarding supervision of the principal, finances, facilities, curriculum, and student life provide clear guidelines for the administration of the school. The
The Role of the School Board

supervision function allows the school board to manage the school by ensuring that policies are being correctly implemented. The school board is also able to assist the pastor and the principal in defining or clarifying their roles in relationship to the board so all three work as a team (Board of Parish Education, 1978).

In its most basic function, the LCMS school board formulates policy that supports the mission of the school (Board for Parish Services, 1987; Board of Parish Education, 1978). However, this role can further be divided into the desired role of the school board and the actual role of the school board. For the purpose of this study, the desired role of the school board is defined as the actions and activities performed by the school board to optimally promote the mission of the school; the actual role of the school board is defined as all actions and activities undertaken by the board, which may or may not be related to the desired role of the school board.

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to determine whether significant differences existed between and among the views of principals, school board chairpersons, and pastors regarding the desired and actual roles of the Lutheran elementary school board. The horizontal dotted lines in Figure 1 illustrate the first type of conflict examined: conflict between each respondent’s views of the desired role and the actual role of the school board, in other words, how each views what the school board should be doing in comparison to what the school board is doing.

An unclear understanding or lack of agreement regarding the desired or actual role of the school board reduces the effectiveness of the Lutheran elementary school.

Lutheran elementary schools rely on a strong principal, school board chairperson, and pastor. To a large degree, educational success depends on a good working relationship between and among them. The Lutheran school board chairperson, the principal, and the pastor constitute a team. An unclear understanding or lack of agreement regarding the desired or actual role of the school board reduces the effectiveness of the Lutheran elementary school.

The vertical dotted lines in Figure 1 illustrate the second type of conflict examined and involved two areas. The first area examined whether the principals, the
school board chairpersons, and the pastors agreed on the *desired* role of the school board. The second area examined whether the principal, the school board chairperson, and the pastor agreed on the *actual* role of the school board.

![Diagram of desired and actual roles](image)

Conflict between roles

Figure 1: Conflict (horizontal and vertical) between desired or actual role of the school board.

**Significance of the Study**

There are approximately 180,000 students currently enrolled in Lutheran elementary schools. Since its origin, the LCMS has promoted parochial education. The school board plays a vital role in the operation of a LCMS elementary school. Yet, there is a profound lack of research concerning the role of Lutheran school boards.

This research may assist school board members in the successful implementation of the school’s mission, as well as in the development of policies and procedures that will achieve the desired role of the Lutheran elementary school board.

Also, results from this study may provide information that will help school board members develop effective training practices for future school board members, pastors, and principals. This training could aid in the clear delineation of roles and agreement between the views of the principal, the school board chairperson, and the pastor concerning the role of the school board.
The Research Hypothesis

There is a significant difference between the desired role and the actual role of the Lutheran elementary school board as described by principals, school board chairpersons, and pastors of the LCMS.

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at a .05 alpha level:

\( H_01 \): For each task, there is no significant difference between the desired role and the actual role of the Lutheran elementary school board as described by the principals.

\( H_02 \): For each task, there is no significant difference between the desired role and the actual role of the Lutheran elementary school board as described by the school board chairpersons.

\( H_03 \): For each task, there is no significant difference between the desired role and the actual role of the Lutheran elementary school board as described by pastors.

\( H_04 \): For each task, there is no significant difference between the principals' and the school board chairpersons' desired role of the Lutheran elementary school board.

\( H_05 \): For each task, there is no significant difference between the principals' and the pastors' desired role of the Lutheran elementary school board.

\( H_06 \): For each task, there is no significant difference between the school board chairpersons' and the pastors' desired role of the Lutheran elementary school board.

\( H_07 \): For each task, there is no significant difference between the principals' and the school board chairpersons' view of the actual role of the Lutheran elementary school board.

\( H_08 \): For each task, there is no significant difference between the principals' and the pastors' view of the actual role of the Lutheran elementary school board.

\( H_09 \): For each task, there is no significant difference between the school board chairpersons' and the pastors' view of the actual role of the Lutheran elementary school board.

Instrument

The survey instrument used in this study was distributed to principals, school board chairpersons, and pastors of randomly selected Missouri Synod elementary schools in the United States during the 1999-2000 School Year. Part 1 of each of the
survey instruments contained items that were identical for all respondents. It consisted of 47 tasks commonly associated with school boards. Respondents were asked to indicate on a Likert scale the (a) desired amount of involvement they believed the school board should have with a task and (b) the actual amount of involvement they believed the school board has with a task. Part 2 of the survey instruments requested demographic information from respondents relative to their position.

Population and Sample

A population of 1,008 elementary schools in the United States was obtained from the LCMS International Center Department of Rosters and Statistics (Elementary Schools of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 1999). The criteria for generating the population database included schools that offered any of Grades 1 through 8. The schools could also offer preschool, kindergarten, or Grades 9 through 12. A random number generator (Microsoft Excel 97, 1997) was utilized to select a sample totaling 200 of these schools for participation in this study. A survey instrument was sent to each principal, school board chairperson, and pastor. If there was more than one pastor, the pastor with the longest tenure was asked to complete the survey instrument.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were derived from this study:

1. Null hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were rejected for 38, 26, and 35 tasks, respectively. Figure 2 represents the number of tasks that were rejected for each of the 9 null hypotheses. Null hypotheses 4 through 9 were each rejected for less than 10 tasks each.

2. Principals desired the school board to have the greatest involvement with the following tasks: (a) interviewing principal candidates, (b) building church support of the school, (c) developing a long range plan for the school, (d) selecting new principals, (e) terminating principals, (f) determining the school mission, (g) developing the teacher salary schedule, (h) determining personnel policies and procedures, (i) developing the school budget, and (j) terminating teachers.

3. School board chairpersons desired the school board to have the greatest involvement with the following tasks: (a) developing a long range plan for the school, (b) determining the school mission, (c) developing the school budget, (d) interviewing principal candidates, (e) terminating principals, (f) building church support of the school, (g) determining personnel policies and procedures,
(h) selecting new principals, (i) evaluating principal performance, and (j) establishing policy for disciplining of students.

4. Pastors desired the school board to have the greatest involvement with the following tasks: (a) building church support of the school, (b) developing a long range plan for the school, (c) developing the school budget, (d) determining the school mission, (e) interviewing principal candidates, (f) determining personnel policies and procedures, (g) developing the teacher salary schedule, (h) terminating principals, (i) establishing guidelines for student conduct, and (j) complying with local, state, and federal laws.

5. Principals' views of the actual involvement of the school board which reflect the greatest involvement included the following tasks: (a) interviewing principal candidates, (b) selecting new principals, (c) terminating principals, (d) terminating teachers, (e) determining personnel policies and procedures, (f) selecting new teachers, (g) developing the school budget, (h) interviewing teacher candidates, (i) determining the school mission, and (j) developing the teacher salary schedule.

6. School board chairpersons' views of the actual involvement of the school board which reflect the greatest involvement included the following tasks: (a) determining the school mission, (b) developing the school budget, (c) interviewing principal candidates, (d) determining personnel policies and

Figure 2: Number of tasks (t) in which the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significant difference in views.
procedures, (e) selecting new principals, (f) terminating principals, (g) developing a long-range plan for the school, (h) selecting new teachers, (i) establishing policy for disciplining of students, and (j) determining class size.

7. The pastors' views of the actual involvement of the school board which reflect the greatest involvement included the following tasks: (a) interviewing principal candidates, (b) developing the school budget, (c) selecting new principals, (d) developing the teacher salary schedule, (e) selecting new teachers, (f) interviewing teacher candidates, (g) determining personnel policies and procedures, (h) establishing guidelines for student conduct, (i) complying with local, state, and federal laws, and (j) establishing policy for disciplining of students.

Implications

The LCMS has always advocated Christian day schools. One of the major missions, according to its constitution, is the furtherance of Christian schools. Although the governance of each varies, typically, a school board's general duties include defining policy and ensuring its implementation.

When the roles of the school board are clearly stated and understood, fulfillment of them is not guaranteed. Often, the board operates in a crisis mode, having to handle immediate, pressing problems rather than focusing on the overall picture. This study investigated the possible disagreement between the desired and actual roles of the school board. When comparing these roles among Lutheran principals, school board chairpersons, and pastors, significant differences were exhibited on a majority of tasks. Included among them were determining the school mission and developing a long-range plan for the school. Todras (1993) contends that "frustration with school boards has reached crisis proportions. . . . Perhaps the greatest problem facing both rural and urban school boards is their tendency to micromanage and become bogged down in minutiae" (p. 2). Olson and Bradley (Todras, 1993) recount that "in West Virginia, a five-year statewide study of board minutes found that boards spent only 3 percent of their time on policy development and oversight, compared to 54 percent on administrative matters" (p. 2).

A major finding suggested that principals, school board chairpersons, and pastors viewed the desired role of the school board differently from the actual role. This finding relates to the first type of conflict examined in this study: conflict between each respondent's views of the desired role and the actual role of the school board, in other words, how each views what the school board should be doing in comparison to what the school board is doing. When making this comparison,
significant differences were found on a majority of the tasks. This finding agreed with Alvey and Underwood (1985) who "wanted to find out, first, whether boards and superintendents agree on who should do what in school systems, and, second, how closely the real division of responsibility mirrors their perceptions of the ideal" (p. 21). Their findings indicated, "board members want a bigger share of the authority than they have... on every single issue posed" (p. 24).

For the most part, the principals, the school board chairpersons, and the pastors agreed on what the school board should be doing and on what the school board is doing. Once this common ground has been established, these three leaders can better focus on the mission of the school.

Research suggests that conflict may increase if it is left unresolved. Nell (1979) examined the perceptions of pastors, principals, and teachers regarding the authority and responsibility of pastors and principals in the elementary schools of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Nell concluded that conflict between pastors and principals is likely to increase if the pastor, the principal, and the governance bodies of the congregation cannot concur on the rules of the organization.

Communication between and among principals, school board chairpersons, and pastors is key to resolving or preventing conflict. The leaders need to examine and compare which school board tasks they view as most and least important. Respondents to the School Board Function Survey in this study maintained that principals, school board chairpersons, and pastors consistently ranked administrative tasks as least important. These administrative duties correspond to the responsibilities of the principal and the school staff, not functions of the school board. Additionally, participants consistently ranked the legislative and policy functions of the school board as focal areas.

The principals' and the pastors' desired roles of the school board, as measured in this study, agreed with previous research. Oetting (1989) delineated a clear difference between the types of tasks with which the principals and pastors believed their school boards should be most involved. He concluded:

- Principals indicated that they should be most involved in tasks related to teacher selection and evaluation and to school administrative and leadership issues.
- Pastors indicated that they should be most involved in tasks related to religion or the parish, issues involving the principal, and issues involving school mission and morale. (p. iii)

Ketterlin (1976) examined the role of the public school board as perceived by school board members, administrators, and teachers. One conclusion indicated "that the separation of the legislative functions of the board and the executive functions of
the administrative staff is desirable, and should be maintained” (p 111).

Principals, school board chairpersons, and pastors may use this information to organize a systematic approach, assisting the school board in the fulfillment of its mission. Part of that approach may be training for school board members. Egelston and Egelston (1995) conclude that school boards, and especially new board members, often do not understand the extent of their authority and disagree on some very general issues. Additionally, new board members may undertake service as a school board member with good intentions but with limited experience or skills related to the position. Board members may find the difficult task of mutually relating to faculty, staff, parents, students, and other board members a unique and unexpected challenge. Thorough delineation of the school board’s role may assist the board member’s effectiveness. Danzberger et al. (1987) concurs:

Many begin board service with only vague notions of the scope of their responsibilities, little preparation for difficult public decision-making, and few of the skills needed to lead and interact with board colleagues, faculty and staff members, students, parents, community leaders, and the media. The . . . study confirmed that most school board members had little idea of the scope of the commitment required of them when they joined their boards, or of the enormous body of information that they must master and constantly update, or of the leadership and interpersonal skills that would be required . . . . To become contributing members of effective boards, those who seek . . . appointment to school boards need orientation to the complex roles and responsibilities [of the school board]. (p. 59)

Training, which clearly delineates the mission and role of the school board, might be of benefit to others as well. An unpredicted finding of this study indicated that 58% of principals surveyed were employed at their present school as principal for four years or less. A majority of school board chairpersons had served on the school board, in any capacity, for four years or less. Approximately, one third of the pastors had served at their present school for four years or less.

