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CONTENTS

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Focus On: Leading Into Learning

6 Student-Centered University Instruction

12 Leaders of Learning: Core Competencies of School Leaders

23 Teacher Empowerment and Teacher Perceptions of the Principal's Servant Leadership

34 Grit and Spiritual Learning

39 Not Invited to the Banquet? Why Not?

43 The Essential Nature of Affective Education

56 A Classroom for All Students: Project-Based Learning

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In This Issue.

6 Student-Centered University Instruction

The lesson plan template designed for use in CUC's College of Education includes a section where teacher candidates must indicate how they differentiate instruction for different learners at the elementary school level. Sekulich advocates for using the same principles of differentiated instruction at the university level.

Kim Sekulich

12 Leaders of Learning: Core Competencies of School Leaders

As we've seen from recent current events the job of district superintendent is a most demanding job. What goes into the job, and what does a good superintendent need to be able to do? The authors explore this major question in this issue of the LEJ.

Robert K. Wilhite, Daniel R. Tomal, Craig A. Schilling, and Jeffrey T. Brierton

23 Teacher Empowerment and Teacher Perceptions of the Principal's Servant Leadership

Christ called for us to lead by serving others. Hammond explores teachers' perceptions of their leaders's servant leadership. *Helen Hammond*

34 Grit and Spiritual Learning

We all know students who give up on themselves too easily or don't push themselves academically. There are others who seem to rise to challenges that appear to be beyond them. In this article the authors explore Carol Dweck's concepts of fixed and growth mindset in both an academic and a spiritual sense.

Laura LaSalle/Don Borling

39 Not Invited to the Banquet? Why Not?

Gorleku shares her experience as a child in a school system during the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. She describes a system that segregated others who were different, and how change has been taking place since the fall of the iron curtain.

Zuzana Gorleku

43 The Essential Nature of Affective Education

Guidera explores what it can mean to deliver education in a wholistic approach that anticipates a child's social and emotional needs as well as teaching facts and figures.

George Guidera

56 A Classroom for All Students: Project-Based Learning

Wellen introduces project-based learning as an approach to teaching that welcomes all students into the enterprise. Project-based learning makes the classroom come alive with activity and provides both time and space for exploration and questions.

Lauren Wellen

Departments

---

4 Here I Sit…Leading Into Learning

Shirley K. Morgenthaler

67 Teaching the Young…Children are Active

Michele Gnan

69 Teaching the Different Learner…What is different?

Andrea Dinaro

72 Serving the Language of the Student… Serving the daughters and sons of immigrant parents.

Simeon Stumme

74 Literacy in the Classroom…Effective Education: Online Course Design for Adult Learners

Kari Pawl

77 Book Reviews…Leading with Resolve and Mastery

Kevin O'Mara

79 …Digitized: Spiritual Implications

Ardelle Pate

82 Words for Thought…Jesus Loves Me

Shirley K. Morgenthaler

85 A Final Word…"Learning" and the Resurrection

Daniel Gard

Here I Sit

by Shirley K. Morgenthaler

Leading into Learning

We are all in the learning business. We are learners. Our students are learners. For many, it's the teachers who report to us who are learners. The teachers taking our courses are learners. The researchers completing dissertations are learners. The dissertation committees are learners. We are all learners.

We might say that the ultimate target of learning is the child in the classroom. The freshman student in the library. The graduate student at her computer. The high-school students in the chemistry lab. The middle-school students on the theater stage.

And that makes us leaders of learning. If you teach preschool, you are a leader of their learning. If you teach doctoral students, you are a leader of their learning. If you have ever taken time to answer a question that a child asked about rockets or stars or weeds, you are the leader of his/her learning. Think about it. You are a leader of learning.

Kim Sekulich writes in this issue about leading learning at the graduate level of Concordia University Chicago. Her discussion of differentiated teaching and learning can apply to all readers who work in classrooms or in the classroom of the internet. At the same time, we can learn from the leaders among us—principals and superintendents and university professors—as they consider how to empower teachers as they teach and lead. Bob Wilhite and his team take us into servant leadership, an important strategy for classrooms and for life. That same topic is taken up by Helen Hammond and Kevin O'Mara. Helen's discussion of teacher empowerment and servant leadership is a good segue into Kevin's book review of Leading with Resolve and Mastery, one of several books by Bob Wilhite, Jeff Brierton, Dan Tomal, and Craig Schilling. These Concordia faculty members are contributing powerfully to the discussion of servant leadership and teacher empowerment.

Teacher empowerment can lead to deep learning, and it is our deep spiritual learning about which Concordia University Chicago President Daniel Gard writes in this issue. As we think about deep spiritual learning, we might also think about grit and about the qualities surrounding grit. Laura LaSalle and

Don Borling add to our consideration of spiritual learning and grit.

Grit is a quality in wide discussion in the United States. But not all countries work under the same philosophy. Zuzana Gorleku, a new professor in Teaching, Learning, and Diversity (TLD), tells the story of her learning as a child in the former Czechoslovakia and highlights the differences she sees in her adopted country. Those differences include a commitment to differentiated instruction, to the learning possibilities for those less able, for an identification of styles of learning and languages of learning. Simeon Stumme, also in TLD, introduces us to the new language of immigrants, from the German of the early decades of this institution to the Spanish of today. His work takes us to new levels of welcome for our first-generation college enrollees.

All children need an invitation to learning. That invitation is the welcome that encourages learning for all students. Lauren Wellen introduces an approach to teaching and learning that welcomes all students into the enterprise. Project-based teaching and learning make the classroom come alive with activity and with learning. Project-based learning provides both time and space for questions, for explorations, for possibilities, for theories. Michele Gnan adds to the project-based discussion by describing its use in early childhood classrooms. This approach also supports the values and affective education that George Guidera longs for so passionately.

Our discussion of classrooms and teaching would not be complete without a look at two important topics in education. Every issue of this journal includes a discussion of literacy in the classroom and of teaching the different learner. Kari Pawl takes us to the university classroom to discuss the provision of online learning that is dynamic and approachable for all students. She also introduces us to the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a teacher-planning model that is used in both our graduate and undergraduate teacher education and professional development. This UDL provides an outline for planning that includes the diverse or different learner, provides for formative assessment of learning, and emphasizes the essential question of a lesson to give students a map for their investigations and learning.

Andrea Dinero takes a look at the different learner through yet another lens. Her discussion of autism and its spectrum of what is different challenges all teachers to think about and look at the different in their classrooms to see the possibilities and resilience of those we have in the past regarded, as Zuzana pointed out in her article above, as difficult or even impossible. All children need the opportunity to learn. Our challenge is to provide opportunities to learn determination, to learn persistence, to learn grit. Only then will our classrooms provide opportunities for deep learning. From where I sit, it's deep learning that matters. ***LEJ***

Student-Centered Instructional Strategies

by Kim M. Sekulich

Student-Centered Instructional Strategies

My goal as a graduate-student instructor is to model and enhance each student's journey toward becoming an educational leader. Modeling student-centered instructional strategies helps prepare future leaders to implement those strategies in their schools and districts to maximize their own, teachers' and students' learning. As an instructor, it is important to model research-based practices that identify and implement student learning-style modes, require higher-level critical-thinking skills, provide descriptive feedback based on criteria, and encourage reflective analysis for continual improvement. These practices may be implemented across content areas and in various educational settings. As these practices are implemented within the teaching/learning process, a spirit of mutual collaboration and respect develops. Also, these practices demonstrate the instructor's value for student-centered learning and each student.

Focusing on Student-Centered Learning

Prior to each new class, I communicate with each student personally to welcome each of them to the class and to provide important course information. At the first class meeting, each student is asked to write about how he/she learns best in graduate school. Patterns are identified from this student feedback and shared at our second class meeting. Often, students write that they learn best through discussion, collaboration, practical applications, visuals, projects, and feedback. This student feedback guides my instructional planning for future class meetings.

Graduate students appreciate the focus on their learning preferences. "[The instructor] tailored the course toward our individual learning styles. I appreciate how organized she is and how she communicated clearly each week" (Concordia University Chicago [CUC], 2016-2017). "Our professor did a great job of planning for each lesson. She asked questions about our learning styles and was able to hone into those in class" (CUC, 2017-2018).

These practices are supported by the work of Fullan (2016) who writes about ways in which student-centered learning may be enhanced. These

practices demonstrate how Fullan's work may be applied within the context of higher education and may also be applied in school districts. For example, principals may ask teachers how they learn best and plan professional-learning sessions accordingly. Teachers may ask their students how they learn best and use that information to guide their lesson planning. According to Fullan, "My Learning" is about individual and collective student views about how they best learn. There is little evidence that anyone has asked students that question on any scale" (p. 149). Fullan also writes about "My Belonging" which he describes as "whether students feel cared for and wanted, or otherwise feel they are members of a community that values them" (p. 149).

Addressing Learning Styles

To address the varied ways in which students learn, activities are differentiated. According to Warwick (2015), "Each student has a style of learning that is most beneficial to him or her for processing new information. The learning environment needs to create options for learning that address the four major learning styles: concrete-sequential, abstract random, abstract sequential, and concrete-random" (p. 88). Below are methods to address each learning style.

> *Concrete-sequential:* Present experiences in a sequential linear, structured, ordered, hands-on, immediately-reinforced, and teacher-centered manner.
> *Abstract random:* Present active experiences, small-group, multiple-source, unstructured, and student-centered discussion.
> *Abstract sequential:* Present ideas in a sequence using written lists, order, logic, conceptual approaches, and teacher-centered approaches.
> *Concrete-random:* Present ideas and discuss, using movement, action, hands-on methods, observation, experimentation, and student-centered methods. (Warwick, 2015, p. 88)

Presentation of content in a *concrete-sequential* manner includes step-by-step instruction, modeling, and detailed explanation of assignments. The active and multiple-source methods of *abstract, random* activities incorporate discussion and brief videos. Presentation of ideas in an *abstract, sequential* manner integrate course readings. *Concrete-random* activities include role play, simulations, and student presentations. Grouping structures are varied and facilitate whole group discussion, small-group discussion and collaborative tasks, partner work, and individual reflection.

It is important for students to experience all four learning styles so they expand and integrate how they process information. "If a student learns most effectively as a concrete-sequential learner, after the initial presentation in that

style the student should be required to be in a small-group discussion (abstract-random) to reinforce the understanding of new material" (Warwick, 2015, p. 88).

Graduate students commented on activities that benefited their learning. Comments are aligned with the learning styles.

> *Concrete-sequential:* "She gave us great examples and modeled various assignments and presentations that we needed to do. She always gave us clear directions and had high expectations for us. She was very patient and took the time to re-explain or clear up any misconceptions" (CUC, 2017-2018).
>
> *Abstract-random:* "Brought in activities which were helpful in discussions and real-life situations. Also used technology to enhance learning" (CUC, 2016-2017). "The ability to engage all students in discussions, providing opportunities for us to self-reflect but also gain feedback from peers and the professor" (CUC, 2016-2017).
>
> *Abstract sequential:* "The texts were current, relevant, and well-written" (CUC, 2017-2018). "The texts and readings were of use and allowed for some strong learning" (CUC, 2016-2017).
>
> *Concrete-random:* "I liked being able to re-enact scenarios during class" (CUC, 2016-2017). "The role playing and presentations were very helpful" (CUC, 2016-2017).
>
> *Abstract-random and abstract-sequential:* "The discussions with readings helped shape my understanding of course content; both student-led and professor-led discussions were great" (CUC, 2016-2017).
>
> *Concrete-random and abstract-sequential:* "I liked the presentations that allowed me to review the key points from the weekly readings" (CUC, 2016-2017).

Experiencing the differentiated activities provides future educational leaders with knowledge and experience that they may share with teachers in their schools to then implement in their classrooms to benefit student learning. This includes addressing, expanding, and integrating learning styles; and varying grouping structures. Differentiating activities according to learning style creates options for learning that can be facilitated across content areas and in various educational settings.

Addressing Levels of Critical Thinking

To extend student learning, questions are posed and activities are planned that reflect higher levels of critical thinking. "Four areas of thinking that educators need to address are *application, analysis, evaluation,* and *synthesis*" (Bloom, 1956 as cited in Warwick, 2015, p. 4). Below is a description of the higher levels of thinking.

Application: Using or carrying out a procedure in a novel, concrete situation

Analysis: Breaking down a whole into parts and understanding the role of each part, the relationships among the parts, and the relationship to the overall purpose or structure of the topic

Evaluation: Making and justifying judgments based on criteria

Creation and Synthesis: Creating a new form with individual parts; putting elements together to form a coherent whole (Gareis & Grant, 2015, p. 56)

Higher levels of critical thinking are incorporated within activities and assignments by asking students to apply content from course readings and make recommendations to enhance implementation of initiatives in their schools; analyze leadership theories, frameworks, and/or standards systems and identify common themes; complete self-evaluations based on criteria provided on rubrics; and create plans and presentations for school improvement. Discussion questions that reflect higher levels of critical thinking are embedded within presentations. Questions are also individualized to extend student learning.

Graduate students commented on being asked questions that reflect higher levels of critical thinking. "[This instructor] provided feedback to each week's post…and asked thought-provoking questions. She also anticipated the needs of learners by providing information about upcoming assignments in advance" (CUC, 2017-2018). "[This instructor] consistently provided timely, thorough feedback on assignments and discussion posts. I like how she took the time to clarify key concepts within her own discussion posts weekly and responded to each of our posts, asking probing questions to stimulate higher-ordered thinking" (CUC, 2017-2018).

Instructors' addressing the higher levels of critical thinking helps graduate students have a rewarding experience within courses. They may then apply their understanding of higher-level thinking when working with teachers to incorporate critical thinking within their lesson and unit planning, questioning, and assessments. This may be done across content areas and in a variety of educational settings. According to Sousa (2006), "Our students would make a quantum leap to higher-order thinking if every teacher in every classroom correctly and regularly used a model such as Bloom's revised taxonomy" (p. 259).

Providing Descriptive Feedback

Scoring rubrics are shared with students before assignments are due. The feedback that is provided about an assignment addresses the expectations of the assignment and criteria on the rubric that will be used for assessment of the assignment. Comments include areas of strength and recommendations for next steps in students' learning. The descriptive feedback addresses both

content and format. Comments about content include strengths regarding fulfilling the specific requirements of an assignment and details about any requirements that were not met. Questions are posed to encourage further reflection. Comments about format include organization of the assignment and specific areas of American Psychological Association (APA) format that needed to be addressed. Any deduction of points is substantiated by feedback to enhance student learning and support continual improvement.

Graduate students appreciate descriptive feedback. "The professor has given me excellent feedback about the assignments and answers I have presented in the discussion posts, which has helped tremendously" (CUC, 2017-2018). "Overall I think the instructor did a great job of creating a true learning community. She was fair on her grading, gave quality feedback, was very responsive, and always supplied us with helpful resources" (CUC, 2017-2018).

Instructors' modeling descriptive feedback helps future leaders experience a practice that is essential in teacher-evaluation systems for the purposes of instructional improvement. It is also essential in assessment systems to enhance student learning. Providing descriptive feedback is an important component of formative assessment, which is assessment for learning. Stiggins (2007) writes about assessment for learning and emphasizes the importance of "the effective use of the assessment process and its results to help students advance their learning with enthusiasm and feel in control of their learning as they attain new levels of proficiency" (p. 69).

Conclusion

Focusing on student-centered learning, addressing learning styles and levels of critical thinking, and providing descriptive feedback helps graduate students have a rewarding and successful experience for leadership growth and development. Modeling these practices also helps future educational leaders implement them within schools and districts to maximize adult and student learning. It is through knowledge and implementation of research-based practices, self-evaluation, and feedback that we, as instructors, continually work to transform ourselves and our students. I wish teachers and educational leaders the best of success with continually improving the teaching/learning process. ***LEJ***

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Dr. Kim M. Sekulich *is an associate professor and program leader in the College of Graduate Studies at Concordia University Chicago. She teaches master and doctoral level educational-leadership courses. She served as a principal for 13 years before coming to Concordia University Chicago.*

A Comparison of Core Competencies of School Leaders

by Robert K. Wilhite, Daniel R. Tomal, Craig A. Schilling, and Jeffrey T. Brierton

In many ways, the job of the superintendent is similar to any chief executive officer in any other organization. As executive leaders, they work with budgets, facilities, management, contracts, evaluations, community relations, disgruntled constituents, and attend endless meetings. But what are the unique roles and core competencies of school superintendents? How do these roles and core competencies differ from school principals? And how do these roles and core competencies support the improvement of the organizational culture and overall performance of the school district? How do school superintendents come to serve as chief learning leaders?

Based on the review of literature on leader core competencies, the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC), the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), and the authors' own experiences, a list of school leader core competencies was created. A study based on these core competencies was also conducted. The purpose of the study was to obtain the opinions of current public school leaders (superintendents and principals) to determine the most valued core competencies for these positions.

The research questions for this study were:

1. What are the most important core competencies for superintendents for public schools?
2. What are the most important core competencies for principals in public schools?
3. Is there a significant difference in the importance of the core competencies between superintendents and school principals?

The participants in this study consisted of forty-two K–12 public school leaders which included sixteen public school superintendents and twenty six public school principals in selected elementary and secondary schools in northeast Illinois. The respondents held school leadership positions in Chicago-area suburban school districts. They were defined as school leaders working full time in the official role of either a superintendent or principal. The participants came from diverse economic, cultural, ethnic, gender, and academic backgrounds.

A two-part questionnaire was used in this study. Part one consisted of a

list of the twelve core competencies in which the respondents were asked to rate the competencies based on their importance for performing the job of the superintendent or principal (see figure 1.1). The survey instrument consisted of twelve core competencies that were validated through a series of expert reviews.

	Core Competencies	Descriptions
1.	School governance	Collaborating and working with district school board members.
2.	School law	Understanding laws impacting district leadership and operations
3.	Instructional leadership	Being a proactive, involved leader in improving district instruction.
4.	Resource management	Managing financial, facility, and human resources and regulations.
5.	Vision leadership	Leading and motivating staff for improved performance of school initiatives.
6.	Change leadership	Leading and managing school change and improvements.
7.	Communication	Communicating to school district staff and stakeholders.
8.	Strategic planning	Developing and setting educational goals.
9.	School data management	Interpreting and using school data and assessment information.
10.	Community relations	Developing and working with school community members, parents, etc.
11.	Diverse learner strategies	Providing effective instruction for diverse students.
12.	Collaboration	Building collaboration and teamwork.

Table 1.1 Core competencies of school leaders.

The twelve school leader core competencies were also linked to the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) and the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) (see figure 1.2). Each of the core competencies was mapped with these standards based upon degree of association. All core competencies were covered within the standards and there appeared to be comprehensive coverage.

School Leader Core Competencies	ELLC Standards	ISLLC Standards
School governance	1, 4, 6, 7	1, 4, 5, 6
School law	5, 6, 7	5, 6
Instructional leadership	1, 4, 6, 7	1, 4, 6
Resource management	3, 5, 6, 7	3, 5, 6
Vision leadership	1, 2, 4, 5	1, 2, 4, 5
Change leadership	1, 4, 6	1, 4, 6
Communication	1, 3, 4, 6, 7	1, 3, 4, 6
Strategic planning	1, 2, 4, 6, 7	1, 2, 4, 6
School data management	1, 2, 4, 5, 6	1, 2, 4, 5, 6
Community relations	1, 4, 6, 7	1, 4, 6
Diverse learner strategies	1, 2, 4, 5, 6	1, 2, 4, 5, 6
Collaboration	1, 3, 4, 5, 7	1, 3. 4, 5

Table 1.2 Comparison of the school leader core competencies and ELLC and ISLLC standards

The second part consisted of an open-ended question that asked the respondents to describe any other core competencies that were important for a superintendent or principal serving in public schools. Respondents were also given additional space for other comments. In some cases, follow-up interviews were conducted with the respondents to gain further information concerning the core competencies and responsibilities of the positions.

The idea of clarifying core competencies is not new but has received increasing attention in the wake of growing accountability and legislative reform. This is particularly true as districts come to grips with both identifying specific competencies desirable in superintendents and recognizing that when superintendents are not successful, it can come at great cost to the district. More importantly, school boards and superintendent-preparation programs will need to identify the technical core of the superintendent's work in order to optimize their readiness and performance.

Researchers can also help craft effective tools to link school superintendents with the technical core of their profession and reinforce a school administration's

knowledge base; so that the professional-learning-community model can produce greater student achievement, deeper learning, and greatness as an expectation embedded in the twenty-first century school.

It can be argued that for more than a decade, four questions remain at the center of the discussion and drive conversation about superintendent preparation and the identification of core competencies:

1. Are instructional programs and student learning a result of school superintendent's skills in organizing staff and allocating financial resources?
2. Do NCATE (CAEP), AASA, and PSEL standards-driven preparation programs produce superintendents with superior instructional leadership skills and dispositions?
3. What skills and leadership dispositions propel some superintendents toward greater success than others in improving instruction and student performance?
4. Do leadership practices of school superintendents, as measured by Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) by James Kouzes and Barry Posner, and other self-report leadership measures, relate to the quality of instruction and student performance (Achilles, 2001)?

The survey offered in this article is yet another attempt to push that conversation forward and clarify the definition of the core competencies essential to service as a school superintendent in the twenty-first century.

Definitions for the core competencies were created to assist the respondents in defining each of the core competencies (see figure 3.1). In some cases, interviews were conducted with teacher leaders in helping to clarify the core competencies and definitions. A standard Likert scale (5 = most important and 1 = least important) was used. Also, the scale included the option of "0" indicating that the teacher leaders found the core competency to be irrelevant given they did not have job responsibilities in that area.

The survey instrument included identification of two types of school leaders—superintendents and principals. Respondents were asked to identify themselves as either a superintendent or school principal. All the respondents were acting in a full-time capacity and had no direct teaching responsibilities.

There were several limitations of the study that included non-random selection, low and disproportionate sample numbers, and the lack of differentiation of the school district core mission, and grade level (e.g., elementary or high school). All the respondents who were asked to complete the survey were very cooperative and helpful in providing opinions about their jobs and the overall roles and responsibilities in public schools.

The core competencies of all groups were rank ordered using descriptive

statistics, and significant differences were calculated using a two-sample test of significance. The narrative comments were typed verbatim and compiled in each of the core competencies. All responses were kept anonymous and the original survey instruments were destroyed to further protect the identity of the respondents.

The results of the study for the superintendents indicated that they ranked as the top core competencies: school governance (4.86), collaboration (4.80), vision leadership (4.52), and strategic planning (4.47), community relations (4.61), and instructional leadership (4.45) (see table 1.1). The core competencies that were least valued for a superintendent included: change leadership (4.50), communication (4.49), resource management (4.20), school law (4.01), school data management (3.94, and diverse learner strategies (3.90) (see table 1.5).

Core Competencies	**Mean**
1. School governance	4.86
2. Collaboration	4.80
3. Vision leadership	4.52
4. Strategic planning	4.47
5. Instructional leadership	4.61
6. Community relations	4.46
7. Change leadership	4.50
8. Communication	4.49
9. Resource management	4.20
10. School law	4.01
11. School data management	3.94
12. Diverse learner strategies	3.90

Table 1.3 Rank order of superintendent core competencies.

These rankings were consistent with several of the comments in the second part of the questionnaire and interviews. Respondents commented that working with school boards was of critical importance. Some commented that

they believed the role of the superintendent is to teach the board regarding issues facing the school district and that, in the best districts, the relationship between superintendent and the board is a hybrid relationship often moving between professional, personal, and political.

Other respondents warned that too often superintendents speak the language of collaboration but fail to follow up to ensure that all are actively engaged in the collaborative effort. They noted that in a perfect world, all would embrace the collaborative model. But, embedding measures of accountability, especially in the emerging stages of the PLC model, is critical to it being successful.

One principal spoke plainly on this topic saying, "What is not monitored becomes optional." Another was more hopeful and indicated that once the school passed through the "emerging" stage of the professional learning community model, then effective practice became, "who we are not what we do."