Communicating the role of the school board and the mission of the school may serve to improve the effectiveness of the school board. Although effectiveness of the school board was not examined in this study, research conducted by Convey (1995) among Catholic schools confirms: “Factors preventing board effectiveness include . . . lack of understanding of [the] role [of the school board]” (p. 18).

To improve a school’s overall potential for accomplishing its mission, the mission must be clearly defined and communicated. Findings of this study suggested that school board role conflict may be a result of unclear mission and vice versa. If the
The Role of the School Board

school mission is vague and ambiguous, it is likely that the role of the school board may be, as well. Conversely, if the role of the school board is in conflict, the mission of the school may be in conflict. School leaders would do well to provide opportunities that clarify the mission of the school and the role of the school board. Subsequently, upon a clear delineation of the mission and role of the school board, consistent and continual examination by the principal, the school board chairperson, and the pastor would seem beneficial.

According to Krause (1963), the purpose of Christian education is derived from the Bible. Christian education should transmit the Word of God and fulfill his purpose to human kind. Lutheran elementary schools are operated to fulfill the God-ordained purpose of Christian teaching. This mission of Lutheran elementary schools is affected by the manner in which a school board functions. Agreement between and among the principal, the school board chairperson, and the pastor regarding the desired role and the actual role of the school board is vital to the fulfillment of the mission of the school.

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Be Ready for Your Day in Court: Insurance Issues Facing Lutheran Schools

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Congregations and individuals rely heavily on their insurance agent/broker to properly insure their needs. If the agent a congregation is working with has properly filled their insurance needs, they are “ready for their day in court.” Their liability exposure, both defense and claim payment, has been transferred to an insurance company that is obligated to respond on their behalf when a claim arises. Unfortunately, in many cases, congregations have large holes or gaps in their insurance programs. In order to fill these holes, it is important that an individual administrator or board member have a working knowledge of a congregation’s insurance program and how it meets its specific needs. The statement “We have insurance” is nebulous because there are so many types of coverages and exclusionary endorsements that can be included within every insurance policy. As a result, there is a need to clarify what the insurance policies cover. Only when a congregation is an informed buyer will it be “ready for its’ day in court.”
Special Multi-Peril Package Policy

The basic insurance policy that is typically purchased is referred to as a Special Multi-Peril or Package policy. In addition to liability insurance, it provides property coverage and, usually, crime coverage. As this article is about the liability concerns of a Lutheran church and/or school, these other lines of coverage will not be addressed. What will be addressed, however, are the coverages and endorsements that should be included on each Package policy and the separate liability policies that are available to fill the holes or gaps within these types of policies.

General Liability Coverages

The liability portion of the special multi-peril policy is commonly referred to as commercial general liability coverage. Its primary purpose is to protect the congregation and its employees and volunteers from legal action alleging bodily injury to others or the destruction of their property. This means that someone must be physically injured, or their property materially damaged, before the insurance company will respond and provide a defense against said allegations. Before proceeding further, it should be noted that commercial general liability policies also include coverage for some types of personal injury and advertising injury. The definition of personal injury usually includes slander, defamation, disparagement, wrongful eviction, false arrest, privacy violation, and malicious prosecution. The definition of advertising injury includes the same types of coverages included under the definition of personal injury, although they generally result from some type of media use. Advertising injury also includes coverage for the misappropriation of advertising ideas and the infringement of copyrights. It is important to note that these types of losses do not require physical injury or damage to another organization or person’s property.
Coverage Endorsements to General Liability

Endorsements to the basic commercial general liability form are designed to enhance or limit the coverage that the standard policy form provides. Endorsements often serve three purposes: to exclude a particular coverage such as sexual misconduct, to modify a particular coverage and/or coverage wording, and to add coverage back onto a policy. When most people look at an endorsement to a policy, and they see that coverage is being added or that a separate dollar amount is shown for a particular coverage, they assume nothing else has changed. Don’t make this mistake! Thoroughly read the endorsement and understand the changes it is making. Know if it is taking away coverage by virtue of the change in wording or if it is broadening coverage. The special multi-peril policy, in most cases, pays defense costs without reducing the dollar amount of coverage available for settlement. An endorsement making a slight change to the policy wording may make defense costs a part of the limit thereby reducing the amount of coverage available to pay a settlement. The point is to be aware of all the various parts of an insurance policy. Otherwise, when a legal action occurs, the congregation may be paying for the defense and/or settlement costs involved with any of a number of claims.

A. Sexual Misconduct

This particular coverage provides for the defense and settlement of actions arising out of physical acts of sexual molestation or misconduct as more fully defined within the form and almost always needs to be added to the basic special multi-peril policy by endorsement. In some cases the coverage is for the congregation only and does not provide coverage for the accused individual(s). It should be noted here that most sexual misconduct endorsements void coverage for the congregation and the individual if there is prior knowledge of similar allegations against a particular individual whether they are an employee, volunteer, member of the church, or student, and the insurance company was not informed of this situation. It is important to understand that one cannot ignore these events and hope they will just go away.

B. Pastoral Counseling

This coverage provides for legal action arising out of some type of spiritual counseling performed by a pastor, or an individual assigned by the pastor, as long as they do not have a professional license. Pastoral counseling would include instances such as a pastor counseling on divorce or other marital issues, a director of youth counseling with young adults, or a teacher, in a non-instructional environment, counseling a student or parent. (It should be specifically noted that licensed
counselors must have coverage under a separate individual professional liability policy. It is important to read this portion of the policy to be sure what it covers (each policy is different) and whom it covers (it may be limited to a pastor or named positions only). If the position is not named or the coverage is not blanket ed over all positions, persons working in that capacity and those working along side in this capacity may not be covered. Either way, the church worker and the congregation are definitely not ready for a day in court.

C. Employee Benefits Liability

This coverage provides protection for claims arising out of the handling of employee benefit plans. Coverage is usually provided as an endorsement to the commercial general liability policy. It protects, more specifically, the congregation and its employees, from claims alleging improper advice that may have been given out regarding a particular plan, or an error or omission in the administration of a benefit plan such as failure to add an employee to a benefit program.

There are a great many other aspects of the commercial general liability policy form and its various endorsements that should be reviewed. A determination needs to be made whether the dollar amount of coverage the congregation is carrying is sufficient. Are defense costs provided in addition to the limit of liability, or do they erode the limit available to pay claims? Items, such as the definition of who is included as an insured, should also be reviewed. Particular attention should be paid to the verbiage on the coverage endorsements, as discussed above, as they often have a modified definition of who is considered an insured person. The named insured wording within endorsements adding coverages to a policy are almost always less encompassing than the wording within the body of the primary general liability form. Many times vicars, student teachers, and even volunteers are not included in the policy, or its endorsements, as an insured person. To protect church workers, volunteers, and the congregation’s interests, there is a need to make sure time is taken to read and understand these terms in the particular insurance companies policy form. If in doubt, contact the agent or broker and have them go over these areas in detail.

Other Liability Policies

There are specific areas of liability coverage that are normally excluded under the general liability form. They include coverages such as automobile liability, director, officer, and trustee liability, employment related practices liability, educator’s legal liability, workers’ compensation, and umbrella liability. Separate policies are available
to provide these lines of coverage. And, although these coverages are provided by separate policies, the same cautions mentioned above still apply. Review limits, policy wording, and definitions before determining whether all exposures are adequately covered.

A. Automobile

Most individuals have a good understanding of automobile coverage. However, several important forms or coverages are sometimes left off of the policies of Lutheran congregations and schools. One of these coverages is hired and non-owned automobile liability coverage. This provides liability coverage for the church and/or school when either an employee or a volunteer has an accident while driving his or her own car on institutional business. Note that coverage is provided for the organization. The individual is not covered by the policy unless it is specifically endorsed to cover employees and volunteers (each category is a separate endorsement). Without these endorsements, the individual’s personal automobile liability carrier must respond on his or her behalf, and even if you have these endorsements, the policy will provide coverage for them, individually, after their personal policy limits have been exhausted. The employee and volunteer will be happy to know that they have an additional layer of coverage provided by the policy should they be in an accident while driving their own vehicle. The bad news is that they are probably going to be upset when they find out that the policy does not provide any coverage for the physical damage to their vehicle. The congregation and its insurance carrier are not responsible for the damage or their deductible—there is no way to insure this exposure. However, if they sue the organization for these damages, the policy will provide a defense. Another of the coverages that is often left off automobile policies is Hired Car Physical Damage Liability. This endorsement provides physical damage coverage, up to the stated limit, on vehicles that are rented by the congregation or worker for brief periods for special purposes or when on congregational business. It should be noted that the geographical area of coverage is, in most cases, limited also. Very few policies will provide coverage once one crosses the border into Mexico. As a result, if a trip is being planned into Mexico, there will be a need to purchase this coverage separately from a company that specializes in foreign automobile liability.

B. Directors, Trustees, and Officers Liability

This insurance protects from claims arising out of the performance, or lack thereof, of duties as a board member, trustee, or officer of the church/school. Here I am going to specifically address the exposures facing a church. A school should
obtain this coverage in conjunction with their educators’ legal liability insurance policy, which will be discussed later in this article. The coverage provided by a Directors, Trustees, and Officers Liability would include, but is not limited to, claims arising out of the following types of situations:

1. **Improper use of designated funds**
   Churches will, at times, use designated funds to pay current expenses rather than incurring interest on commercially borrowed money. This is done with the full intent of putting the money back into the designated fund when the giving cycle picks up. On occasion, whether the money has been replaced or not, the heirs of the party that designated the funds may bring about legal action to enforce compliance with the conditions of the gift. In some cases, they may also request the return of all of the funds that are remaining within this account. This type of case is almost always brought against the individuals on the board.

2. **Failure to properly invest church funds**
   This type of claim could be brought by a member who feels that the money that has been entrusted to the church has been invested in a risky manner or that the investments have been too conservative. Again, this type of claim is almost always brought against the board and its members.

3. **Failure to put proper safeguards in place**
   Recently, an entire board was sued by a member of the church who felt that the board was derelict in its duties because it did not carry sufficient employee dishonesty limit to cover a $90,000 embezzlement claim. The claim cited the fact that they were quoted a sufficient limit of coverage by an agency; however, they were not allowed to purchase the coverage from the insurance carrier because they would not agree to institute a two-signature rule. A two-signature rule requires two signatures on every check issued over a certain amount. Needless to say, the member found this out and sued the directors and officers as individuals for failing to perform the responsibilities their job.

   Directors and officers coverage is often one of the coverages not purchased by Lutheran congregations. Many individuals operate under the illusion that state laws protect them because they are volunteers. If one feels this way, it would be a good idea to get a copy of the state statutes and read it. There are multiple types of actions that are excluded from state statutes. In any event, if one doesn’t have the coverage,
one will still have to hire a lawyer to defend the allegations being made. This alone is expensive. Some also think they have coverage under their homeowner’s insurance policy for the exposures presented by being a board member, and in some cases they may be right; however, if they do have coverage, it is extremely limited in scope.

C. Employment Practices Liability

This type of lawsuit is becoming more and more common in today’s litigious society. Currently, it happens to be one of the largest areas of legal action within the United States. It is very prevalent in the church because most churches do not have any formal process for hiring, promoting, giving raises, or firing employees. This type of legal action is almost always based on some type of discrimination charge. It could be age, sex, favoritism, etc. In one case where a church employed non-members, and let one of them go, but kept members employed, the congregation was sued for religious discrimination. This coverage is sometimes expensive, and many churches do not currently carry this coverage. The reason it is expensive is all the law suits that are currently being brought in this area. Regardless of the cost, it is strongly suggested that this coverage be purchased. Coverage can be purchased as a rider to the Directors, Trustees, and Officers liability policy and/or the Directors and Officers endorsement attached to the package policy. Once again, it is important to read the form—know what is being purchased. This coverage varies greatly from insurance company to insurance company.

D. Educator’s Professional Liability

This form of insurance provides Director, Officer, and Trustee coverage for a school (see description above). It also provides professional coverage to the school, its boards, and its teachers for their actions or inactions as professional educators.
Types of actions included under this area would be:

1. **Failure to educate**
   Claims for failure to educate occur when a child has been promoted to the next grade level and subsequently cannot get into college or get a job because she cannot perform the skills that her grades would otherwise indicate.

2. **Failure to control a classroom or school**
   Parent(s) may bring action against a school and its teachers because they failed to properly discipline its students. Because of this they may allege that their child is unable to learn properly—that she is unable to concentrate on her schoolwork. They may also allege that their child is being harassed and that school officials are looking the other way. Once again this is a performance of duty issue for which an educator is responsible and can be held liable.

3. **Failure to fulfill written or oral commitments**
   Recently, a school put out a brochure touting the individual care given to each student. A child was enrolled who had an attention deficit disorder. The parents paid their tuition and then demanded an individual instructor. The school refused. The courts overruled.

   It is important to understand that the phrase “educators’ legal liability” can mean anything. One company that shows this phrase on their declaration page is actually only providing coverage for corporal punishment. Nothing else is covered. Again, don’t be caught off guard. It is important to ask questions and read the policy.

**E. Workers’ Compensation Insurance**

There are two primary areas of misunderstanding with regard to Workers’ Compensation Insurance coverage. Both can result in a congregation going to court without the protection of an insurance company.

1. **Who has to carry this coverage?**
   Many smaller churches do not carry this coverage because the state in which they are located may have a minimum number of employees required before the coverage becomes mandatory. Coverage not being mandatory has nothing to do with your liability for your acts. In fact, under many state laws, not carrying the coverage can cause a congregation to lose its defense and be held immediately at fault. If this happens, the congregation will be held, at a minimum, responsible for
Be Ready for Your Day in Court

what would have been paid under an insurance policy. In essence, the congregation is now the insurance company. In most cases, congregations exceed the minimum and are often not aware of it because they are not counting workers correctly as more fully described in state statutes. The number of employees relates to how many a congregation has during a year, not how many they have at any one given time. Anybody paid is considered an employee. Pastor, secretary, organist, guest organist, grass cutter, and anyone else compensated, by workers’ compensation interpretation, are all considered employees. Note that the pastor is included. Although he might be considered a contracted employee, the state considers him an employee, if he does not have a workers’ compensation policy of his own. Remember, failure to insure is not covered under directors, trustees, and officer’s liability or educators’ legal liability coverage, and they could be separately sued for failure to perform the responsibilities of the position in not obtaining workers’ compensation coverage.

2. Workers’ compensation insurance only covers injury to an employee.

The standard workers’ compensation policy actually includes two forms of liability coverage, which are excluded from a general liability policy and all other specific insurance policies discussed above. They are referred to as Workers’ Compensation and Employers’ Liability Insurance. Coverage for individuals other than employees, in certain situations, is in place under the Employers’ Liability section of this policy. The Workers’ Compensation section of the policy generally covers workers. Examples are:

a. Loss of consortium between worker and family.

b. Third party crossover liability claims, which occur when an employee is injured using equipment purchased by the congregation that has been modified or not properly maintained. Normally the manufacturer is sued, and they will in turn pass the liability on to the congregation. An example would be a ladder that has been extended by adding some boards to it. The congregation is now a manufacturer.

c. An individual who upon hearing that a congregational employee, their family member, has been injured, suffers a stroke or heart attack. This is called consequential liability

As is apparent, while in a rare instance workers’ compensation may not be mandatory, it is certainly necessary for you to be ready for your day in court.
**Umbrella**

This is a policy that is designed to provide coverage over the congregation’s existing insurance policies (mainly general liability, automobile liability, and employers’ liability) when a catastrophic loss occurs which exhausts the primary policy’s limit. The limits of coverage under this policy are usually offered in one million dollar increments. Examples of losses that would be covered under an umbrella policy are:

1. Automobile losses that have multiple injuries or deaths whose damages exceed the automobile policy limits.
2. Food poisoning affecting multiple attendees resulting in claims exceeding the limits provided by a general liability policy.
3. Bleachers collapsing injuring multiple individuals resulting in claims exceeding the limits provided by a general liability policy.
4. Individual losses where negligence is so prevalent that a larger than normal settlement is made.

Again, this coverage, while relatively inexpensive, is often not purchased. The amount of insurance purchased under this coverage is just as important as the policy form that is purchased. If the purchased amount of coverage is inadequate, or a policy has reduced coverage via exclusionary wording or endorsements, the congregation will not be ready for its day in court.

Deciding what insurance agent to purchase insurance coverage from is just as important as determining what policies and coverages should be purchased. When shopping for an insurance agent, look for one who will take the time to review coverage on a regular basis. He or she should be willing to do this and be knowledgeable about the exposures facing entities similar to those of your congregation. Find out how many churches and schools the agency insures and how long they have been working exclusively with churches and schools. Only an agent experienced with the handling of churches and schools will be able to advise on potential exposures to loss and what can be done to prevent, reduce, and/or transfer losses to another party. The agent should also regularly provide quotations for the optional coverages that are needed. Even if it is decided not to purchase all of the recommended insurance policies and/or coverage, at least the option to make an informed decision will have been exercised.
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The word “wind” instead of “trend” has been used in the title of this brief article because financial development in most Lutheran schools and/or early childhood centers is certainly blowing in the wind. I was tempted to insert the word “whims” since financial development is not a fact in most places, rather an impulse, a thought, or idea that usually happens elsewhere.

What follows is based upon personal observations made during my involvement with 15 districts of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) and many Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) schools and/or early childhood centers. This involvement was obtained through numerous Saturday workshops and on-campus consultations with the core leaders of the church and/or school and many wonderful volunteers over a ten-year period. In most Lutheran schools, the first attempt at raising funds was done by going through a defined development process of asking others for financial assistance. It was truly an undertaking of going to school constituents, reminding them of the school’s mission, stating the need and asking for a gift.
As it relates to Lutheran school financial development, I would put forward the following major observations:

**No Change**

Many of our schools have done little. Even places that had begun a development process have fallen back because of changes in leadership and a lack of understanding of the financial potential. There have been attempts and invitations for training that slide across the administrator’s desk, but selling products, sponsoring a market day, and the annual “a-thons” is still the mainstay of raising funds. Many administrators have now become acquainted with the understanding that funding formulas have changed, and will continue to change, but little is being done. Leadership is not taking the chance of trying something new.

**Position of Development Director, Fundraiser, or Business Manager**

The small segment of schools and churches that have recognized that new streams of income are necessary have moved to hire someone in this type of position. A variety of these positions, however they are titled, are increasing around the country. Most of these individuals have little training, last an average of two years, have a poor job description, unrealistic expectations, and few training outlets. However, it’s a beginning, and these schools are moving in the right direction.

**Creating Other Financial Income Streams**

Traditionally, there has always been talk of “third source” income. Today, schools need a variety of income sources, not only to meet the budget but also to move forward with staff salaries, student scholarships, academic programs, and
needed expanded facilities. Income sources should include vast summer programs, extended care (12 hours a day 12 months a year), tuition upgrades, annual fund drives, capital/product campaigns, limited fund raisers, special gifts, appeals, and interest on endowment funds. Schools are now realizing, or will soon realize, that there is a need for fifth, sixth, and seventh sources of income. Church support and tuition cannot continue as 95% (or higher) of the funding formula for most of our schools.

Need for Strategic Planning

Implementing a broadly-participatory grass-roots planning process assists schools in many directions: the board’s budgeting process, future facilities planning, added programs, and future staffing possibilities. Including the school community in the planning process paves the way for tuition increases and lays the groundwork for future capital campaigns and giving programs. More schools should invest in the strategic planning process for professional future guidance.

Creating a Funding Atmosphere

Strong successful schools and/or early childhood centers that have a long rich history of consistent congregational support, full classrooms, and sound budget management are now in a prime position to begin creating a “financial development” climate. Unfortunately, many of these schools sit back during the “good” years not realizing the “lean” years are ahead. And lean years will come!

Everyone wants the financial rewards of fundraising but they express discomfort with the process. Whether the school and/or early childhood center is urban or suburban, rich or poor, new or old, heavily Lutheran or not, changes will occur. The key is creating a “culture” in our schools that underscores and supports the financial development process.

Encouraging this atmosphere depends on how the administrator, pastor, and key board members perceive fundraising or development. Leadership must set the tone and encourage the process.

Ask For It

The major reason some schools are successfully funded is that someone is asking for support. In some schools it’s the principal, the development director, the business manager, a member of the school board, or a designated parent doing the asking. The most significant factor in why some schools are always struggling, have closed, or are extremely unstable financially, is that no one is asking for money.
Think Bigger

Never in the history of our schools has the time been more opportune for mission outreach, building larger enrollment, and serving more families and students. Never in the history of our country has there been dollars of such significant amounts being passed down from the older generation to the next. These are extraordinary “rich” times. Are our schools and/or early childhood centers ready to take advantage of the gifting opportunities to fund our dreams? Or, will our schools and churches be passed by for other worthy charities and non-profit institutions because so many of us are not in position to reap the benefits?

Every school and/or early childhood center has in its midst several major donors who have the capacity to give the big gift. However, few of our schools and congregations have set up an endowment program, or have explained planned giving mechanics that encourage donors to give. Now is the time to inform constituents that you need the gift and how you will use it.

Overload

Old formulas used to justify how much time the administrator is out of the classroom are out of date. The only relevant understanding of the administrator’s time is that he or she doesn’t have enough. This statement is nothing new, no matter the size of the school. Adding financial development duties, which is a science in and of itself, to the role of an untrained administrator is extremely unfair. This is especially true when so many principals and early childhood directors squirm when you mention fundraising, budgets, planned giving, donors, and endowments. These are foreign concepts and significantly down the list of academic and church-related priorities. School boards must investigate other methods of achieving financial development that won’t add to the administrator’s load.

Being Cheap

This continues to be the main battle cry for most of our schools. Administrators, pastors, and board members look at the cost of contracting outside consultants or facilitators and are very reluctant. Schools that view development and strategic planning as an investment understand the next level of advancing the mission of the institution. They are on course to move forward and upward.

Use Your Board

Every board must realize that financial integrity of the school is one of its main
responsibilities. Whether board members like it or not, the financial buck starts and stops with them. This is inescapable. Even if the school’s funding is a major part of the church’s budget, a board member should still be in communication with the church through the church council. The administrator’s role becomes one of finding members who understand this, training them, and motivating them to accept fundraising as part of their job description. (There are some schools where this isn’t part of the board’s responsibilities, but it’s coming very quickly.)

Focus on the Mission

The best source of funding for any fund drive or any other kind of fundraising activity are individuals who appreciate the school’s ministry. People who relate to the school’s mission statement will champion the school. It’s relatively simple—find those people who agree with the ministry and ask them for support. You will be surprised at the results.

The school must focus on its mission, the school’s purpose for existence. Once the school has identified this as the place to start, it can begin compiling a database of those “friends” of the school.

The good news is that each and every school and early childhood center has many donors who will support our institutions once they are asked.