Many principals and superintendents had strong feelings about the political nature of school leadership. Comments such as "keep your friends close and your enemies closer," "trust but verify," and even "trust in God but everyone else must bring data" were not uncommon in conversations with respondents. In particular, veteran superintendents felt the need to be very politically astute and were fond of pointing out that board support was often short lived. One even went so far as to say that, "superintendents begin to lose their job the day they get it."

A very common conversational theme with principals, superintendents, and interestingly enough, many new and emerging leaders, was the need for superintendents to passionately articulate a clear vision and plan for the school organization; to motivate, inspire, and lead from the front." It also provoked comments about their wish for more specific training on how to develop the ability to so.

The core competencies that were most valued by the principals for a principal position included: change leadership (4.88), vision leadership (4.80), collaboration (4.76), strategic planning (4.72), communication (4.60), and diverse learner strategies (4.46). The core competencies that were least valued included: community relations, (4.14), instructional leadership (4.24), school data management (4.21), resource management (4.10), school law, and school governance (3.48) (see table 1.2).

While the rankings of the school leaders (superintendents and principals) were somewhat similar, there were two core competencies whose comparisons were statistically significant. The first one was school board governance ($p < .01$). The superintendents ranked this core competency as the most valued

Core Competencies	Mean
1. Change leadership	4.88
2. Vision leadership	4.80
3. Collaboration	4.76
4. Strategic planning	4.72
5. Communication	4.60
6. Diverse learner strategies	4.46
7. Community relations	4.44
8. Instructional leadership	4.24
9. School data management	4.21
10. Resource management	4.10
11. School law	4.08
12. School governance	3.48

Table 1.4 Rank order of principal core competencies.

for the superintendent position (μ=4.86). The principals ranked this core competency as the last for a principal position (3.48). This might be explained because the superintendents need to work very closely with their boards while principals do so with less frequency.

Another core competency that was statistically significant was that of understanding diverse learning. The superintendents ranked this core competency last (3.90). The principals value this core competency much more and ranked it number six (4.46). This ranking difference might be explained by the fact that principals are in more direct daily contact with teachers and staff in educating diverse learners and thus feel the need to be proficient themselves. See figure 1.3.

For superintendents in districts with rapidly changing demographics, these data should serve as a wake-up call. The effective 21st-century superintendent can no longer afford to be uninformed about strategies for serving diverse learners. Much like teachers, superintendents, principals, and all levels of leadership in the district will need to closely collaborate on how best to meet the need of those learners traditionally underrepresented and underserved in our schools.

Core Competencies	Superintendent			Principal		
	Mean	Med.	S.D.	Mean	Med.	S.D.
School governance	**4.86	5	.61	3.48	3	0.96
School law	4.01	4	.65	4.08	4	0.88
Instructional leadership	4.46	4	.54	4.24	4	0.83
Resource management	4.20	4	.41	4.10	4	0.57
Vision leadership	4.52	4	.64	4.80	5	0.41
Change leadership	4.50	5	.73	4.88	5	0.33
Communication	4.40	4	.82	4.60	5	0.61
Strategic planning	4.47	4	.74	4.72	5	0.45
School data management	3.94	4	.59	4.21	4	0.67
Community relations	4.61	4	.63	4.44	5	0.76
Diverse learner strategies	* 3.90	4	.71	4.46	4	0.51
Collaboration	4.80	5	.41	4.76	5	0.45
*(p)robability<0.05 **(p)robability<0.01	(n) superintendents = 16			(n) principals = 26		

Table 1.5 Comparison of core competencies between superintendents and principals.

This study indicates that helping all school leaders to develop these core competencies can be beneficial. The need for authentic, practical leadership training cannot be overstated. To achieve this end, however, the modern superintendent has an ethical, moral, and professional responsibility to commit the school organization to offering meaningful professional-leader development opportunities for both building leaders and emerging leaders as well. Too often, these opportunities are squandered because professional-development funds are allocated elsewhere.

The core competencies, as shown in this study, seem to offer a way out of the wilderness, however. They offer concrete application in the context of two sets of standards. More importantly, the idea that a paradigm shift is occurring is borne out by the rankings of these competencies. Both principals and superintendents rank collaboration, instructional leadership, vision, and strategic planning in top half of the competencies with the more traditional competencies in the lower half of the rankings.

What this may suggest is that the paradigm which placed high value on

the more traditional managerial competencies is being replaced by those that impact culture; a culture that moves away from a teaching school toward that of a learning school. It suggests also that the concept of fostering collaborative, professional-learning-community cultures is becoming embedded in the mindset of current and emerging leaders.

If that is true, it may lead to the next evolution of the professional-learning-community model. Returning to the idea that the greatest loyalty is to the smallest team, visionary superintendents may finally be able to redefine the next evolution of the professional-learning-community model that will be known as the intentional-learning community. The school as intentional-learning community, a learning organization, folds all adult energy and practice into student mastery of knowledge and, most importantly, into skills to apply that knowledge.

It can even be argued that the rankings indicate that an emerging contrast between old-school and new-school thinking may be taking hold as illustrated in Figure 1.3.

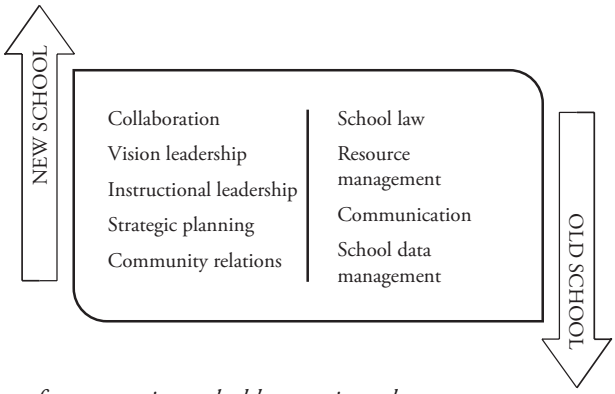

Figure 1.3 Contrast of competencies ranked by superintendents

While there are some anomalies in the competency rankings, such as school governance and diverse-learner strategies, there seems to be a clear prioritization of core competencies that indicate a shift to culture-oriented leadership; one that recognizes the need for a more strategic, even systemic, reframing of schools as true learning organizations (Senge, 2006).

With increasing frequency, literature on school organizational change is expanding its treatment of systemic school improvement. There is, or should be, an increasing cross-over of private-sector organizational-change theory and practice into public-sector change research and practice, and in particular, public education. Effective leadership demands that superintendents go beyond

traditional definitions of district leadership. It demands mastery of the twelve core competencies by an intentional leader, within a thriving, intentional-learning community, using systems thinking as the organizational change model to achieve authentic, sustainable school improvement.

In summary, this study offers some hopeful implications as the role of the modern and effective superintendent shifts focus from traditional district leader to a true leader of learning. A focus on the core competencies in this study offers hope that current and emerging leaders alike recognize the linkage between the power of culture, the need for creating intentional learning communities, and the superintendent as the learning leader of those communities. ***LEJ***

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Robert K. Wilhite, Ed,D., *is a Professor of Leadership, and Dean of the College of Graduate Studies at Concordia University Chicago*

Daniel R. Tomal, Ph.D., *is a Distinguished Professor of Leadership at Concordia University Chicago.*

Craig A. Schilling, Ed.D., *is an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at Concordia University Chicago. Chicago.*

Jeffrey T. Brierton, Ph.D., *is an adjunct Professor of Leadership at Concordia University Chicago.*

Teacher Empowerment and Teacher Perceptions of the Principal's Servant Leadership

by Helen G. Hammond

Background of the Study

School leadership continues to be an area of focus particularly as it relates to teacher burn-out and teacher turn-over (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 2012). As a result, researchers have placed focus on leadership-theory application and the influence of leadership style on students, teachers, and schools (Afshari, Bakar, Luan, & Siraj, 2012; Angelle, 2010; Meirovich, 2012). This paper will explore the relationship between school-principal servant-leadership and teacher empowerment. Findings of significant positive relationships would provide new information to school leadership educators regarding the value of servant leadership in effective school leadership.

Servant leadership is a follower-focused approach to leading that is rooted in trust (Choudhary, Akhtar, & Saheer, 2013). Introduced by Robert Greenleaf in 1970, servant leadership comprises characteristics of listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and community building (Black, 2010). Recent empirical research has explored the application of servant leadership in academic settings including its relationship to school climate (Black, 2010), school culture and school performance (Williams & Hatch, 2012), academic advising (McClellan, 2007; Paul, Smith, & Schney, 2012), and teacher job satisfaction and intent to stay (Shaw & Newton, 2014). These studies add to the body of knowledge and provide evidence of the value of the practice of servant leadership in academic settings.

Teacher empowerment is a process that engages teachers in taking ownership and action in their own growth and problem-solving capability (Short, 1994). Past studies of school teacher empowerment have explored its relationship to school-principal-leadership orientation (Short, Rinehart, & Eckley, 1999), student-conflict resolution (Pinchevsky & Bogler, 2014), organizational commitment (Sharif, Kanik, Omar, & Sulaiman, 2011), and teaching effectiveness (Adedoyin, 2012). These studies illuminate the interest in teacher empowerment and prompt the inquiry to what may lead to empowered teachers. This study explores the strength, direction, and significance of the relationship between teacher school-principal servant leadership and teacher empowerment.

Theoretical Foundations

There are two theoretical foundations for this study: servant leadership, and teacher empowerment. The research questions and measurement justifications were explored through the lens of Greenleaf's (1970) seminal servant-leadership theory, which was also used to describe how servant leadership and teacher empowerment were related. Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) operationalized servant leadership through the lens of the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ), using the five conceptual characteristics of altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship based on Greenleaf's (1970) leadership philosophy of servant leadership.

It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant—first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test is: "Do those served grow as persons, do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?" (Greenleaf, p. 4).

Greenleaf (1970) first introduced the term servant leader in his seminal work, though he was not the first to introduce the concept. Jesus Christ taught leading by serving and is identified as the first servant leader having lived a life which was servant-leadership demonstrated (Blanchard, Hodges, & Hendry, 2016). In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus explained that he was not sent to earth to be served, but rather to serve (Mark 10:44-45). Prior to these verses, Jesus explained to several of his disciples about their thoughts of His status and their role in the kingdom. Jesus explained to his followers that while leadership of the time was 'of the world'—it was not how they would lead. Instead, Jesus explained "But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else" (Mark 10:35-44, NLT). The ultimate sacrifice of a leader is to put the needs of followers first, and to lead by serving (Hine, 2014; Parris & Peachey, 2012).

Momentum and interest has emerged in the study of teacher empowerment as a result of efforts in school improvement, reform, and effectiveness efforts (Angelle, 2010). Short (1994) explained teacher empowerment as a process of sharing administrative power, allowing teachers autonomy, the opportunity to take risks, grow, make decisions, and develop new skills. The influence on teacher empowerment with a school-principal servant leader was explored through this definition and operationalized using the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) developed by Short & Rinehart (1992) using the six themes of decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact. The research question of this study directly aligned to

the theoretical foundations of teacher empowerment and servant leadership. The research question was "What, if any, significant relationship exists between teacher perceptions of principal servant leadership characteristics of altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship as measured by the SLQ individually and collectively and teacher self-empowerment as measured by the SPES?

Method

Quantitative methodology and correlational design were used in this study. Characteristics of quantitative research including the measurement of variables using numerical data, the testing of hypotheses, and conducting statistical analyses to explore the relationship among variables (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2017) were relevant to this study, making quantitative methodology an appropriate choice. The strength of all pairs of scores between variables was assessed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficients. Standard multiple linear regression analysis was used to assess the strength of the combined relationships between both criterion variables and the five predictor variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The intent of this study was to explore the strength, direction, and significance of the relationships between teacher perceptions of the servant leadership characteristics of their school principal, and teacher self-empowerment. A quantitative methodology and correlational design was therefore the best research approach.

Variables

The five predictor variables used to measure servant-leader attributes of the school principal were based on the five subscales of the Servant Leadership Questionnaire: Altruistic Calling, Emotional Healing, Wisdom, Persuasive Mapping, and Organizational Stewardship (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). The criterion variable in this study was teacher empowerment based on the defining characteristics (subscales) identified by Short and Rinehart (1992) in the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES). The six characteristics of the SPES include Decision Making, Professional Growth, Status, Self-Efficacy, Autonomy, and Impact (1992).