If you are moving towards a financial development program, I salute and encourage your efforts. You are on the right path moving through the financial maze.†
Financing Lutheran Schools: What Was, What Is, and What Can Be

Dr. David Hahn earned his bachelor’s degree from Concordia, River Forest in 1975 and his doctorate from the University of Minnesota in 1991. He has served as teacher, coach and administrator at Lutheran schools and colleges in Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and New York. Since 1987, he has been Executive Director at Long Island Lutheran Middle and High School. Hahn frequently consults with non-profit organizations in the areas of strategic planning, fundraising and management.

Recently, I was meeting with some fellow veterans in the field of Lutheran education. Our conversation soon drifted to “the way things used to be” in our respective ministries. We harkened back to a by-gone era when the students were more respectful; the parents, more supportive; the pastors, energetic leaders; and teachers, tirelessly faithful. Later, our discussion wandered to a time of long-gone financial simplicity when congregations gladly footed the bill for our schools.

Sentimentality being what it is, perhaps such cheery, “Beaver Cleaver” days never really did exist. But certainly we were right about one thing – many things have changed since we had begun our Lutheran teaching service three decades ago. And here’s the good news–many of these changes are for the better.

One of my former colleagues at Long Island Lutheran Middle and High School (LuHi) encouraged her students and co-workers to “Embrace change!” What a great way to look at life and what a great way to look at our schools! Yes, much has changed for the better in education. Technology has brought the
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innumerable resources of the Internet to our classrooms. The world is shrinking via communications and travel, providing educational opportunities unimaginable a generation ago. Spectacular teaching resources and training opportunities abound. Salaries and benefits for educators have substantially increased. Expanded school facilities and equipment augment learning opportunities. Doors of opportunity have been opened for young people regardless of gender, race, or disability. Exciting Christian service opportunities help students to put faith into action.

This is a time of boundless opportunity for quality, faith-based schools. Of course, there’s a catch. Realizing the potential of our times requires increased capacity to raise and manage significant financial resources. Is your school organized and motivated to find the dollars necessary to “embrace change” with quality in the twenty-first century?

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What Was: Financing Lutheran Schools Prior to 1970

As we prepare for the future, it’s helpful to take a look at the past. Based on data and input provided by educational leaders of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS),¹ it appears that many of our schools experienced a significant change in funding sometime around 1970. While recognizing that characteristics vary from school-to-school and region-to-region, the following fiscal realities applied to many Lutheran schools prior to 1970.

- Congregational operating budgets funded 90% or more of school operating expenses. In the words of LCMS Director of Schools Bill Cochran, “It was pretty much the ’congregation pays the way’ model.”

¹ Special thanks to the following individuals for their insights and data: Dr. Ross Stueber, Mr. William Cochran, Ms. Marlene Lund, and Mr. Ed Grube.
• The vast majority of Lutheran school students were members of the sponsoring congregation. In many schools, particularly in the Midwest, Lutheran member children made up 98%-plus of the student bodies.

• “Tuition was a dirty word and seldom charged,” reflected Concordia-Mequon professor, Dr. Ross Steuber. “This was especially true for congregational members.”

• Nearly all Lutheran schoolteachers were LCMS “called teaching ministers” and products of the Concordia College system.

• Salaries and benefits were kept very low, providing a means to hold down costs. Bill Cochran refers to low salaries as “fourth source funding,” which significantly supplemented dollars generated by congregations, tuition, and fundraising.

• Operating costs were modest, often reflecting a Spartan German-Lutheran approach to compensation, programs, facilities, and equipment.

• Fundraising efforts also were very modest, including “candy bar sales, wrapping paper drives, and PTA events.”

• The role of the principal was focused on educational leadership, which often included teaching classes and handling school-wide discipline. The principal usually had minimal responsibilities regarding the raising and managing of finances.

What Has to Come to Be: Current Realities in Funding Lutheran Schools

In the ensuing three-plus decades, the funding of Lutheran schools has entered an era of increasing complexity. This has led to changes in the ways that our educational leaders operate their schools and prioritize their workload. While again it is impossible to generalize these changes for all schools and locales, the following trends are a way of life for many of our schools and their leaders:

• The percentage of school operations funded by the sponsoring congregation(s) has declined to a national average of 30-40%. Often these reduced dollars have paralleled a general decline in congregational membership and resources. In some parts of the country, the cash flow has even been reversed. Marlene Lund, Executive Director of New York’s Lutheran Schools Association reports that, “Some of our schools have become ‘cash cows’ for failing churches. This is especially true for those congregations with Early Childhood centers.”

• Children from congregational families make up a declining proportion of the
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student bodies in Lutheran schools. The national average is now 40%, but many schools have far lower percentages of member children. This trend toward educating more “outsiders” has also tended to erode the congregation’s sense of ownership and commitment.

- Tuition now provides about two-thirds of the income needed to operate most Lutheran schools. Initially, tuition tended to be charged only to the “outsiders,” but eventually members have been included in an escalating tuition cycle. In recent years, a number of Lutheran schools have raised tuition rates to reflect true operating costs.

- The percentage of Lutheran school educators holding degrees as “called LCMS teaching ministers” has also declined at most schools. Nationally about 60% of Lutheran elementary school teachers are Synodically trained - down from 70% since 1995. Again, these percentages are often far lower in urban and “Saltwater District” schools.

- The hiring and retention of more non-LCMS teachers has also increased the pressure for Lutheran schools to offer salaries and benefits that are competitive in their region.

- Increased operational costs have been driven not only by higher salaries and benefits, but also by the need to maintain state-of-the-art facilities, technology, and equipment, as well as funding faculty housing and professional marketing efforts.

- The increased need for dollars has driven Lutheran schools to develop more aggressive fundraising programs including annual funds, special events, capital campaigns, and endowment drives. Still, in the words of Lutheran Education Association administrator Ed Grube, “We Lutherans are awfully slow. The elementary schools are beginning to follow the lead of our high schools. I see boards looking more and more for principals with fundraising skills.”

- All the above factors require today’s Lutheran school principal to be a multifaceted leader. Significant financial expectations have been added to the role, often at the cost of hands-on academic leadership.

What Can Be: Winning the Multi-Front War

So now what do we do? Even in today’s tough economic times, non-public school enrollment is booming across America as parents seek a quality, faith-based environment for their children. How do we lead our schools to embrace these exciting opportunities while maintaining fiscal integrity?
Sorry—there are no simple answers. What is required is an approach I call “winning the multi-front war.” Imagine facets of your school’s operations detailed on one of those battle maps, with various units advancing and retreating on the field. The battle cannot be won if key units are weak or in retreat. Conversely, a successful advance on all fronts ultimately adds up to victory.

So it is with the “multi-fronts” in your school’s operation. A successful student recruitment effort will be undermined by weak academic performance. Successful fundraising efforts will come to naught if there is inadequate financial management. An untrained or uncooperative staff can undermine the finest technology and equipment.

On the other hand, a school that develops strength on all “fronts” is a blessing to everyone. The energy generated by each positive facet of your school operation fuels the success of other programs, including access to increased financial resources.

Five Steps Toward A Fiscally Healthy School

While many factors contribute to a school’s success, there are five principal initiatives that seem to characterize a positive environment. By the grace of God, I have seen these strategies work at LuHi over the past 16 years. These five steps toward a fiscally healthy school are offered in the hope that they might assist your ministry, as well.

Step #1: Get With the Plan

Every successful journey begins with a good road map. This is certainly true for our schools. Your map can take many forms—an annual strategic planning process, a less formal board action plan, or just a set of agreed-upon goals. What is important is that your school sets priorities, establishes measurable objectives, and develops a system for holding itself accountable for results.

An effective planning process always grows out of a clear, compelling mission statement, which is supported by an effective organizational structure. As a school administrator, one of your most important jobs is to raise your eyes above the day-to-day grind to develop and share a vision of what your school can be!

Strategic planning unites a school behind a course of action. Input and participation are solicited from all sectors of your school’s constituency. Effective marketing, fundraising, and public relations initiatives spring naturally from your school’s plan of action.

Step #2: If You Build It, They Will Come
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Your school’s financial success begins with a commitment to quality. Contrary to our traditional Lutheran thinking, people are willing to pay for quality, especially when it comes to the education of their own children. Conversely, I am finding that even the most loyal members of Lutheran congregations will not send their children to our schools if they feel that our educational environment is somehow inferior.

Quality means different things for each school setting. My point is simply that an unflinching commitment to quality be apparent at every opportunity. This begins with taking care of our most precious resource—the teachers and staff who form the bedrock of the educational experience. While this certainly implies that we do our best to offer competitive compensation, it is also crucial to provide teachers with the finest educational resources and equipment. Quality should also be reflected in your school’s communications. If you didn’t know anything about your school and picked up your newsletter or visited your website, what would your impression be?

An attitude of quality also should be reflected in your school facilities. Around the LuHi campus, we have invested significant dollars into our physical plant. Sometimes our Board and administration are even criticized for raising and allocating funds for our buildings and grounds.

But there is no doubt that part of our school’s appeal to students, parents, staff, and donors has been an increasingly beautiful, up-to-date campus. If an organization looks organized and cared for, it probably is! Whether your improvement plan involves volunteers with buckets of paint or millions of dollars of construction, the impression of quality in your building will pay big dividends for your school.

Step #3: Tell Your Story—Early and Often

A quality school with a well-crafted game plan can still fail. Your school’s ultimate mission and financial position depend on attracting, enrolling, and retaining an adequate number of qualified students. In most cases, the easiest way to build fiscal stability in your school is to enroll some more great students.

This doesn’t happen by accident. Today’s Lutheran school (Pre-K, elementary,
secondary, or college) needs to develop and execute a comprehensive marketing plan. The heart of this plan is to get prospective students and their parents to visit your facility. Prospect names can come from many sources including congregational lists, feeder schools, and commercial mailing lists representing targeted ages and communities.

Telling your story early and often is a big key to success. At LuHi, we host our first Open House in late September for students seeking admission the following fall. Prospective students begin taking entrance examinations during the first week of October, and we continue with monthly events until enrollment is full for the following fall. All prospects receive personal telephone calls and participate in a one-on-one interview with the principal prior to acceptance. Promoting your school early and often is one of the best ways to ensure your school’s fiscal stability.

**Step #4: Ask and You Shall Receive**

I have yet to hear one of my fellow Lutheran administrators complain that their school has too much money. In fact, very few of our schools charge tuition amounts sufficient to cover the costs of a top-quality educational operation.

With regard to fundraising, I have good news and bad news for you. The good news is that there is probably plenty of money to support your school. The bad news is that it is still in the pockets of your parents, alumni, and friends. One of the marks of a successful, growing school is the presence of a comprehensive plan for resource development.

An effective fundraising plan needs to focus on improving your school in some tangible, exciting ways. Specific cash goals for facilities, programs, and endowment attract the most interest. A month-by-month schedule of fundraising contacts and events will ensure that everyone has a chance to participate. It is especially crucial that you cultivate relationships with constituents who are capable of making leadership gifts to your campaign, as the top 10% of the donors often contribute 90% of the money.

One other key: involve your parents in your major fundraising efforts. Often I hear administrators who are reluctant to approach parents for major gifts because “They’re already paying tuition.” At LuHi, our parents have become the primary category of financial supporters to our on-going capital campaigns. Obviously, the dollar amount varies from family to family, but parents are often able and motivated to assist their children’s school to move forward with educational enhancements.

**Step #5: Keep It Together**
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A fiscally sound school begins with sound financial management. This requires that your school have an annual budget driven by a positive but realistic calculation of revenue sources. This estimate of income should then be compared to your school’s likely expenses for the upcoming year, with the goal that the former should be at least equal to the latter. Even after adoption, your school’s budget projections should be updated on a regular basis to chart reality versus your original spending plan.

This process of budgetary development and review is seldom easy. But as our friend Shakespeare said, “To thine own self be true!” Faithful fiscal management is the foundation upon which the rest of your school’s success will depend. This includes clear record keeping, reporting, billing, and vendor payments. An annual independent audit (or at least, audit review) is highly recommended as a way to build and maintain a credible bookkeeping system. Another helpful tool is a multiple year projection of income and expenses to assist in identifying trends before they become crises.

Final words of advice from the annals of LuHi’s past fiscal crisis: beware of large, overdue tuition balances. Most of our schools are heavily dependent upon tuition as the primary source of income. When our schools do not regularly tend the billing and collection process, everyone suffers. Policies need to be put in place and enforced, albeit with as much Gospel light as possible. Sometimes, an additional scholarship grant is in order. The process of collecting tuition is not easy. (You may even join me in occasionally being labeled “un-Christian” in the process!) At the end of the year, however, LuHi regularly collects nearly all of its $3 million in tuition. This is a huge blessing to everyone, including those parents who were not allowed to fall behind.

Yes, things have changed in Lutheran education over the years. These changes require energy, vision, and financial skills in order to preserve and expand the mission of our schools. But with attention to quality on many “fronts,” our schools will continue to serve and prosper for many years into the future.
Marketing for Lutheran Schools

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In the California-Nevada-Hawaii (CNH) District of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, Lutheran schools operate in a very competitive private school environment. In that market, we are, generally speaking, a very small and relatively unknown player. In some districts in our synod, having Lutheran in your school’s name evokes a positive response from the community because Lutherans, and their school system, are well known and respected. In the CNH District, the word Lutheran is more likely to induce a comment such as, “Uh, what’s a Lutheran?”

Knowing that we could not complacently sit by, depending on Lutherans sending their children to our schools, we began looking for ways to better position ourselves in the private and parochial school market. This introspection inevitably led us to marketing. In this article I will share with you what we have learned.

What is Marketing?

In their book Strategic Marketing for Educational Institutions, Kotler and Fox (1995) begin to define marketing as a managerial process of carefully formulated programs that seek to attract and keep customers by serving their needs and desires, using and blending a set of tools called the marketing mix: program, price, place, promotion, processes,
already, in just the beginning phrase of their definition, a question begs to be asked: who is the Lutheran school’s customer? Whenever I ask that question in a workshop, it usually engenders a vigorous debate over whether the customer is the parent or the child. In some instances either or both answers may be correct, but in general, an organization’s customer is always the end user. The end user in a school is always the student. While it is a parent who usually makes the enrollment decision and almost certainly foots the bill, ultimately it will be the student who decides whether or not to stay in the school. Very few parents will keep their children in a school that does not meet their children’s academic or social needs. While I may be wrong about who is the customer of the Lutheran school, the question still must be asked and ultimately answered. A school that does not know who it is trying to serve eventually serves no one.

Another part of Kotler and Fox’s (1995) definition raises a lot of emotion as well: serving their needs and desires. When a school begins objectively looking at itself, it will eventually discover that a lot of what it does is seldom examined from the customer’s point-of-view.

Programs, course-offerings, curriculum, and school processes are often done because it is what the staff wants, not because it is what students’ want and need. Now, I understand that schools are different from any other kind of business. We have state regulations to meet, professional practices to follow, and the like. Obviously, schools can’t be designed around the desires of children. Neither should schools ignore their tradition, culture, or purpose to provide whatever is “hot” at the moment. However, the fact remains that imposing a program, service, or idea that is not matched to your customer’s needs or wants will eventually fail.

Effective marketing is always client-oriented, not seller-oriented. For schools, the key to program development is to seek clients who are interested in your core offerings and then adapt and package that core to make it as attractive as possible.

Not long ago a message on a list-serve for Lutheran school administrators asked, “Who is getting good marketing results from their website?” The question underscores a common misunderstanding about marketing: marketing is advertising. As Kotler and Fox’s (1995) definition points out, promotions—and advertising is just one aspect of promotion—is but one part of what it means to market. In my estimation, not only is advertising just one part of marketing; it is also the least important. The
most one can expect from even the best and most expensive advertising campaign is an inquiry, usually via a phone call. Turning that phone call into a visit, application, enrollment, attendance, and graduation is where schools should concentrate their marketing efforts. There are schools that do little or no advertising and still have full enrollment. Likewise, there are schools that do a lot of advertising and have plenty of openings. School advertising has little or nothing to do with full enrollment. This is true, in large part, because of the kind of “business” in which schools are engaged.

The “Business” of Lutheran Schools

Leading marketing workshops throughout the CNH district and the synod has led me to the conclusion that many school administrators, school board members, and other lay leaders have not clearly defined the school’s market sector. Education is a service, not a tangible product. Yet schools are usually “marketed” (advertised) as if they were delivering a consistent, storable product that was independent of the person who made it or used it. Carefully planned and expensive promotional campaigns proclaim, “Lutheran Schools Care” or “We offer quality Christian education.” Do we fulfill these promises? Well, that depends on the expectations and perceptions of parents and children. It depends on the actions and attitudes of the teachers, administrators, secretaries, board members, support staff and after-school care providers. Is our fulfillment of these promises tied to attracting and keeping students? Yes, it is! Today’s parents are pretty savvy consumers. They know advertising, even school advertising, is unreliable. Do school brochures ever tell the whole story? Parents don’t think so. They are much more likely to contact your school because they have heard about you from their friends and neighbors, have had positive interactions with your students and teachers in the community, or have been impressed with your facilities. The perceptions of stakeholders are far more important marketing tools than slick, promotional campaigns.

With just a quick perusal of print, radio, and television advertising, one finds that the majority of advertising is for manufactured goods, not services. Most services, especially professional services like doctors, lawyers, therapists, dentists and others, rely on word-of-mouth promotions. When my family recently moved to a new city, we choose our dentist because we got a good recommendation from our neighbors. Within a few days after my first visit to that dentist, I received a letter from him, thanking me for my business and encouraging me to tell my friends about his services. I did. He has a full practice, not because of any advertising, but because he had a clean, attractive office with good parking, his office staff is efficient, friendly and helpful, and he did great dental work very gently and affordably. I believe that the money schools spend on advertising would be better spent on providing better
service, better curriculum, better teaching, more excellent programs, better facilities, and more attractive property. Remember this important truth about marketing: the goal of marketing is not just to attract a customer but more importantly, to keep the customer. All successful businesses, especially those who provide services, thrive and prosper on repeat business.

In their book, The Discipline of Market Leaders, authors Treacy and Wiersma (1995), reported on their study of 80 market leaders in a variety of businesses. The authors found that the most successful organizations could be sorted into three categories: operational excellence, product leadership and customer intimacy. (In the language of education, Operational Excellence translates to price, Product Leadership to graduate quality, and Customer Intimacy to service.)

The author’s three broad conclusions can be summarized as follows:

- No organization can be superior in more than one of the three areas.
- Leaders should focus on one of the three, and then pour most resources and effort into that approach.
- Leaders who endeavor to excel in more than one of the areas will inevitably fail because that multifaceted effort will diminish overall organizational impact.

The book’s major thesis is, then, that market leaders discipline themselves to build just one component to a level of competitive superiority; in this case, less is more.

Organizations that discipline themselves to focus on operational excellence attract customers because they are known for low prices, reliable quality, few extras and have a reputation for delivering value for the money. They reward employees who find ways to keep costs low. Because their profit margins are generally quite low, they need to attract a large customer base. Wal-Mart practices this discipline.

Organizations that focus on product leadership appeal to people because of the combined novelty, attractiveness and quality of their new concept applications. These companies have fluid decision-making processes and reward employees for innovation. They measure their success by making competitors—and sometimes their own—ideas and products obsolete as quickly as possible. Sony applies this discipline.

Organizations that concentrate on customer intimacy attract customers who want great service and desire a personal, long-term relationship with the company. Employees are empowered and rewarded to nurture relationships as creatively and persistently as possible. Success is measured by customer retention.

While the book’s audience is definitely business and industry, there are two significant implications for Lutheran schools. First, when developing a strategic plan, schools must decide which operational discipline, price, graduate quality or service, will be the area in which they will excel. Secondly, while organizations—and that
includes schools—cannot excel in all three areas, neither can they fail in any of the three. The key is to excel in one area and do well in the other two.

In my experience, Lutheran schools are drawn to price as their main strategy for establishing a market edge. Of the three strategies, price is the easiest to execute. But before making that choice, school leaders must understand that neither its quality of services nor its quality of graduate will be equal—over time—to those of its competitors. Eventually, the lack of financial resources will affect the quality of teachers, facilities, curriculum offerings, and program variety. As the school’s offerings decline in quality, so will its enrollment. At some point the value of an excellent education with quality service will outweigh the benefits of a low tuition payment.

It may surprise the reader to learn that in informal polls I have taken at marketing workshops around the country, most participants, when given the choice between the three disciplines, product, price, and service, almost always chose product and price as the strategy they presently use. I wonder how successful that can be since partnering product and price is counterproductive and self-defeating. I am always perplexed at how infrequently service is chosen as the discipline in which to major. If there is one area in which Lutheran schools can distinguish themselves from other schools, it is in the discipline of customer intimacy.

If there is one area in which Lutheran schools can distinguish themselves from other schools, it is in the discipline of customer intimacy.

This viewpoint is somewhat bothersome to many school personnel and lay leaders. It almost always causes them to become defensive about the quality of their graduates. But that need not be. It is possible to pursue excellent service and graduate quality at the same time. The two disciplines are very compatible. But doing them separately, or in combination, with integrity, is impossible at a bargain-basement price. As a strategy, price must always fly solo.

But, is it possible for Lutheran schools to major in graduate quality? I do not believe it is and stay connected to our tradition and purpose. At some point, Lutheran schools must emphasize service over all else. The history, culture and tradition of Lutheran schools are about service (ministry), not price or product. If Lutheran schools want to focus on graduate quality they will have to limit their enrollment to only the brightest and best students. Will Lutheran schools begin turning away
applicants because they may turn out to be just “average” students? Likewise, producing the very best graduates means employing only the very best teachers. Unfortunately, the very best teachers may not be Lutheran, or Christian for that matter. Finally, stressing graduate quality may be incompatible with discipleship, community building, and teacher/student and student/student relationships. When push comes to shove, the focus of Lutheran schools must be service.

**Good Service Begins Before a Customer Arrives**

It has been said in the world of marketing—but I don’t know by whom—that the fastest way to kill a bad product is to advertise it. While Lutheran schools certainly are anything but a bad product, there is something to be learned from the warning: before encouraging new families to visit your school, make sure you have your act together. There is no point in spending thousands of dollars on brochures, banners, or any other kind of advertisement if you are not prepared for business.

This means that your physical facilities will be clean, in good repair, and looking sharp. Your yard will be neatly trimmed, weeded, and attractively landscaped. The school office will be a model of friendliness, helpfulness, organization, and efficiency. The school administrator will be professionally dressed, neat, and friendly. Parents will be invited into an attractive, well-appointed, and organized office. All materials they will need to “kick the tires” of the school will be available. This may include items such as textbooks, class schedules, samples of student work, and a curriculum guide that explains specifically and succinctly—in a language the parents can understand (no “metacognition,” please)—what the student will learn.

Teachers will be prepared also. Their classrooms, like the principal’s office, will be neat, well appointed, and attractively decorated with lots of student work prominently displayed. Teachers will come to meet the family at the classroom door, look them in the eye, smile, shake their hands, and invite them into the classroom. The students are prepared for interruptions such as these, instructed how to politely and warmly greet visitors and not interrupt their teacher as she spends a bit of time with her guests.

After the family leaves the school, they will receive a note from the principal and from the teacher(s) they visited, thanking them for visiting and indicating their availability to answer questions and address concerns. The note might also include an invitation enroll. In any case, the school should be aggressively polite!

If the family decides to enroll, another note will come from the teacher, expressing her excitement and pleasure in having the opportunity to serve the family and become a partner in the education of their child. The parents will be invited to make an appointment to find out how they can prepare their child for upcoming the school year, receive an invitation to a class function, or be visited at home. There is lots of
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room for creativity here, but the point is this: the school, specifically the teacher, should have as many positive contacts with the family as possible before the child ever enters the classroom as a full-time student; positive relationships build trust and value.