Instruments

The instruments chosen for this study align with the research question because they measure teacher perceptions of the variables. Two validated psychometric instruments were chosen for this study: the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) and the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES). The SLQ was used to measure teacher perceptions of the servant leader attributes of their school principal. The 11 key dimensions of servant leadership (calling, listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization,

foresight, stewardship, growth, and community building) were used by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) to operationally measure servant leadership. The SLQ measured servant leadership using five continuously scaled factors of altruistic calling, emotional healing, persuasive mapping, wisdom and organizational stewardship and has been used in empirical research conducted by Mahembe and Engelbrecht (2014), Paul, et al. (2012), Barbuto and Hayden (2011), Barbuto, Singh, Wilmot, and Story (2012), Garber, Madigan, Click, and Fitzpatrick (2009), and Melchar and Bosco (2010).

The SPES was used to measure teacher perceptions of their own empowerment, based on six themes identified by Short and Rinehart (1992) which were revealed using exploratory factor analysis. The six continuously scaled themes of the SPES are decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact (1992). The SPES has been applied in recent research studies to measure teacher empowerment, including studies conducted by Klecker and Loadman (1998), Pinchevsky and Bogler (2014), Sharif et al. (2011), Adedoyin (2012), and Short, et al. (1999).

Study Sample

All full-time K–12 teachers in the chosen Christian school district were invited to participate. The accessible population comprised 700 teachers from 63 Christian schools located in the Southwest United States. The survey was administered electronically and the sample comprised 236 teachers. The electronic survey included a participant demographics section for the purpose of better understanding the sample. The following questions were included in the participant demographics section: gender, highest level of education, years in the teaching profession, and years at current school. Descriptive statistics were then used to identify key characteristics of the sample. Study participants included 164 (69.5%) females and 72 (30.5%) males. More than half (58.1%) of participants reported an earned master's degree. Half of the respondents indicated at least 5 years of service at their current school, and the average number of years reported in the teaching profession was 16 years.

Results

Prior to data analysis, data were cleaned and screened. The assessment of assumptions included normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity of residuals to determine the acceptability for the use of the standard multiple linear regression analysis. The IBM SPSS computer program was used to complete data analysis and all assumptions were met.

The strength, direction, and significance of the predictor SLQ variables of altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship were compared to the criterion variable of SPES

using standard multiple linear regression. All bivariate correlation coefficients demonstrated moderate positive relationships that were significant ($p < 0.001$). Bivariate correlations between all pairs of variables are presented in Table 1. The strength of the significant correlations falls within the moderate (± 0.40 – ± 0.70) range according to Guilford (1956). The multiple correlation $R = 0.526$ of the combined predictor variables to the criterion variable was significant ($p < 0.001$). The shared variance of the model predictor variables to the criterion variable was $R^2 = 0.276$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.261$) indicating approximately 27.6% of the variability of teacher empowerment was explained by servant leadership.

These findings indicate that the model of the five combined predictor variables of teacher perceptions of the servant leadership characteristics of their school principal significantly predicted teachers' perceptions of their

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	SD
1. SPES		0.411*	0.453*	0.448*	0.449*	0.441*	4.12	0.42
2. Altruistic Calling			0.624*	0.719*	0.712*	0.634*	2.98	0.74
3. Emotional Healing				0.635*	0.720*	0.525*	2.40	1.01
4. Wisdom					0.698*	0.633*	3.04	0.76
5. Persuasive Mapping						0.653*	2.83	0.82
6. Organizational Stewardship							3.51	0.59

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, N = 236
*p < 0.001

Table 1
Bivariate Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Scores on the SPES, Altruistic Calling, Emotional Healing, Wisdom, Persuasive Mapping, and Organizational Stewardship

own self-empowerment. Two individual predictor variables were significant to teacher self-empowerment: emotional healing ($t = 2.460$, $p = 0.015$) and organizational stewardship ($t = 2.398$, $p = 0.017$). The SLQ factor of emotional healing identifies a leader's focus on spiritual and emotional recovery through the creation of a safe environment of listening and empathy to facilitate healing (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). The SLQ factor of organizational stewardship recognizes the leader's role in preparing the organization to contribute to society at large (2006). The post hoc effect size of R^2 was $f^2 = 0.381$ (large) and post hoc effect size of the R^2 was power = 1.0. This means that there was 100% chance of correctly rejecting the false null hypothesis in favor of the alternative hypothesis with an $f^2 = 0.381$, $a = 0.05$, $N = 236$, and five predictor variables.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to build on Greenleaf's (1970) model by identifying the strength, direction, and significance of the relationship between servant leadership and teacher empowerment. This study therefore may add value to the body of knowledge related to these two constructs. The results support the relationships between the constructs. All factors associated with teachers' perceptions of principal servant leadership positively and significantly correlated to teacher's perceptions of their own self-empowerment. The most significant and consistent predictors in the model of all predictors of principal servant leadership to teacher self-empowerment were SLQ Emotional Healing, and SLQ Organizational Stewardship. Teachers' perceptions were that higher levels of servant leadership among their principals related to their having higher teacher self-empowerment.

Limitations

Interpretations of findings may be limited by the target population for the study. Only full-time K–12 teachers were invited to participate. Purposive sampling was utilized, and this district was chosen because of its servant-leadership practice. The homogeneous nature of the sample could influence findings. It could be that a different population of teachers would yield different results; for example, different regions of the country, non-Christian teachers, those teaching in a public school setting versus a private Christian school. Another limitation involved the propensity for only individuals with the most extreme feelings (positive or negative) to comprise the majority of respondents (Simon & Goes, 2013). Finally, the limitation of the potential for bias of self-report should be noted, as the instruments deal with self-report perceptions. Honesty, social desirability, understanding, and response bias can result from self-report instruments (2013). Participants may not be truthful in their responses or unable to recall specific events/information needed to truthfully answer the questions.

Future Research

The following should be considered for future research related to the constructs of servant leadership and teacher empowerment. First, a mixed methods design could be employed to further investigate the relationships between servant leadership and teacher empowerment using interview and observation in addition to survey-data collection. Second, future research should consider the principal-to-teacher ratio. The number of teachers per school within the sampled district varied from 10 to 100 school teachers. This variance could impact findings if a higher number of teachers from

any one school responded. It is recommended that the relationship of the number of full-time teachers in each school to servant leadership and teacher self-empowerment be a focus in future research. Third, the three servant-leadership characteristics of altruistic calling, wisdom, and persuasive mapping were not as strongly correlated to teacher perceptions of self-empowerment. Further research should explore why these characteristics were not as strongly correlated as emotional healing and organizational stewardship. A qualitative study with interviews might give more of the nuances that could be inherent in teacher perceptions. Asking further questions that explore these perceptions at a deep level might eliminate or reveal some of the biases identified in the limitations and allow for deeper understanding of the SLQ characteristics. This could uncover why emotional healing and organizational stewardship are more significantly correlated. Finally, it is recommended that future research explore various leadership styles. Comparisons between leadership styles could further clarify understanding of the unique contribution of servant leadership on teacher empowerment.

Implications

Prior research has identified teachers who are empowered are motivated and satisfied at work (Lyons, Green, Raiford, Tsemunhu, Pate, & Baldy, 2013; Vansieleghem & Masschelein, 2012). Empowered teachers have improved communication and fewer conflicts, in addition to improved student achievement (Noland & Richards, 2015). Further, Shaw and Newton (2014) established a strong correlation between perceived servant leadership and teacher retention. Given the finding that the SLQ factor emotional healing was associated with and a predictor of teacher empowerment, it is plausible that teachers may benefit from supplementary emotional healing support as provided through the leader practice of servant leadership.

Practical implications include the potential for teachers low in self-empowerment to become more empowered under the supervision of a school principal with a servant-leader orientation. In addition, emotional healing and organizational stewardship appear to play significant roles and provide significant advantages that may impact other activities within the school community and aspects of school environment. The relationship of SLQ emotional healing and SLQ organizational stewardship should be further explored to identify what other aspects of teachers and the school environment may be influenced.

Recommendations

The study findings provide opportunity for several recommendations of future practice that, in turn, could lead to stronger schools with empowered

teachers resulting from school-principal servant leadership. First, the findings could serve as a springboard within a district for school principal servant leadership development aimed at the development of empowered teachers. Second, the findings provide an opportunity for exploration related to how servant leadership (particularly SLQ emotional healing and SLQ organizational stewardship) may influence other aspects of the school environment. Further adaptation of servant-leadership training curriculum in district professional development should be encouraged in light of the positive relationships identified. New knowledge resulting from this research with regard to positive relationships between teacher empowerment and school-principal servant leadership may result in changes to curriculum in education administration programs. Finally, these findings could be used in the selection-and-hiring processes of school principals that embody servant-leader characteristics. Given the need for teachers, this study points to a focus on the school-principal selection process. The study suggests a focus on recruitment and retention of teachers, given the relationship between perceived servant-leadership and teacher-empowerment outcomes identified through this study. ***LEJ***

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Helen G. Hammond, Ph.D. *is faculty in the Colangelo College of Business at Grand Canyon University. Her career in higher education began following the completion of her bachelor's degree in 1999, serving at her alma mater, Concordia University – Nebraska. Her research interests include selection instruments, hiring practices, employee retention, and servant leadership.*

Grit and Spiritual Learning

by Don Borling & Laura LaSalle

Growth is a hot topic these days. People talk about growth as and intellectual. Growth as a Christian. Growth in interpersonal skills. Growth in business skills.

Sometimes growth and grit are spoken of together. I think the idea is that growth requires grit. It requires persistence. It sometimes requires single-mindedness toward a goal.

In the professional lives of the authors, there are different perspectives and different goals toward growth. It is our goal to give you both perspectives as a way of helping you think about both perspectives and both goals.

Growth and Learning

I have been an educator for several decades. Over that time I have earned two advanced degrees, taken many seminars, and taught many others. As I think about it, I have been in the growth-mindset business for a long time.

There has been a lot of talk about mindsets lately. A mindset is a belief that individuals hold about them-selves. It has a lot to do with attitudes toward learning and the ability to learn. A student might express his/her mindset with statements such as:

- I'm not good at math.
- I'm too uncoordinated for sports.
- School is easy.

As an adult, this may include statements such as

- My baby won't seem to stay on a schedule. I must be a terrible parent.
- I can't seem to keep a job. I am a failure.
- I've disappointed so many. I 'm not even good enough to step back into a church. I'm sure even God doesn't want me.

These types of statements tend to keep us motionless and are often used as a rationale for not changing. For example, students are given scores on a test, and they believe this is their academic fate. They, and their parents, may be convinced that the low score or the high score is convicting evidence of their academic future.

On the other hand, recent studies demonstrate that our brains are

continually growing. According to psychologist Dr. Carol Dweck (2006), "In a fixed mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits" (p.7). Thus, in a growth mindset, we would believe that we are in control of our abilities, talents, and habits. We would understand that throughout life we can choose to develop and grow to accomplish anything we want. Someone who fully ascribes to the growth mindset might feel that the sky is the proverbial limit.

Most of us would agree that, of course, we want to build on our talents, interests, abilities, and faith, but we may not believe that we can actually do so. Or, perhaps we have never considered a need for growth. Or we have never had a real opportunity to grow. Or we may never have been given the message that growth is possible. And if growth is not possible, then learning is impossible, too.

As a result, in schools we see more and more students disengaged within the institution of schooling. Why is that? As you would imagine, there are several reasons students disengage. One that is often stated by students and teachers is that of frustration or of difficulty understanding the content as it is presented. Another reason often cited is that school is boring. Students who have high ability get bored and do not engage with the topic or the material being presented for learning. Students who struggle and give up because they reach a frustration level lose faith in their ability to master a standard in comparison to others. Many students are driven by grades, not growth in intellectual knowledge or talents. Other students have never felt the excitement of learning something. The same can be true for adults who feel disengaged or frustrated by their work.