It should be quite evident at this point that a school's "people,"—its teachers—are a critical element in a school's marketing mix. Schools with teachers who are people-oriented are much more likely to attract and retain students than schools where teachers are indifferent. While teachers are extremely important to a school, however, the most important people on a campus are the students. Without students, there is no need for schools.

In summary, while an advertising campaign may generate a phone call, it will never make the sale. It will take a quality program, good facilities, and teachers who understand ministry—dare I say customer service—to close the deal.

Generating Inquires

Okay, you are ready for business and ready to receive new families. How will you get the word out about your school? While all the traditional advertising methods will generate some phone calls, nothing is better, or more powerful, than the words of a satisfied customer. Just as a disgruntled parent or student is anxious to rationalize their reasons for withdrawing from your school, satisfied parents and students want to justify why they attend your school. Parents and students want to promote your school, but you have to encourage them by giving them stories to tell.

One of the best advertising tools a school has is the parent newsletter. Your newsletter will give your parents the stories and information they can share with their friends and neighbors. It can be a great pass-along piece. Use your school newsletter to share stories of teachers and students who are successfully carrying out your mission. Offer parenting and homework tips. Explain the benefits of your curriculum and teaching strategies. Always highlight people. Use publishing software and a color printer to make your newsletter as attractive as possible. Spend money on your newsletter instead of a brochure. School newsletters can substitute very nicely for a mail-out brochure; it can be just as striking and, more importantly, it's real. Here is a word of caution: do not use your newsletter as a vehicle for berating parents about not following a school policy; nobody wants to read about your failures. Confront those people face-to-face.

Before going on, I need to define a word I used in the preceding paragraph: benefit. One of the most valuable lessons I learned while working in the retail industry was to distinguish the difference between a feature and a benefit. A feature is a thing; a benefit is an advantage. In general, people buy benefits, not features. For example,
in selling a stereo, I could show a customer all the buttons and other gizmos that the stereo has—those would be its features—or I could demonstrate how those buttons actually improve the sound quality of the music—that’s a benefit. Here’s the point: when communicating the “things” of your school—your curriculum, programs, facilities, location, etc.—translate them into benefits. For example, a print piece could say that, “Trinity Lutheran School is located in downtown Pleasantville.” That would be expressing the school’s location as a feature. To translate that into a benefit, one would instead write: “Trinity Lutheran’s location provides ready access to anyone traveling to or through downtown Pleasantville.” Challenge yourself: see how creative you can be in turning your school features into benefits.

**Building Value with the “Extras”**

Consumers always weigh the cost of anything they purchase against its perceived value. The higher the value, the more the product or service is worth. People determine the value of a product or service by first adding its benefits and then subtracting its costs. The higher the benefit-to-cost ratio the more the product or service is worth. This is true in education as well.

To understand how a school increases its benefit-to-cost ratio, one must first differentiate between the kinds of educational services it offers. Kotler and Fox (1995) maintain that schools have three distinct levels of educational offers: core, tangible and augmented.

The foundation of a school is its core offer. A school’s core offering is the main benefit a student will receive while attending the school. In the case I have been attempting to build in this article, a Lutheran school’s core offerings would be service and good academics in a Christian environment. As these offerings improve, so does the school’s value. However, schools can also increase their value by improving their tangible and augmented offers.

A school’s tangible offer includes such things as people, buildings, playgrounds, textbooks, school furnishings, computers and other equipment, libraries, etc. Programs such as before and after-school care, outdoor education, academic fairs, and parenting classes and extracurricular activities such as athletics, choir, band and drama make up a school’s augmented offer. A school’s tangible and augmented offers should always enhance, never take away from, nor become more important than a school’s core. Likewise, a school’s core benefits should never change, even if the tangible and augmented offers change.

Tangible and augmented offers are critical to school’s marketing strategy. Tangible and augmented offers help a school appeal to a wider variety of market segments and aid in differentiating a school from its competitors. Tangible and
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augmented offers are also very important in setting tuition rates. In most circumstances, parents will be willing to pay more tuition as tangible and augmented offers increase and improve. A quick aside here: Connect increases in tuition with your tangible and augmented offers. Let parents know what those extra dollars will be purchasing.

Creating Loyal Advocates

The goal of any school marketing plan is to turn a prospect into a loyal advocate. In their book, First, Break All the Rules, authors Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman (1999) define an advocate as a customer who is aggressively loyal: customers who not only will not defect, but will sing your praises. “These advocates are your largest unpaid sales force. These advocates, more than marketing, more than promotions, even more than price, are your fuel for sustained growth” (p. 128).

In their extensive research—research that involved interviews with over a billion customers—Buckingham and Coffman (1999) found that businesses create advocates by meeting four basic customer expectations: accuracy, availability, advice and partnerships. They were surprised to find that even though customer needs differ by business, these “four customer expectations remain remarkably consistent across various types of businesses and types of people” (p. 129).

Accuracy means that people expect bills to be accurate, advertisements to be true, and orders to be completed correctly. Availability means people expect things like businesses to be in locations that are easily accessed and people to answer the phone when it rings. Accuracy and availability are dissatisfiers. That is, customers do not get excited when these expectations are met, but they do get irritated when they are not met.

The higher level expectations, partnership and advice, are satisfiers. People get excited when these expectations are met. Partnerships means that people expect organizations to listen to them, respond to them, and to be on their side. They also expect businesses to help them learn; that is to give them advice. How do schools go about meeting these four expectations?

Your school can nurture loyal advocates through integrity of communication. This means that adequate and accurate information about all aspects of the school is readily available on a regular basis. Discipline, homework, grades, dress codes, and parent participation are more than policy matters to be implemented “by the book.” They must be developed, communicated, and implemented with commitment to and caring for the learning community. A network of school staff must be available to listen, empathize, mediate, resolve conflict, correct misperceptions, and define alternatives.
Loyal advocates are cultivated by building alliances of stakeholders. There is a unity of purpose to support student achievement and maintain a caring community. There are clear expectations and accountability for parents, teachers and students. Alliances build on the strengths of stakeholders to empower all members of community to achieve and serve. Educators welcome the perspectives of parents and students about the student’s gifts, challenges, and needs. Parents and students are confident that the school staff will offer sound educational advice and compassion.

Finally, schools build loyal advocates by continuous attention to TCB: taking care of business. The nuts and bolts of daily school interactions are conducted with respect and designed with regard for customer convenience and safety. Phone calls and messages are answered promptly and courteously. The customer may not always be right, but he/she is always treated right. Every effort is made to offer the customers convenient ways to order supplies, purchase lunch tickets, pay tuition, participate in events, and meet obligations. Schools that create loyal advocates take a close look at all of their interactions and look for ways to make those interactions more convenient and more efficient for their clients.

In every interaction the school has with a family, from the initial phone call to graduation and beyond, the school must communicate, in everything it says and does, that it cares; that is, that it cares to serve. When authentic ministry is embedded into every aspect of the school, customer intimacy will be its most effective marketing tool.

References
Why Have Schools?

A child finds some wire, batteries, and flashlight bulbs. Not knowing at first how to make the connections, she plays around with various arrangements until she eventually succeeds in getting a bulb to light. She then discovers that using two batteries makes the bulb burn more brightly. Upon further inquiry, she is able to light two bulbs at once. Experimenting further, she finds different wiring schemes to light the bulbs. She is fascinated and continues to explore. Before long she visits the local library and locates books on circuitry. From there she moves on to other challenges involving electricity.

A second child also finds some wire, batteries, and flashlight bulbs. He, too, eventually gets a bulb to light. He finds a science book that shows how to construct parallel and series circuits. Hoping to receive extra credit from the teacher in science class, he copies some diagrams from a book and shows his teacher that he can light the bulbs in different ways. Content that he has earned extra points in science class, he soon becomes disinterested in further investigation.

In his book *The Life of the Mind: A Christian Perspective* (2002), Clifford Williams notes that we live in a utilitarian society. Our thought processes are geared toward learning how to do things for practical reasons. We like to get things done, and we try to do them in ways that bring about positive results (p. 27). For instance, we wear fashionable clothes for peer acceptance. We buy a larger lawn mower so we can save time cutting the grass. We play sports to be part of a team.

Our desire to be practical even affects what we strive to learn. We think and learn so that we can receive something for our efforts. For example, the second child cited above viewed his discovery of some principles of electricity as a way to improve his science grade. Once that was accomplished, he lost interest.

A utilitarian approach to learning can rob us of the joy of learning for the sake of learning. “If the only matters with which we were concerned were the hows of life, we would be much impoverished,” says Williams. “We would have no long-range goals and no sense that anything is good apart from its consequences. . . . we focus so much on results and consequences that we miss what is good for its own sake” (p. 28).

The primary function of schools is not to prepare students for the next grade. It is not to prepare them for high school or
college. It is not even to help them get a job.

One of the primary functions of schools is to help students see the intrinsic value of learning for the sake of learning. It is to help them cultivate their own minds. It is to help them in their quest of discovery as they try to make sense of the world and understand how various pieces of knowledge fit together into a whole. It is to help them form a worldview through which they can better understand their lives. It is to help them see their part in the world. It is to help them enjoy the act of learning.

Students are not preparing for a life that begins at some point in the future. They are living life now. Williams says, “attending school is not just a means of preparing for a good life. It is a good life. It is not simply a stage that gets us to the next stage. It is an end in itself. Studying and learning enlarge our lives independently of what they enable us to do later on. When we realize these truths, . . . thinking and learning take on new life” (pp. 41-42). Faculty and students alike need to relish the thrill of learning in the here and now of their lives, rather than constantly working toward the there and then of some future distant point.

So what does this all mean for principals? Principals are the key identifiers of what need to be the most important goals of their schools. They are crucial in helping teachers and students alike to develop the desire to delight in learning itself. Working to accomplish this approach may mean having the faculty revisit the basic assumptions about the school’s purpose. Perhaps it means that tests aren’t deemed to be as important as once thought. Perhaps it means less reliance on worksheets that are little more than busywork. Perhaps it means a de-emphasis of achievement test results.

It may result in the realization that the real test of a school’s worth lies in how it serves as a laboratory for students and teachers alike as they spend their time together on earth in the pursuit of answers. If that’s the case, it would seem that schools would limit the use of lectures, fill-in-the-blanks activities, and mindless sessions of questions and answers that utilize only low-level thinking skills. They would emphasize activities which invite the interplay of ideas between students and teachers. They would give students the time and resources to carry on independent studies. It would mean that class discussions would take on a more philosophical nature as students and teachers together chew on the mysteries of God’s creation.

Vital to this new approach are principals who model inquisitiveness and the resultant joy that comes from learning new things about themselves, their students, and their world. Students who see their principals learning about new things and being knowledgeable about things unrelated to their role within the school can’t help but be positively affected.

Reference
Jesus' True Glory

As you think about Jesus’ glory what thoughts and images come to mind? What day in the church year do you think best reflects Jesus’ glory? If you are like most people, you associate glory with power and associate Jesus’ glory with his resurrection, Easter Sunday. However, John in his gospel equates Jesus’ glory not with his resurrection, but with his crucifixion.

In John chapter two, at the wedding of Cana Jesus’ mother comes to him with the problem of no wine. Mary, in one sense was coming to Jesus saying or suggesting, “Demonstrate your glory,” “Manifest your power,” perhaps so she could say “That’s my boy!” Although he does take care of the wine problem, Jesus tells his mother, “My hour has not yet come.” He suggests that his glory is not to be demonstrated in a flashy miracle.

In John chapter seven Jesus’ brothers encourage him to demonstrate his glory by going to the Feast of the Tabernacle in Jerusalem in a rather flashy way. We read in verses 3-6: “Jesus’ brothers said to him, ‘You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.’ Therefore Jesus told them, ‘The right time for me has not yet come.’” Jesus’ glory was not to be demonstrated in a flashy demonstration of power.

However, in John 12:23-33 Jesus does talk of his glory, but he does so in a totally unexpected way—unexpected by the people of his day and unexpected by people of today. We read:

Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

“Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour: Father, glorify your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this
world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

Jesus’ glory is best demonstrated not on Easter, not in the resurrection. The resurrection demonstrates Jesus’ power, which is very important. However, Jesus’ glory is best demonstrated on Good Friday, in the crucifixion, for Jesus’ true glory is best demonstrated in his love. If it were not for Jesus’ love, Jesus power would not be something in which to find glory, but something at which to quake with fear. We glorify Jesus, not because of his power, but because of his love.

In Mark 10:42-45 Jesus says, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

The heart of Christianity is love: Jesus’ love for us and Jesus’ love through us for others. For the sixth year in a row I had the privilege of witnessing this love of Christ through his people in a powerful way. Twenty of us from Concordia University were in the Appalachian Mountains in Virginia to offer ourselves in love to one another and to the people of the community there. I don’t think I heard one harsh word during the eight days we were gone. I saw and experienced our students reaching out with a sensitivity, warmth, and caring that was genuinely from the heart of Christ. The focus was not upon ourselves but upon the people and the needs about us. It was wonderful experience and I am grateful to God and to our students for the time we shared in Bible study, in worship, in service, and in fellowship.

Living the Christian life is all about loving, and loving is not about yielding power as the Gentiles do, but in humble service. Lutheran Christian education must also always be about loving servanthood as we educate people into the person and ways of our Savior. St. Paul writes in Galatians 5: 6, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.” And Jesus in John 13: 34-35 tells us, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Jesus loves you, and in love he gave and continues to give himself wholly for you/us. John in his first epistle writes “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. . . . Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.” (1 John 3: 16, 18)

For Christian educators knowledge is important, both knowledge of Scripture and of church doctrine. However, our knowledge must always be the servant of love. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 8:1 “Knowledge puff’s up, but love builds up.” As Lutheran Christian educators, may we never beat people up with knowledge, but may we always teach in and with love.
You Are Here

There is nothing more frustrating than arriving at a new place and not being able to find anything. A recent experience at a shopping mall reminded me of how important it is to be aware of my position. When coming into the expansive structure through one of 16 entrances from the parking lot, I immediately began searching for the single store that was the objective of my visit. A quick survey of the surroundings verified the fact that I was already lost. I had no frame of reference. Nothing looked familiar. No direction, no orientation and no previous experience with the mall led me to believe that I needed help.

With a bit of anxiety I ventured into the long hall and eventually came across a large sign labeled “Directory.” My attention was drawn to the fact that there were three color-coded levels, 137 stores and eighteen restrooms in the building, but until I saw the arrow with the words “You are Here,” it all didn’t mean a thing. I appreciated the acknowledgment of my status, but one question still loomed in my mind: “Where exactly am I?”

The Lutheran educator is presented on a daily basis with “Where am I?” types of questions. “How do I do this?” “How can we raise enough money to go to the Youth gathering?” “What type of professional development for me will meet all the standards and help my ministry?” And, of course, the favorite among Lutherans, “What does this mean?” We need to help resolve the problems of others, deal with our own professional and personal challenges, and find our way through a mall of life opportunities in every direction. “Where do I need to be?” “Where do I start?” “How can I get there?” The questions of the Lutheran educator are endless.

Where Have We Been?

Educators in Lutheran ministry come from a variety of backgrounds, forming a diverse network of quality professionals. Some have grown up in homes where Lutheran education has been experienced. Others bring with them years of living in other countries. Training has taken place in large and small colleges and universities, Lutheran and non-Lutheran. Different cultures, different neighborhoods, different interests, different families . . . the list goes on and on.

Whatever the individual’s past, a Lutheran educator is positioned into a context of others who have in common their diversity. That sounds strange. But it is a fact that
understanding one’s past is a tool to the development of a successful future. How we teach, how we interact with colleagues, and how we grow professionally are all functions of what preceded our ministry. When we learn from others about their past, we also grow. We value what each person brings to a shared experience: in the classroom, in church, in the office, and in public. Where we have been is a key ingredient in determining where we are.

Where Are We Headed?

It’s rather senseless to venture into a mall without having some purpose. Browsing is fine, but that’s a purpose, too! How much time do people spend wandering around in our world sometimes without really having clearly defined goals, a sense of direction, or a reason for moving ahead? The tendency in education too often is to spend a large amount of time reflecting on the past, then getting stuck on the present. We’re in the right place, it feels good, but we don’t move on.

I believe the nature of the Lutheran educator is to be future oriented. In the very mission of Lutheran education, it is eternal life that we lift up as our primary outcome! About that goal there is usually no argument. However, the challenges facing professionals in this field often divert us from our target. We get to the mall, walk around a bit, and forget why we came in the first place. Too often our goals are blurred by the realities of the present. Time, financial resources, societal pressures and general change in the world cause us to lose our orientation. We’re trained to carry out the mission, we know our tasks, and we have the target in sight, but we’re sometimes confused about our current position and the directions to get there.

Good news! You are here! The arrows have been pointing to our exact place in Lutheran education ministry for a long time. God has positioned each of us in a unique role for his plan: past, present and future. Not only do we have a firm sense of where we are, but because of his “good directions,” we value and celebrate where we have been and look forward with great anticipation to the places to which we are headed. The picture is clear; the directions are specific. Educators in Lutheran ministries are headed into a future of fulfilling, productive application of God’s plan among his people. All we need to do is enter the mall and use the directory!

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

Frederich Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker’s ABC*
Practicing the Resurrection!

One of the powerful joys of living on “this side of the Resurrection” is that we can celebrate and practice our faith each day! We can loudly proclaim, even in the midst of our Good Fridays, “He is Risen . . . He is Risen . . . in deed!” And it is our “deeds” that help to proclaim to others that the Lord is truly alive in our lives, and in others as well. Years ago, my grandson Matt helped me to better understand this remarkable message. I wanted to teach Matt to say “He is Risen . . . He is Risen indeed!” on Easter Sunday. Thinking that it might take this 3 year old a while to accomplish this feat, I already started to train him on Ash Wednesday. He had 40 days to learn his lines!

Easter Sunday came and I proudly brought Matt into the church narthex to meet the pastor and to show what he had learned through my example. Our pastor said, “Matt, He is Risen!” . . . but Matt said nothing. Again, Pastor Mueller announced, “He is Risen” but again, Matt was silent. After two more tries, Pastor went his way, needing to speak to others who, hopefully, would be more responsive. And as soon as Pastor left, Matt looked at me and said, “in deed!”

Matt had learned the message! Jesus Christ has Risen from death and lives through us in our deeds! Jesus is indeed alive in us, and we show this by living and loving and laughing and lifting one another in our daily lives!

In other words, we are called to “Practice the Resurrection!” When we forgive others, feed the hungry, speak about injustices, and comfort the hurting . . . we are practicing the Resurrection . . . in deed!

When we share a joy-filled word of hope with a friend in need, we are practicing the Resurrection . . . in deed!

When we laugh with others, because we know who has the last laugh, we are practicing the Resurrection . . . in deed!

When we take good care of our bodies so that we are better able to serve others, we are practicing the Resurrection . . . in deed!

Look around you—in your classroom, staff meetings, worship services, family, and neighborhoods. Watch for ways to “Practice the Resurrection.” Look for those who need a friendly smile, a hug, a word of comfort and support. They are all around us!
Make a list of ways you can celebrate your faith while practicing the Resurrection. What opportunities will the Lord put into your life today that will help you practice?

In our lives, however, practice does not make perfect. We can leave that up to the Lord! He simply wants us to continue to practice doing our faith ... in deed, while he provides the power, the hope, and the strength through his Word and Sacraments.

We can continue to celebrate Easter and loudly proclaim that “Christ is Risen” ... today, tomorrow, and every day, in the Lord!

Thanks, Matt, for helping us to practice the Resurrection ... in deed!"

“In Take Time for Paradise, the late Bartlett Giamatti—once president of Yale and baseball commissioner—spoke lovingly of baseball as a game that reenacts the eternal myth of exile and return. The batter leaves home and returns home, travels counterclockwise, as if defying time, only to start all over again next time up at bat with another chance at getting it just right. Maybe that is the best, most promising way for academics to imagine what we do in our profession. We begin in the fall with new students who look younger and younger every year but who do not, in truth, age at all. We ride the rhythms to our last finals in the bloom of spring, when we mark the end of our year with a ceremony we call a ‘commencement.’ Then it’s autumn again, and we’re up at bat again with another chance for a homer.”

Patricia O’Hara, “Classroom Divided: The Lost Paradigm of Student-Teacher Instruction.”

*The World and I* (Sept. 2002), p. 275
Whom Do We Aim To Please?

"We aim to please" is a traditional storefront sign in America. Businesses hold this slogan up as their creed: "The only good customer is a satisfied customer." "The customer is always right." Such thinking might work well in the secular marketplace, but it can be unloving and counterproductive to our mission when applied to educational ministry in the Church.

Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). When I read this recently with a group of colleagues, we were collectively startled. The last line especially drew our attention: "I would not be a servant of Christ." Ouch! Then we thought about it.

Jesus didn't always please people, but he certainly loved and served people for their good with everything he did and said. In fact, by our standards today, Jesus often wasn't very "nice." Instead, he gave others what they needed.

Jesus told the distracted and harried Martha only one thing was needed (Lk. 10:42). I think that response fell short of Martha's hoped-for ally. The rich young ruler went away sorrowful after hearing, "Go, sell your possessions and give to the poor" (Mt. 19:21). And I can only imagine the hot, red cheeks on Peter's face after hearing the rebuke, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Mt. 16:23).

Jesus didn't please these people, but he most definitely gave them loving responses. How else would Martha see her idolatry of busyness? How else would the rich young ruler come to the end of his own self-righteous project to win heaven? How else would Peter recognize that man does not see as God sees?

Quite frankly, our flesh would rather try to please people. It is safer. It involves fewer conflicts, at least initially. After all, we need people for enrollment. It is bad for business if we go around offending students and parents. We have to work alongside these colleagues. We want others to see us as good, nice people. Is this thinking trying to please men or God?

This school year I realized that what God's students need most from me is the Truth spoken and enacted in love. They smiled knowingly when I told them this was my mission and that they would not always like it. Every now and then, I remind them of this with the expression: "Do you want a feel-good answer or
the truth?”

My mission was put to the test recently when an academically challenged senior’s parents met with me. They were defending their son because I had removed some accommodations that had been used by our resource teacher during first semester. I maintained that their son was capable of doing more work on his own and that he had proven as much first semester. Initially, they were fearful of their son’s failing the required course for graduation. They asked for my credentials to make such a decision. They claimed it was unfair. After several heated phone calls and a few tense meetings with the principal, they finally acquiesced to the change. The son, of course, chafed a little at having more required of him, especially during his final semester of high school.

It was tempting to cater to this family’s original desire to leave well enough alone. But this verse urged me toward servanthood rather than toward people pleasing. And now, four tests and over two months later, I have observed greater success with fewer accommodations and a growing sense of accomplishment and competence heretofore not seen in this young man.

I suspect that, as we seek to serve and love, some people will walk away from our schools when they don’t get the response they want. I also anticipate that students, parents, and colleagues will at times misunderstand us as we seek to please God rather than please them. At such times we might catch a greater glimpse of Jesus and what he endured when others didn’t understand him. But I also suspect that greater joy will be realized: joy in serving, joy in loving, joy in pleasing our Master. And for those who acknowledge the love given, like the one healed leper, they will show a devoted gratitude.