If we want to have the most significant impact on our children or our loved ones, it is imperative that we allow them to take charge of their choices for learning. We can do that by instilling a growth mindset over the traditionally fixed mindset. We can do that by communicating a growth mindset in our conversations over dinner. We can stop asking, "How was school or work today?" and getting the same non-growth response or shrug of the shoulders.

Instead, we can ask the following growth-mindset questions:

- What did you do today that made you think hard?
- What happened today that helped you to keep going?
- What can you learn from this?
- How will you make it better?

We can also:

- Teach our children to set measurable goals.
- Provide feedback on areas of success and areas in need of improvement.

- Praise *effort* and *progress* over grades.
- Teach them to reflect on growth and to value mistakes as learning experiences.
- Teach children that their brains are like a muscle, The harder they work it, the stronger it be-comes.
- Help children and adults see that doing hard things exercises their brains.

When our children or even we ourselves say, "I can't achieve that," remember to add the word, "Yet."

Growth and Faith

I've been thinking and reflecting over the past few days on the words "growth mindset." I've been in the so-called "religion business" for almost 44 years and I'm still searching, wondering, praying, and hope-fully growing a bit, too. I realize more and more to have a positive and productive mindset has a lot to do with perspective.

What can I control? And what can I not control?

What do I know? And what do I not know?

What can I change? And what can I not change?

It brings me back to the simple, beautiful, and life-changing words of the Serenity Prayer:

> God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
> The courage to change the things I can,
> And the wisdom to know the difference.

I believe that a "growth mindset" comes from deep inside our soul.

Spiritually, it's knowing there is a higher power at work in the world. It's a power we call GOD. Knowing and believing this keeps our life in perspective with a good dose of humility, wonder, and mystery. At the same time, we believe that God is at work deep inside the very fiber of our own humanity.

It's this spiritual dichotomy that makes it fun and worthwhile to get up every day. On the one hand, I know there is a power greater than me, beyond me.

And yet, this incredible power is also inside of me. Yes, this imperfect and very human me can be the vessel through which God comes alive in our world. A vessel through which other people are impacted as I witness to my faith in the God alive in me.

Religion can (if we let it) become a stumbling block to a growth mindset if we allow our religious differences to be barriers, getting in the way of growing and understanding each other.

On the other hand, *spirituality* looks beyond the barriers of religion and

challenges us to grow. It helps us hold onto to that which binds us together. Spirituality opens our eyes and hearts to what we can control and what we can't. It's fun. This *higher* power helps us discover our *inner* power and when this happens, it's amazing how much we can grow and make a difference in the world

The learning and faith growth mindsets work hand in hand and can generate an interaction that allows us to maximize our untapped potential and minimize our weaknesses. Both inspire individuals to explore a wide range of opportunities to discover the presence of God and uncover the talents in their daily lives as members of their families and parishes. Growth mindsets, spiritually and academically, can help individuals to develop a positive self-image. This positive self-image will inspire them to make contributions to society that support growth throughout society.

Growing and Learning: The Journey of Faith

Commitment, mentoring, and ongoing learning are necessary for both spiritual and academic growth. One enhances the other. Further, we contend that academic and spiritual growth are malleable and for that reason need to be cultivated. Fundamentally, teachers and pastors are servant leaders who cultivate growth and a growth mindset in the people whom they serve.

As teachers and pastors, it is necessary to believe in every individual that we serve, realizing that they have varied needs and talents. Together, we can help them discover all they have to offer themselves, others, and society. The journey is God's challenge to each of us. It is collective at the same time that it is individual. Each of us responds to the challenge of a growth mindset uniquely and individually.

Writing as Laura LaSalle, I turn to my faith in God to keep me motivated and believing in myself to serve others. When I am overwhelmed with my teaching responsibilities, I trust Jesus, knowing he wouldn't give me more than I can endure. That alone keeps me focused and motivated to continue to push forward in my personal life, my teaching and my service to others. When I see my students developing their skill sets as teachers to respond to the needs of their learners, my heart and passion for education is ignited over and over, and I yearn to keep on educating and growing,

Writing as Don Borling, I remember something my preaching professor told me before I graduated from seminary and came to All Saints Lutheran Church 44 years ago. "Don, preaching and religion are pretty basic. It's about stories. Your story. Jesus' story. And listening to the stories of others." Jesus never meant to start a new religion. His was a message of new relationships and the fulfillment of the promises in the Old Testament. His story was about communicating the grace that is ours through faith in his death and resurrection.

His journey is about helping us understand our story, and discovering how his story and our story come together. This coming together opens our minds and hearts, not just to who we are, but to whose we are. This coming together of our stories enables us to be more understanding of the journeys and stories of those around us. My journey may seem quite ordinary, punctuated by lots of ordinary people and moments. But this is precisely where God's spirit and our spirits collide, and our minds become more open to and aware of the magic and majesty surrounding us.

Together, let us open our hearts, our souls, and our minds. Let the growth mindset journey begin. It begins with our faith in God and in our belief in ourselves. It's never too late to develop a mindset of growth. That growth mindset honors God while it also supports learning and discovery. ***LEJ***

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Don Borling *is the pastor of All Saints Lutheran Church in Orland Park, IL. Don has served as pastor there since July of 1974—almost 44 years. He graduated from the Lutheran School of Theology in 1974. Don has 5 children and 6 grandchildren, and is engaged to Peggy Sullivan.*

Laura LaSalle *is an Assistant Professor at Concordia University. She is currently the Program Leader for a Masters Degree in Differentiated Instruction. She earned her Doctorate from Illinois State University. Her experiences include Special Education, Gifted Education, and Educational Leadership.*

Not Invited to the Banquet? Why Not? A story from my own backyard

by Zuzana Gorleku

Standing in the middle of an elementary school classroom in Great Britain for the first time, I was forced to consider the homogeneity of my educational upbringing in the former Czechoslovakia. As a Soviet nation, a communist ideology pressured (pushed) its requirements and restrictions on society as whole.

Under the ideological blanket that covered the most of the Soviet block for almost 40 years, religion was defined as "the opiate of the people," to quote Marx (2014). People were not allowed to observe religion. This meant that many churches were closed and books, pictures/painting of Jesus were prohibited in and out of homes. It may be hard to understand the extent to which it affected society. As such, the following anecdotes from my life may help convey the message.

One of the earliest memories include my 12-year-old sister Eva, five-year-old brother Pavol, and me six years old on the way to my grandmother's house every Sunday afternoon. My Grandmother Maria, a typical Eastern European elderly woman with a scarf drawn over her head, slight arch in her back and supported by a cane, would greet us at her door with our weekly bribe—a bag of assorted candies.

As we were lining up on her living room sofa, she made sure that all the windows were closed, blinds drawn, and a small table lamp turned on no matter the time of day. In a darkened room, we watched her as she uncovered the Bible from between her mattresses. Of course, as young children, we did not understand the possible repercussions of this scene; we only had the candy in our sights as she quietly read the text to us. This tradition continued for years, and over time the Bible stories became more intriguing to us than the candies. My grandmother's ability to explain them to us was incredible. Her love for Jesus was contagious. The repression of religion forced my grandmother to informally develop priest-like skills. With the chair she sat in as her pulpit, she was able to convey God's story in such a way that it ingrained it into the minds of we three children, so that we would have access to it whenever we desired. The first prayer we learned, I remember to this day:

My dear guardian angel, take good care of my soul. May it always stay clean and Jesus loves it.

Our affinity for these prohibited Sunday school classes, however, did not always go unchallenged. It was Pavol, the youngest yet most outspoken, who was the first to note disconnect between the words spoken within the room we retreated into every Sunday afternoon and the life in the society just beyond the curtains every day. It was Luke 14:13 that, metaphorically, let a little bit of the outside world shine into our readings. "But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed."

As we anticipated more to be read, there came the moment. Pavol, who was known throughout the family for what my parents jokingly referred to as "green, narrowed eyes" syndrome, interrupted the reading. Eva and I knew that there was something that he needed to have answered immediately.

"What is a banquet, grandma," Pavol asked. She went on to compare a banquet to his friend's birthday party he went to the day before. He was quick to note the disconnect between the verse and his own experiences. "Not all my friends were invited to the party," he continued, keeping his eyes narrowed indicating his dissatisfaction with my grandmother's explanation.

My grandmother was visibly troubled by Pavol's comment. It was as if she knew this conversation was coming but did not expect it this early on. A recent birthday party had taken place to which almost every single child from our small, close-knit neighborhood was invited. The one exception Pavol noted was that his friend Shino did not attend. Shino was a boy who lived a few houses down from ours and he and Pavol would often ride bikes and play together in the lot behind our houses. Shino labored with certain mental limitations. Blessedly, Pavol saw him for a wonderful playmate—whatever limitations Shino had, Pavol accepted him for the person he was. He seemed to be the only one who put his kindness for Shino above the disability. Other children called Shino "moronic" and would not allow him to join the games they played outside. They laughed at him.

Exasperated, Pavol asked my grandmother, who had the role of gauging morality during these weekly meetings, to explain why Shino was rarely seen beyond the confines of the lot. Tears filled her elderly eyes as she was struggling to find the correct words for the first time. Eventually, she said it is simply because, in the eyes of the system we lived in, Shino was *different* and these differences were considered reason enough to restrict the level of interaction between *us* and *them*. Pavol's childlike brain, conditioned with the blessings and compassion learned from my Grandmother, did not understand her explanation. The only difference he saw was the fact that Shino had the coolest bike in the neighborhood.

Did I understand exactly what she meant at the time? No, not at all. All I knew was that he attended *that* school. Shino's school was an old building

where kids like him went—the kids who were not allowed in our school.

Later on in my life, when I was an undergraduate student at the school of education, I learned that our school system was influenced by the Soviet science of *defectology* (Khitryuk, 2010; Vygotsky, 1993). According to this theory, children with disabilities had to be separated from the rest of society's children. In practice, this meant that an entire school was dedicated solely to those without disabilities, while those with disabilities attended special schools. Shino came back to my mind.

I became increasingly interested in understanding the characteristics that caused an individual to be deemed disabled as well as the way in which they were assessed. To my surprise, children in the Soviet bloc were most of the time not assessed holistically, but rather, the only input taken into account was their IQ scores. This process, for various reasons, had negative consequences for children such as Shino. These children were considered uneducable and never gained access to the public schools the majority of children attended, imprisoning them in a "special," isolated world for most of their lives.

Years passed by, and I was surrounded by early elementary age school children in Sheffield, Great Britain. There was Nausheen from Iran who knew just a few words in English, little Ben with Down syndrome who loved listening to audio books, and Jaque from Ivory Coast who was very proud of his traditional dress. Their backgrounds, learning styles, skills and abilities varied, yet they were all friends.

My older sister Eva, also a teacher, but in the former Czechoslovakia, was the first one I shared my excitement with. I described the great contrasts between the classrooms of our childhood and the environment where I found myself teaching at the time. The emphasis placed on having these students in my classroom, bringing children with special needs to learn in regular classrooms, and the wide range of courses I was taking for the sole purpose of learning about "the other" shocked both of us.

First, she struggled to understand how they could all be taught, learn, and socialize in the same manner. I explained that these classrooms had multiple teacher assistants, emphasized group learning, modified material according to students needs, respected the individual needs of each child, while also calling upon the children themselves to help each other. All of these ingredients added needed flexibility in such a diverse classroom and simultaneously created a community-like environment where teaching and learning were both constantly happening.

In the years since the Communist regime collapsed in 1989, many special schools have closed their doors, separation of "the others" is diminishing, and these special students have been integrated into society. Important steps

have been taken to improve teacher education and professional development programs to make sure that all teachers are prepared to respond to the diversity of students, with the end goal of opening society's doors to inclusive practices in education. Even though there are still several obstacles to overcome, administrators, teachers, and parents have embraced the ability to "invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind," to the banquet. ***LEJ***

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Zuzana Gorleku *is an Associate Professor at Concordia University in the Department of Teaching, Learning and Diversity. She has lived, studied and worked in three different countries. Prior to joining the faculty at CUC, Dr. Gorleku was an ESL / BE professor at East-West University, St. Augustine College and National Louis University. Dr. Gorleku completed her graduate studies at the University of P. J. Safarik in Slovakia and Loyola University in New Orleans. Dr. Gorleku's professional identity is centered around teaching ESL / Bilingual and international students.*

The Essential Nature of Affective Education

by George A. Guidera

Values and Social-Emotional Development

Abraham Maslow contended that after facing issues of survival and safety, humans address additional value and social-emotional needs. These include love and acceptance, leading toward self-actualization. He included acceptance, affection, confidence, self-expression, and creativity as human needs. For many children, these needs may be difficult to fulfill. While, some youth are well supported, many are minimally supported or not supported at all. These children may be unaware that their needs are even being addressed, let alone feeling stress over them. Others lack sufficient direction or attention-supporting development within their families, schools, and their community.

Maslow considered the issues of belonging and finding positive roles in the school and culture to be essential. Students benefit from silent and overt support for fitting into the culture of the school and of the classroom. They also need to feel and expressions of care and of worthiness in order to gain emotional health for themselves, as well as gain social perspectives for school and for life.

My Reflection on Social-Emotional Education

Prior to formation of an educational theory, I had appreciation for affective learning, but I would not have called it that as a child. By the third grade, I recall intentional decisions regarding what was worth learning, including things I viewed as less valuable. I knew school was about learning stuff (curriculum) and I trusted my family, school, and teachers would teach me the right stuff. It included formal and informal values and social curriculua regarding affective issues. I practiced independence beyond my family at school.

I enjoyed school and learning, and I trusted my teachers. I found at recess that I really liked dodgeball. It was a valuable activity involving physical challenges. It also involved learning moral values such as fairness and honesty. Dodgeball was important to me, even though there were no specific learning standards. I was good at dodgeball. Other students noticed my prowess. This built my confidence in who I was. We also had citizenship grades in school,

describing behaviors regarding social, moral, and behavioral expectations. My parents paid attention to these grades along with my academic progress.

I carried these perceptions into my teaching preparation and practice, adding the spiritual concern of nurturing the faith in Lutheran schools. I wanted to develop a classroom that provided support to students reflecting affective learning goals. There were moral perspectives as well as knowledge. The curriculum in my days of teacher preparation featured a behavioral orientation, along with expectations for learning a secular/theological/social mix of values, attitudes, and motivations.

This behavioral orientation was also reflected in my observations of and responses to student actions and behaviors. I sought for students to experience joy, encouragement, success and perhaps some frustration and disappointment with poor behaviors. These experiences were all elements of their development. There was grace and forgiveness. Students knew that sanctions were not judgements of who they were. My sanctions were responses to behaviors that at times required admonishment, some for the sake of order, others for the sake of learning responsibility to society. Most of them were expectations for their success for understanding life within a culture. It was expected, not always perfectly executed, that students would comply with classroom rules within the Gospel's promise and parental hopes and expectations. Teacher behavior in my early days of teaching included an assumption of in loco parentis, of teachers acting in an extended or quasi-parental role. The quality of values and behaviors were important to learning and life. This was true of both the perspective of the teacher and of the parent.

Maturing as a teacher, I perceived that curricula which included emotional and values components were also supported and shaped by my expectations and interactions with my student's perspectives and needs. Some were formal, with goals and even sanctions. These goals and sanction provided the surest check for students to know if they had soared or trespassed was in observing their responses and expectations of others, especially teachers. Students can be master interpreters of the subtle. There were goals and encouragements plus the reality that God's Law serves as both a deterrent and a recommendation when students appreciate its purposes, taking responsibility for acting appropriately.

My adult daughters have on occasion reported there was fear of getting caught breaking the rules and sanctions that were enhanced by the fact I was their father, principal, and teacher. They also knew that I failed at times, I was a sinner as well.

The church, the society, the school, and families all had notions of what social behaviors and emotional perspectives were desired and, which conflicted, becoming two-edged swords at times. Still, as in any game, when

rules were mutually accepted, understood, and practiced, there was usually less pain or conflict. Rules require care, empathy, and restraint. Without restraint, majorities may become a mob without reflection, responsibility, or boundaries.

Learning how to play fairly by the rules is an important affective skill is. This leads to appropriate, fair, and moral decisions later within society. Affective learning is neither easy nor shallow. It is focused on feelings, emotions, values, and attitudinal outcomes. It has a lot to say about self-perception, affecting the child's social and emotional needs. Affective learning is often about what we do and how we feel.

Later in graduate school, we discussed classroom management, creating classroom climates that enhance affective expectations. This affected my development as a teacher and led me to examine the theoretical reasoning of experts in the field of affective education.

Looking at Social-Education Perspectives

Social-education theories demonstrate the need to consider the role a school plays in discovering, shaping, and supporting social attitudes and skills, values development, emotional health, and positive citizenship behaviors of their students. Schools are social institutions. The interactions that occur there help to teach and model student behaviors and expectations. At times, we lose sight of that reality.

It is not a question of whether affective modeling and learning should take place. They do take place. Further, this affective modeling and learning is both complex and essential for individual development. It often occurs in our daily transactions. It is of social value to the culture.

We expect schools to help prepare students for life in society. Robert Putnam holds in Bowling Alone (2000) that the schools are the most significant intermediate social institution in the society, only trailing the family in their impact upon children. Further, in Our Kids (2015) he goes on to describe how many children are in crisis with insufficient supports. He claims this is partially due to the decline of other institutions (clubs, scouting, churches, etc.) in importance as well as impacts due to greater individualism, social media's impact, (too much screen time), a decline in economic support, and less parental time and emotional support for many children.

Who are the heroes young people are looking to as models? How loud are the media? The solution is not to be found in memorized curricula or testing regimens. Pools of youthful ignorance are not helpful either. "Just don't do it," only works in fear or if the child does not want to do it anyway. Children may and will continue to act out improperly, despite knowing it is wrong within the culture. Appreciation for good behavior is part of growth

and learning. Many young people are supported with sufficient assets and the environments required for a rich development of behaviors, attitudes, habits, and values needed to live well for the benefit of self and society. But self-image and personality are creative, complex developmental challenges. Too many children, do not receive sufficient support for this essential growth. The social curriculum is part of each day for growth or its failure.

Success within the practice of life is important. For children, much of this occurs at school. That is where curriculum and process must be initiated, modeled, and practiced for rich and powerful affective development. Schools and families must focus on living in the organic realities of development. There is no one thing that fosters a healthy development of self, but an awareness and intentional effort to help students learn, mature, and effectively operate within the affective domain is essential for such healthy development. Academic growth is essential, but social needs trump academics.

Looking at Values-Education Perspectives

Questions of values in education often devolve into "what values should be taught?" and how to accomplish the learning of these values. An appropriate discussion for democratic values is Jefferson's call to educate yeomen farmers to make wise democratic choices.

The issue in values-education is often a lack of support for cultural values or contested views of what those values should be, While these issues are debated, most children are seeking safe surroundings where they feel accepted to develop their own values and their understandings of truth. They are growing, budding individuals, questioning their emerging sense of worth, limits, authority, and power.

Values are more than memorized lists to be endorsed by students. They are observed, tested, and adopted attitudes and actions based upon students' experiences and feelings. Children are busy developing their personal characters, both at school and at home.

Traditionally, schools are conservative, expected by the community to model and adhere to accepted social values including retributions for recalcitrant members and rewards for obedience. However, children may have less safe and supportive communities in which to build their personal values system. Technology has provided a global village that plays a significant social role in children's lives, often with few filters. They are expected to do the right thing, they also face correction by multiple voices often without much coordination or credibility. Today, young children often live in multiple cultures. Living is complex in a diverse culture where consistency may be difficult to achieve. Children need acceptance. They also hear calls both for

variety for and conformity. This call for both variety and conformity may set up tensions within the larger culture. It may also lead to debate between forms and levels of values, There may be a variety of views and practices within the community culture.

At the same time, a juxtaposition of global values as presented through social media can add to confusion for children. Since there are varying degrees of compliance and sanctions regarding both simple and complex issues, this state of being will be challenging to children. For example, I can still recall watching a police officer explaining a traffic stop to my middle school students. Pupil focus for this issue was high. The students were engaged because the curriculum was seen as relevant. The students were developing values and attitudes. The event created a powerful teachable moment for my classroom.

We live in a global society. We observe the urge to return to nostalgic clan-like villages with compliant values. This urge competes with global goals for the benefit of a more politically diverse vision of culture. In addition, there is always the siren call of freedom. Erik Erikson's work is helpful for describing the stages of development throughout life. His work is most often used to understand the childhood process of personality development. He describes affective conflicts in children's lives that they need to resolve. These conflicts include trust, autonomy, industry, identity, and intimacy. Students deal with these issues in school as well as at home and in the community. The resolution of these conflicts is a complex process over time that is neither simple nor soft, but vital, complex, and sustained.

Complexity and autonomy battle with conformity and practice in a subtle dance seeking to win young hearts and souls. Cries can be heard in the UN as well as on the playground as the voices of children may challenge with the words, "you are not the boss of me." Personal freedom, choice, authority, and pleasure are primary goals in many young lives. These goals help children develop a sense of individuality and personal power.

It is not only world leaders who strive for power. These issues can be found in the classroom and on the playground every day. There are selfish actions and maturity issues. There are elements of convergence and divergence regarding children's creativity and obedience. In addition, values operate on both an individual level and at a group level, producing issues among peers or at the community level. Children need the playground and recess as well as the classroom to practice life. They also need critiques from teacher voices. Students recognize they are asked to accept ideas and values they do not share or that are not consistent with their realities, at times causing them responding with disapproval when pressured.

How tolerant will we be with those who maintain different values? R.F.

Butts addressed this issue on a political level in The Revival of Civic Learning, (1980). He speaks of a need for balance between Pluribus and Unum to sustain both the rights and responsibilities required to shape values and civility within a diverse society. If there is too little agreement on the Unum, this process is difficult to sustain. It takes energy and time to develop Unum. It is a thoughtful occurrence in young lives. Simply said, when everyone concurs there is less conflict requiring supervision or mediation, but it is healthier when not coercive or forced. At times, the miracle is how well students agree and compromise. At the same time, a multicultural classroom or community or nation will have important doses of pluribus. And in order to maintain that pluribus, there needs to be agreement to disagree. It is through those disagreements that negotiation is learned.

Theories of Values and Value Development

Taxonomies were developed by David Krathwohl and Benjamin Bloom in 1964 to describe both affective and knowledge domains of learning. It is the taxonomy of affective development that we need to consider here. The affective taxonomy addresses regarding value and attitude development, describing developmental stages in a sequence from:

1. Receiving phenomena;
2. Responding to it;
3. Making decisions regarding which concepts to value;
4. Organizing preferred values;
5. Internalizing the values into a system.

Their theory assumes that values develop from a variety of sources throughout childhood, including observing the environment and reflecting upon their own perspectives and experiences: which are then considered, processed, organized, and adopted by the individual within the context of the society. It is an active, unfolding process. Their theory describes both an emotional and a cognitive process, but does not answer all the aspects.

There are additional factors to be considered. Some in society support absolute values, while others are more comfortable with more relative notions selected by individuals or a cultural majority. Krathwohl and Bloom (1956) suggest an order or process regarding how individuals develop or organize values. They do not address the development of societal values. Others in society may hold that it is simply a genetic process being unfolded, or that it is a behaviorist stimulus-and-response process.

One theory that appears in many discussions on values is Lawrence Kohlberg's stage theory, called cognitive moral development. This theory includes six stages of moral development that begin with self-gratification

and the perceived magnitude of a moral offense, then progress through to a consideration of the greater good of the community or of society a large.

In addition, Louis Raths and Sidney Simon popularized values clarification methods in the 1960s, receiving praise, criticism, and questions for their theory. In the 1970s, Milton Rokeach distinguished between what he described as terminal values, which were descriptive of end-states of existence and behavior, i.e., happiness, respect, wisdom, and intimacy as examples, with more behavior-oriented instrumental values, such as; courage, forgiveness, honesty, and imagination, which, as Rokeach posited, are often used as the means to achieve or support terminal concepts (Rokeach, 1970;1973).