We servants are no greater than our Master. As the Father sent him, so he now sends us. May all that we do today in our schools love others and please him.†

Craig Parrott has recently published *For the Faint of Heart: Hope for the Hurting*. The book aims to provide a quick and profound resource for those personally undergoing a severe trial in their lives, ministering to hurting people, or teaching a class on suffering. The book concisely and biblically addresses life’s most difficult questions that arise during times of trial. *For the Faint of Heart* can be ordered by calling Xulon Press at 1-866-909-2665.
Discovering and Learning

Young children are born with a thirst for learning. That thirst can be seen and sensed almost immediately as the infant listens, watches, and imitates other people in his/her environment. The challenge in the classroom is to keep that thirst for learning strong and growing. The challenge for teachers of young children is to support the learning of young children in authentic and dynamic ways.

Supporting Curiosity

Children are born curious. God made them that way. As we watch very young children reach out and examine and explore, we enjoy the discoveries they make. They poke and prod, push and pull, test and try. They learn.

Those same sorts of explorations need to happen for young children in the classroom. They still need to poke, prod, push, pull, test, and try. They also need to watch, wonder, listen, smell, touch, and taste. They need to use all of their senses to discover pieces of their world. They need to make these discoveries for themselves rather than have the solutions given to them by well-meaning adults.

A Sense of Wonder

When is the last time you said “Oooh” to a discovery or a surprise in your world? Has a sunset or a rainbow evoked an expression of wonder? Has a fully-formed spider web or the intricate formation of a leaf caused you to catch your breath?

Have you looked at the world with a young child lately? Have you noticed the details of the world around that a three-year-old child is noticing for the first time? Have you allowed yourself to ask the questions that flow naturally from the lips of a five year old? Have you puzzled over the beauty and complexity of nature with a seven year old recently?

Young children learn through discovery. Their joy in discovery is never more powerfully seen than when they are examining the details of the world they are just beginning to explore. Their sense of wonder needs to be nurtured as they make those early discoveries and formulate the questions that will drive their learning.

Helping Children Ask Questions

Young children ask questions because they are curious. They continue to ask questions to support and nurture their sense of wonder. They come wired to ask questions! How
Teaching the Young

adults—especially teachers—respond to their questions will determine how apt they will be to continue to ask. Children whose questions are given superficial answers or no answers soon learn not to ask. But children whose questions are met with respect and a willingness to search for an answer learn that questions support the quest for learning.

It is not always the answer to the question that is important. Rather, the search for the answer as joint explorers of learning is the important activity. Young children learn to learn by the ways in which their questions are treated and by the ways in which teachers help them develop strategies in the quest for answers.

Building Learning on Children’s Questions

Two approaches to curriculum implementation that are currently prominent are Reggio Emelia and the Project Approach. Both of these curriculum implementation strategies focus on children’s interests and what children want to know. In the process, both approaches focus on children’s questions and helping children find answers to their questions.

This column is focusing on ways to think about organizing curriculum from the professional’s—the teacher’s—point of view. In later columns we will focus on the implementation of curriculum, spending more time on both Reggio Emelia and the Project Approach. For this discussion, it is important simply to note that curriculum implementation can be powerful when it allows for children’s questions and interests to guide the direction of classroom inquiry, at least in part.

Using Materials as Curriculum

If the curiosity and wonder of young children are to be supported by the curriculum, there are certain ingredients that must be present. First, there must be materials and artifacts from their natural world in the classroom. This will mean leaves, flowers, nuts and seeds, snow, rainfall collected outside the classroom, small animals, insects, and the like will be present at the appropriate times of the year and for the topic under exploration.

Children also need the opportunity to explore the physical world of size, shape, color, leverage, wheels, containers, and the like. This exploration will take them into the realms of discovery that will later be called math or physics. Some of these explorations will take place at the sensory table or discovery table or with manipulatives. Whatever the means of exploration, that exploration is important.

Supporting Discovery in the Classroom

In order for discovery to take place, young children need three gifts from their teachers. They need the gift of time because real discovery happens within the time to explore. They need the gift of materials and artifacts to support that discovery and exploration. Above all they need the gift of trust and respect, because it is only as teachers truly respect the ability and the drive of young children’s thirst for learning that their learning will indeed be authentic and exploratory. As teachers enter into the discovery with children, true and lasting learning happens.

The title *That I May Be His Own* gives just a hint of the real potential of this book. By way of history, explanation, and encouragement, the author provides a means by which as many people as possible might become God’s own. This intent is articulated in the introduction where the author expresses his goals: to reacquaint the reader with the catechisms, to show how the catechism renews, to highlight the catholicity of Luther’s catechisms. Arand meets these goals as he identifies and develops “the distinctive evangelical motifs of Luther’s catechisms” and as he unpacks “what might be called the fullness of the catechism’s words.”

Chapter One is a summary of the history of the catechisms. The author begins by rightly distinguishing between catechism and confirmation. The catechisms have always had a much broader purpose than simply preparing people for the rite of confirmation. For example, Arand notes how the catechisms made basic Christian doctrine available to people who did not normally have access to books. Luther provided the catechisms and other preparatory literature in order to involve the laity in the life of the church. Surely there is a similar interest behind the inclusion of the Small Catechism in the latest editions of the hymnal. This chapter provides an invaluable summary of the catechism’s history. It also provokes thought about the place of the catechisms in the midst of the “information age.” An over abundance of books can make biblical doctrine just as difficult to obtain as a lack of books. Thus, the potential of the catechism remains the same: to make basic Christian doctrine accessible in the presence of contrary forces.

Chapter Two discusses the many forms and means by which printed material supported the catechetical task. Before the printing press, sermons were the medium of communication for the masses. Luther was able to use sermons and printed material “to create a powerful and effective one-two punch.” The catechisms provided an interpretive framework by means of which the laity could better understand the texts and sermons they heard. The confessional, popular prayer books, liturgy, and hymns were all harnessed for the catechetical task for two reasons. First, Luther was unsuccessful in eliminating established practices and
mediums, so the only solution was to make them beneficial. Second, different mediums and settings provided reinforcement of basic catechetical instruction.

Chapter Three looks at Luther’s methodological and pedagogical blue-print for using the texts of the catechism so that they might become lifelong companions for the Christian. The author notes that “though the Small Catechism was a tremendous success, most people could not read it.” The illiteracy rate would require Luther to find other means of putting this material in the hearts and minds of the people. Perhaps we are encountering a similar parallel today in trying to reach the “M-TV” generation who can read but have lost their ability to concentrate because of the constant barrage of media they subject themselves to. Luther’s response to the situation began by instructing those who were literate and then enlisting them as instructors of the non-literate. Luther sought allies for this process in three social areas: government, pastors, and parents. Authorities were to encourage pastors and parents to learn and teach. Pastors were no longer to be remote and self-serving (like the hermits and monks) but to be “parish pastors” who instructed their flocks. Parents were to train their children, but if they were unable to do so, they were at least to see that the children were taken for instruction. Simplicity of material, language, and organization, along with stories and woodcuts, were all employed so that the teaching was effective and enduring. Today we might wonder if catechetical instruction still conveys this simplicity or whether it is often overshadowed by complicated and lengthy companion curriculums. On the other hand, the author’s reference to woodcuts might urge us to employ people’s familiarity with the media in order to highlight basic Christian truths. Remember, those mediums that Luther could not eliminate, he harnessed in service of the gospel.

Chapter Four is a very fine overview of how the catechism is organized and how the parts relate to each other. This chapter would be of the greatest assistance to pastors, teachers, or lay leaders who teach catechism. The explanations that Dr. Arand provides allow the instructor to let the catechism essentially teach itself. Protecting the simplicity of the catechism allows students to concentrate on the profound character of the information. Unfortunately, the author provides only a brief treatment of the Lord’s Prayer. An explanation more like that of the Commandments and Creed is really needed here.

Chapter Five explores the potential of the Catechism to provide the “access code or password that unlocks the various dimensions of Christian existence.” Luther’s intent in the catechism was to break down unbiblical distinctions between clergy and laity. Faith is for the life of all people; thus, faith is at the center and appears throughout the Small Catechism. Faith creates new life and gives direction/definition to that life. One example of the helpfulness of this chapter is seen in the way the author explains the organic nature of the law. The fact that people already know something is wrong demonstrates that the law is essential to living and people need to face the truth of it.

The book concludes with several appendices: Texts and Editions of the Small Catechisms, Abbreviated Text of the Ten Commandments, Numbering of the Ten
Commandments, and a Woodcut Sampler. Extensive endnotes and a bibliography make this a very important text for pastors and professors who have a particular interest in this field.

For those who already consider themselves Christian, Dr. Arand commends the catechism as a way to solidify and enliven their faith. This combination equips the Christian with a simple yet profound witness to the faith, namely the chief parts of the catechism and their explanations. For those outside the faith, the catechism and its integration in the life of the church offers an open door and accessibility. The Catechisms have much to offer the Christian mission in our time. This book certainly makes that potential more accessible to the faithful.†

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50 Years Ago in Lutheran Education

Lutheran education from kindergarten through law school has a definite philosophy which corresponds to the Christian faith as set forth in Sacred Scriptures. Its philosophy is that the purpose of man is to promote the glory of God. Education must do these things:

1. Fit one better to make a living.
2. Fit one better for a life of service.
3. Prepare one for better parenthood.
4. Prepare one for better confessorhood.
5. Prepare one for heaven.

Admittedly, the '50's and '60's are going to be as difficult a time for raising children as the world has seen. The eminent British historian Arthur Toynbee has such an outlook: "We must become religious-minded again as we have not been in the last 250 years, during which we have stood for technology rather than religion. This religious demand arises from the circumstances that Communism is a religion—one that worships collective mankind—and Communism is confronting Western Christendom with its first challenge since the Turks besieged Vienna in 1683."

There is no reason for a child of Christian parents to remain spiritually underprivileged and an easy convert to Communism. This is particularly true of members of The Lutheran Church -Missouri Synod. Although less than 50 per cent of the students of the Synod are enrolled in Christian schools, yet this Synod in its proceedings every three years since 1941 has said in effect, "Our greatest need is to concentrate on the expansion of our system" (1941).

Eugene Beltz, "There Are Schools and Schools," LE June 195
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The Opposite of Faith: ? and !

What is the opposite of faith? At first, the answer to this simple question seems obvious from the familiar story that we know as the account of “Doubting Thomas.” Jesus himself tells Thomas, “Do not be ἀπιστος (faithless) but πιστος (faithful)” — or as most translations have it, “Do not doubt but believe.” In fact, it’s specifically doubt that calls into question the essence of faith, that is, not so much the knowledge of the truth, but a relationship with the Truth, with God. Both sacred and secular literature abound with examples, from the serpent’s kindling of doubt in the mind of Eve (“did God really say . . .?”) to Iago’s poisoning Othello’s trust in his innocent wife, Desdemona. Doubt can undercut our dearest bonds, even with God. With good reason our Lord calls us to shun it.

But further reflection reveals that the opening question is really not so simple after all. Jesus’ second admonition to Thomas offers a warning in a different direction: “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” By these words Jesus commends faith to Thomas and us not as opposed to doubt, but as opposed to certainty.

Of all people, Lutherans should be able to handle this. One of our fundamental theological principles is that of paradox, including the acknowledgment that we never, ever have the truth all absolutely straight. Yet all too easily we yield to the temptation to find security in our grasp of the right answers, especially by contrast with others (“I thank you, God, that I am not like . . .”). Too easily we forget the very definition of faith in the letter to the Hebrews: “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” The fact is that either error leads to a religio legis — a religion of the Law— whether by way of the rebellion of doubt or via the perfectionism of certainty.

Our only hope lies in trusting the crucified and risen one. It is our privilege as Lutheran Christian educators to lead others to a faith-filled relationship with him.

We all have much to learn here. But especially we who serve the called ministries of the Church have a great deal to learn from the laity who will gladly teach us and gladly see us succeed, if only we listen. The good news is that our success — indeed, our very salvation — lies not in our being right, but in our being loved by the God who won’t ever let us go.

Our prayer is that of an earlier faithful, fearful father: “I believe; help my unbelief!”

(Note: This article is a condensation of the sermon preached at the Service of Praise and Consecration for professional church work graduates of the University on 3 May 2003.)