From a cultural perspective, the values discussion of this era came to a controversial head of sorts when Joseph Fletcher presented his theory of situational ethics in 1966. His work was interpreted by many as a challenge to the notion of absolute values. Fletcher supported a more relative flexible values regimen. This relativity of values remains an issue for many in society today. While that may not have been his intent, it identified a dualism regarding relative values contrasted to more traditional absolutes of right-or-wrong value positions. Further, much of the debate regarding situational ethics occurred within a theological context.

The diversity of the 60s and 70s became a dynamic upon which there was intense and personal disagreement. The outcome seems to be a more utilitarian cultural view held by some as the modern secular view, with vocal disagreement concerning common values at the heart of continuing political debates. Life and death issues from abortion to capital punishment to genetic planning all continue as contentious issues within the various views of values.

All these definitions and distinctions seem to indicate that by 1900 schools had already become socialization centers for life in the culture with the actors merely fighting over how to present their views, or over who won the political arguments of which values to support. Growing global diversity and technological abilities have provided the schools even a greater challenge. It can be more difficult to address or teach values if we have not agreed about what those values are. This points to the importance of the family in the articulation of values and to the essential nature of family discussions about values and faith. The values and faith formation taught within the family then become experiences each child confronts within the culture.

The Crux of the Matter

The issue then becomes deciding both how to define and how to teach a values curriculum. Will it be a unified set of values to which each student and family will subscribe? Or will it be a diverse and pluralistic menu of values from

which students and their families will choose?

As society debates values, students continue to build attitudes and abilities such as resilience and agency so that as citizens they can take responsibility for their lives as socially adept citizens. Students need to know the rules with some degree of certainty. Even as teachers present ethical choices and options, students will search for certainty even if there is none.

We ask questions about why some children seem to have more imagination, grit, or optimism. The certainty of self is a lesson that each child learns differently. The reality is that teachers have been responding for years to uncertain children whenever they refuse to give up on their students, go the extra mile to understand why a student does not seem to be very resilient or why a child is not able to improve social interactions. It even happens when they comfort a child who falls on the playground.

These are only part of the challenge. Often, for children with fewer assets, the teacher may be the child's best hope in an unfair game. Can we step back and accept that schools are key institutions for learning how to live in modern society, which includes values and behaviors? Children are not to be trained, but nurtured and educated. Many parents desire schools to partner with families, but feel they lack a healthy contract. Educators and community leaders endlessly argue over finances, curriculum, and methods. Still, as other figures in education have suggested, school experiences help shape children into stronger citizens for the welfare of society, as well as to support their own futures. The solution is not so much a new curriculum of correct values nor an additional class period to teach values. Much of values education is personal and incidental. It relates to complex climates and relationships.

That does not mean that lessons or units should never focus on specific values, but that there is no one set of universal politically-determined values to be considered as the values or social curriculum if freedom and democracy are to thrive. Rather, values need to be generated and integrated into the flow of the school day with a curriculum addressing social issues and the academic curriculum supporting social development. Effective lessons need to be part of a context with stories and responses, even choices. For example, teachers teach a lot about fairness at recess.

Teachers or aides should supervise recess and other activities as it is much more than play. It is also skill and value development. It is about moral development, honesty, fairness, even empathy and care. We need to consider the values that society and students need in the flow of their days. Part of that is letting students practice their values, but other times it requires interventions. This is an art of teaching issue. In Lutheran schools, it is also about faith. We can deal with moral topics in a religion class, but Lutheran schools are first

about the Gospel and the Creator's plan, making faith an integral part of the curriculum all through the day.

Schools perceived as moral academies are expected to enforce lists of rules. This is too simplistic by itself. Teachers nurture the faith even as they teach geometry and spelling. The Spirit is there all day. The social process and curriculum are complex teaching challenges integrated throughout day and throughout the school year.

Schools are the market place or village square (Plato, xxxx; Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985). Our children practice and discover the truths by which they will live. In a democracy, school is about helping young people observe their world to discover the best understandings and realities; then to apply them. Students do watch their teachers. They are silent interrogators of teacher leadership. Yes, our effect is often quietly judged by their cooperation and relevancy of our responses. That point is not a criticism of schools, rules, or their performance, but I fear that often, along with their students, teachers, parents, and citizens are lost in the weeds chasing after false prophets, power, and fleeting rainbows.

The affective domain is often personal and usually most effective as an inductive activity where the student discovers best practice and personal belief. We need to focus more strongly on the main things if school is to help kids figure out life. Those main things include:

1. How to turn down the media channels that may lead young people toward more selfish behaviors or destruction rather than purpose;
2. How to support families that do not provide strong observation platforms from which children can view the world around them or to deal with issues and conflicts they face; or
3. Communities that realize poverty and health issues need to be addressed because they are assets for healthy students and positive emotional behavior.

The winner is not the one with the most toys, greatest fame, or best fast ball. How do we select and honor the goals of being sincere helpful human beings? Or select the best steward of the rich gifts God provides us to live within a society? Part of the problem is the variety in the lives of children and the fact that they require various levels of support. Part of the issue is the difficulty to reflect upon the process when they are at the center of the drama. Students need a variety of personal and institutional supports or scaffolds to complete the task.

Children need to clarify values, but it is a nuanced and complex discussion that is modeled and taught throughout the school experience as well as during the rest of life. It is not just another topic to add to the curriculum list Instead

each child needs to build his or her own understanding. This is the core curriculum. It is this building of core values, one child at a time. That is the core of schooling for children. Districts and schools use a variety of plans and strategies to address the social and emotional needs within schools, some more effective than others.

Special Concerns

Concerns arise regarding the institutionalization of teaching values beyond those mentioned above. Can we even ponder what a description of values to be taught might look like? Can there be a single universal list? Or would that make the notion of democratic freedom a folly? If the question of universal values is addressed, the notion of a curriculum of values and behaviors that are to be taught to all children will likely limit personal freedoms.

The concern about affective education is that it is so much more than factual knowledge. It is about the process of learning, the actions and reactions of children, and the real-life fears that every child addresses. Many efforts to address affective education may likely be either too general or too simple. One criticism of Kohlberg's work was that even if a student could be convinced of an appropriate moral position there is no evidence that the individual will act appropriately using that understanding. All we need do is study our human history around diet and exercise to understand this issue. Moderation and self-control by themselves do not prevent unhealthy living. Examples abound. We know what we should do, but add a little stress and we fail to do it.

In the Christian school, we recognize there is still sin, leaving us to ask what freedom of life choices we have. You might as well remove whatever makes life a challenge or adventure. Life is intended to be lived boldly as saints, despite our sinfulness.

A related notion is that before we can agree to a curriculum, someone will want to make money devising the ramp-up and testing needed to declare accomplishment or mastery of a value or behavior. This results in a valueless quantitative piece of datum. Then we must ask, what do we do with the factory rejects, those who fail to develop enough grit or demonstrate enough resiliency for a passing grade on some normative curve? Yes, we need to do both assessment and evaluation, (and they are not the same thing), but only after consideration of how and what to do with the data. Schools used to give citizenship grades (many still do) on personal and observed social behavior, likely assigned as a pass/fail or needs-improvement measure, or based upon a qualitative form or rubric. Finally, who would want to hang out with people who earn a 99% on a perfectionist fulfillment score? They would never finish the project.

We need to give much more thought to a very complex and difficult goal

of helping all children develop within a rich and caring environment. This needs to be an environment where teachers are not exhausted by the process, but have some energy to care and to mentor.

Education for Values and Social Development as a Core Purpose

Social and emotional growth occurs as we face and practice life. Moral behavior is a key aspect of the experience. Social skills are an essential aspect of human development. "How well did my practice of life go today?" is a great question as you drift off to dreamland at bedtime. It is great for dinner table discussions about values, which are more than announcing your own truth. Nel Noddings calls it a climate of pervasive care. Your curriculum and plan will reflect those realities. At times, we can all recall how a rehearsal at an earlier point helped us in a time of deep joy or sorrow.

This is not an activity just for children or students, nor do we ever get it all totally right or figured out. We teachers may be sainted, but also still sinners. We must also repent. If we are interested in helping others, especially our students, we must maintain a human concern and focus on how we behave and share the experience with them. Responsibility is a holistic goal.

Discussion and reflection are intended to invite a person to consider what is important in his or her life and to then perhaps be more open as in sharing and witnessing the values in listening, planning, and advising fellow supporters on the journey. These observations describe the need for disciples to awaken to the very purpose of addressing values and behaviors, thereby sharing hope with their students.

In, *An American Childhood* (1987), Annie Dillard speaks of the time when you realize that you are of age, you are responsible. That you are no longer a child, but are now responsible for your life or destiny. That strikes me as an affective experience or realization, discovering your essence, which can be both a terrifying and an invigorating time in one's life. Before that, the family and culture have primary responsibility, but after coming of age you begin to sign off for your own actions. It used to happen around the 8th grade when the church confirmed children and knickers were replaced with long pants. A critical eye and reality were needed, along with a more mature affective perspective. Dillard addresses this experience with the following question and answer:

> "What does it feel like to be alive?" Knowing you are alive is feeling the planet buck under you, rear, kick, and try to throw you; you hang on to the ring. It is riding the planet a long way downstream, whooping. Or, conversely, you step aside from the dreaming about some fast-loud routine and now feel time as a stillness about you, and hear the silent air asking in so thin a voice, have you noticed yet that you will die at some

> point? Do you remember, can you remember? "Then you feel your life as a weekend, a weekend you cannot extend, just a weekend in the country." (Dillard, 1987, p. 151)

Her description is powerful, even breathtaking, to clarify this awareness and practice of life, to clarify an understanding of its meaning and implications. Learning is a part of life, even at school. Further, there are common elements, but no two people experience them in the exact same way. As above, it may be a flash of insight or it may happen so gradually that you are not sure when it occurred. It may scare you to the point of despair and panic, or make you as giddy as a Saturday-night dance. It is both simple and complex, and, to a degree, an internal awakening we become aware of, then realize what the teacher meant in telling us to take responsibility for our own actions.

Many people can help prepare and support us in our journey toward values identification, but it is a journey that, at some point, we each take alone. We often do not reflect upon our journey very much, because we are so busy just existing and surviving. Yet, this journey is at the heart of how we become human, engage life, and celebrate our very being. In that way, it is a common part of the journey that we all experience individually, each in our own time, way, often privately. It can be extremely out loud at times and may then also serve as a small spark that lights our own imaginations for the rest of our lives. I can recall dealing with bullies, struggling with spelling skills, realizing girls were different and interesting, organizing my own academic projects, and guilt over a class's corporate meanness toward a teacher. These issues all expanded my affective abilities, understandings, and self-image.

Therefore, as you seek an educational reformation agenda that will address the key questions; put right at the top of the list, the question of how we help release the power and imaginations of our students to learn. How do we encourage them to use their talents to make life a richer and deeper experience for themselves and the worlds where they live?

There is no best test, practice, or standard; no magic path, no app to solve it, and there is no cheap way. It is a costly collaborative, requiring care for our students as God's gifts and taking the time to know them as individuals as we prepare them to take responsibility alongside us for the care they will provide the world. It is one generation preparing the next to care for life and pursue hope for the future. It is the serious work of parents, educators, leaders, and society. It is the most important work we do. We must understand children's needs and act upon them to help children relish becoming citizens.

So, I am encouraging you, the reader, to join in passing on the sense of responsibility that we once assumed, seeking ways to care, helping children take responsibility for the future. May God smile on your efforts. ***LEJ***

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A Classroom for All Students: Project-Based Learning

by Lauren Wellen

Introduction

With the institution of the Common Core Standards in classrooms, educators are challenged to explore ways to meet the learning needs of their students. This is having a huge effect on teaching practices and what is happening in schools in the United States. It was and is the intention that with the development and use of the national Common Core Standards (2010), students would receive a high quality education consistent with best practices from state to state. In an article by Porter, McMaken, Hwang, and Yang, "Common Core Standards: The New U.S. Intended Curriculum" (2011), they state,

> The Common Core State Standards both for mathematics and for English language arts and literacy are explicit in their focus on what students are to learn, what we call here "the content of the intended curriculum," and not on how that content is to be taught, what often is referred to as "pedagogy and curriculum. (p. 103)

With the Common Core Standards, the New Generation Science Standards (2013) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education (2014), the standards have brought changes to states and differences in content and assessments in classrooms. In order to learn the content and skill from the STEM initiative, students from preschool through 12th grade will need engagement and application in the world through thoughtful teaching and learning. If this is true, teachers will need to discover ways to help students understand the content material while following the curricular standards and initiatives.

Many times, curriculum planning focuses on teaching the intended curriculum of the unit, theme, or project, with limited practice and application of the content with reference to the students' lives and content studies. Bredekamp (2017) states, "Curriculum is a written plan that describes the goals for children's learning and development and the learning experiences, materials, and teaching strategies that are used to help children achieve goals" (NCQTL as cited in Bredekamp, 2017, p. 311). This is where, pedagogically, teachers will need to choose ways to teach the content. In order to provide

the best teaching practices while supporting standards, but most importantly, meeting the learning needs of the students, it is the teacher's responsibility to decide how to best teach the content. If pedagogy is considered, then teachers will want to help students interact with the material in real-world experiences that lead to challenges and problem solving.

As a result of meeting national standards, teaching practices are changing to help students' learning required for the 21st century. This article will examine recommendations for all teachers to enhance the learning in the classroom. If students are required to be prepared to make lasting contributions to society, they will need to work with the materials and the content of today's curriculum in real and engaging ways.

One way to meet and teach the skills needed for future learning will be to use project-based learning strategies with students of all ages. Teachers must be knowledgeable about the benefits of project-based learning, and how it will provide a successful way to teach the curriculum. Preservice teachers, teacher educators, and other professionals must value project-based learning so that they can help students learn and create an environment for successful school experiences.

In order to influence appropriate practices for teachers to meet students' learning needs, this article discusses an explanation of the history of project-based learning, theories that support the approach, a comparison of systematic or traditional instruction to project-based learning, the barriers that prevent using project-based learning, and how project-based learning benefits and supports all students in 21st century classrooms.

What is Project-based Learning?

Project-based learning is not a new approach to teaching. In William Heard Kilpatrick's (1918), The Project Method: The Use of the Purposeful Act in the Educative Process, he stated, "The word project is perhaps the latest arrival to knock for admittance at the door of educational terminology" (p. 3). Kilpatrick continued, "I did not invent the word nor did I start it on its educational career" (p. 4). More recently, Nell Duke (2016) in the article, "Project-Based Instruction" from American Educator defined project-based learning, stating that in

> Project-based learning, students work over an extended time period for the purpose beyond satisfying a school requirement—to build something, to create something, to respond to a question they have, to solve a real problem, or address a real need. (p. 5)

These quotes support the use of a type of instruction that has students learning by doing. Projects that are well-planned, and integrate the curriculum provide

the opportunities for learning. Consider the following project-based work that was completed in a university undergraduate course taught by the author that involved preservice teachers and children from Concordia University Chicago's Early Childhood Education Center:

The preservice teachers and children visited the Trailside Museum in River Forest, Illinois to learn about the care and rehabilitation of wild animals for an Animal Project. The children became interested in animals as a mother rabbit had given birth to a litter of babies under the climbing structure on the playground. The children met in the classroom, asked questions about rabbits, the babies, and other animals. The strategy of a KWL (what we know, what we want to know, and what we learned) was started. A class web was also used to assess the students' initial knowledge of animals. The students were also involved in researching animals through the internet and in books to learn about how they live, what they eat, and lastly, their care. An additional part of their research was the visit to the museum that allowed them to gain more knowledge and hear from an expert. They came back to the classroom, wrote about their visit, illustrated pictures of the animals, completed another web to show what they had learned, and also completed the "L," their learnings, from the KWL strategy. A Memory Book was created which helped the students practice reading and writing skills. In order to celebrate the learning, parents were invited into the classroom to view the Memory Books and hear about the project.

The topic of animals aligns to the content area of Science, but other curricular areas were included such as reading and writing and technology. The project-based learning described gave the children learning experiences about animals, but its main focus provided the college preservice teachers with the knowledge of how to facilitate, and how to teach within a project. This is needed for these preservice teachers to be able to envision their future teaching in their own classrooms.

Further, project-based learning can be viewed from another course. The following examples are from a Multiliteracies and New Literacies graduate course taught to college doctoral literacy students who had an assignment to implement a multiliteracies project, including literacy and another discipline, in their own classrooms. The 15 students created, planned, and would teach their projects in the following classrooms: an early childhood special education language arts, second grade language arts, grades 3, 4, and 6 science, 10th grade Honors English, grades 11–12 environmental science, grades 4th and 5th social studies, and two college courses. Some of the graduate students had been using project-based learning and adapted their projects, but others learned this as a new teaching approach. The students included the reading standards being

studied in the course, but also included science, communication, history, and other standards while incorporating visual, oral, written, and audio activities to enhance the learning. In the book, Classroom Instruction that Works, Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, and Stone (2012) state,

> By helping students use a variety of media to produce nonlinguistic representations (e.g. drawings, audio, video, presentations) that demonstrate their learning and help them understand new concepts, teachers are tapping into more creative methods of working with content than simply memorizing information or completing worksheets. (p. 45)

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) provides a website and standards for educators, students, administrators, coaches, and computer science specialists to help bring teachers to rethink their teaching and to create innovative learning environments as they are transforming to the digital age, teaching, and leading (ISTE Standards, n. d.). Because practicing and experienced teachers must be current in what is happening in the field of education, it is imperative that all teachers use resources inside and outside the classroom that are available so that they can enhance and deepen the learning of all of their students. Teachers must be knowledgeable and apply appropriate practices to their classrooms. Project-based learning can and will become a reality in the classroom.

Support for Project-based Learning

When educators are asked by parents and administrators what they are planning and how they are teaching the content, they should be able to explain and understand the foundation and reasons for teaching so that they can communicate the importance of using an appropriate approach to teaching, and how it helps students develop and learn. One way of demonstrating understanding and explaining this is by knowing two of the most common theorists in contemporary education. These theorists are Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky whose theories support the growth and development that occurs when using the project-based learning approach. Piaget is known for his stages of cognitive development. Saul McLeod (2015) states,

> Piaget's (1936) theory of cognitive development explains how a child constructs a mental model of the world. He disagreed with the idea that intelligence was a fixed trait, and regarded cognitive development as a process which occurs due to biological maturation and interaction with the environment. (p. 1)

As McLeod (2015) discusses, it is children's interactions and experiences with real situations and objects that help students move from a lower level of Piaget's stages to a higher level. The more real-life experiences students have, the more

they can contribute to what is being taught and engage in what they are to learn. Learning about the world and how it functions will also help students prepare for future learning and to be ready to move out into the world (p. 1).

Lev Vygotsky theorized that it was the contact with others who can scaffold (Woods et. al., 1976) learning that will help students gain more knowledge and learn. "Vygotsky's theories stress the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978), as he believed strongly that community plays a central role in the process of 'making meaning'" (McLeod, 2014, p. 1). It is the social interactions of working with the teacher and with peers that helps students problem solve and critically think through their learning of the content.

These two theorists focus on providing authentic experiences that will enhance students' learning. Dr. Lilian Katz, professor emerita from University of Illinois, in her seminal ERIC digest (1994g) article, supports this in her definition of the Project Approach. She said,

> A project is an in-depth investigation of a topic worth learning more about. The key feature of a project is that it is a research effort deliberately focused on finding answers to questions about a topic posed either by the children, the teacher, or the teacher working with the children. The goal of a project is to learn more about the topic rather than to seek right answers to questions posed by the teacher. (p.1)

The Project Approach is a complement to the curriculum. It is not a separate subject "nor is project work an 'add on' to the basics; it should be treated as integral to all the other work included in the curriculum" (Katz, 1994g, p. 1). It allows the students thinking and practicing time to apply the skills that they have learned.

Teachers need to ensure that students are provided with appropriate strategies to promote development and learning in the classroom. The project-based approach allows teachers to integrate academic content with development and practice of skills. Projects where students work together and develop questions for which they will seek answers engage in the learning process in ways that will help them apply the skills that they are learning in classrooms.

Systematic Instruction and Project-based Learning

In the book, Engaging Children's Minds (2000), Lilian Katz and Sylvia Chard define systematic instruction as,

> …an approach to teaching individual children a progression of interrelated sub-skills, each of which contributes to greater overall proficiency in skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Systematic instruction refers to processes by which those skills require specific and sequential sub-skills to attain proficiency are learned. (Katz & Chard, 2000, p. 13).

They provide five distinctions between Systematic Instruction and Project Work. These distinctions are:

a. In Systematic Instruction, teachers focus on students acquiring skills while in Project Work, the teacher provides opportunities for the students to apply the skills;
b. Systematic Instruction involves extrinsic motivation which is mostly by the teacher, while Project Work involves intrinsic motivation where students are developing their interests by helping to decide what they will study or explore;
c. The teacher chooses the activities in Systematic Instruction as compared to the teacher and children choosing them in Project Work;
d. The teacher is the expert in Systematic Instruction, while the students are the experts in Project Work, with the teacher encouraging and developing the students' proficiencies; and
e. Only the teacher is accountable in Systematic Instruction, while the teacher and students are accountable in Project Work. (p. 13)

The five distinctions provide reasons for using project-based learning. In many classrooms, teachers are teaching (telling) and students are sitting in their desks doing the work assigned by the teacher. Students certainly need to learn the skills that teachers teach, but in order to internalize what they are learn, the students must have time to practice what they are learning. Project-based learning allows students to learn the material that has been aligned to standards, to research what they are learning, and to integrate a variety of subjects or content areas as they gain an understanding of the topic or content.

Included in the *American Educator* article, Duke, (2016) as a literacy professor, also lists the benefits of using project-based learning for informational texts. These benefits are:

1. The skills are consistent with 21st century skills—creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration among other skills—that are in demand for work and citizenship.
2. The approach improves students' knowledge and skills.
3. The approach keeps the students more engaged than many traditional forms of instruction.
4. The approach is well-suited to addressing today's standards. (p. 5–6)

Duke's research has included children in high poverty areas as well as students with disabilities. "Furthermore, the more strongly teachers implemented the projects, the higher growth students made in informational reading and writing and motivation" (p. 8). Her work is convincing for use with informational texts, and also that it can be used across the curriculum in all content areas. Also she states, "…it can be used with non-informational

genres" (p. 42). As students are internalizing and owning the information, teachers can facilitate and guide students in their learning as both students and teacher remain involved in the project whether is for literacy or other disciplines.

Barriers to Project-based Learning

In tracking all states that are using Common Core Standards, 36 originally adopted the Common Core, 10 states are currently involved in revisions, four never adopted Common Core, and only one adopted the English/Language Arts standards (Ujikusa, 2017). Therefore, examining the number of states using the Common Core Standards, the college- and career-ready Common Core Standards are present in most schools across the United States. With these statistics, this is a perfect time to include project-based learning in all classrooms. The *American Educator* issue on Project-Based Instruction includes the President's Page of Randy Weingarten (2016), president of the American Federation of Teachers. Weingarten discusses the idea that barriers such as schools' focusing on standardized tests, how the school day is organized, and teachers needing the time and resources to develop and refine projects prevent this type of instruction (p. 1). These barriers are preventing teachers from doing what they should be doing in the classroom.

Teachers are concerned about teaching the strategies for the tests, while in many classrooms allowing students to practice the skills to learn the content are eliminated. Teachers are following the curriculum, practicing the strategies, but students need guidance on how to communicate what they want to say and write in order to help them problem solve and think critically. An example is students working on the concepts of "the main idea and details," but they cannot write or spell the words they need to use in order to describe "the main idea and details." By using the curriculum to focus only on the test strategy of "main idea and details" and not considering the other basic reading and writing skills needed to complete the strategy, students are virtually prevented from being successful.

Another aspect is that the school day is so scheduled that there is no time for doing projects. Projects do take time. "Another is the way the school day is organized, with class periods that are too brief to undertake in-depth projects" (Weingarten, 2016, p. 1). Time for project work must be made available. Adequate time will encourage students to work in depth with materials and ideas. This in-depth work will provide students with enduring concepts and skills that they will take into the workplace.

Materials and resources are necessary to complete projects. Those materials need to be included in school budgets, possibly in the place of the workbooks

and worksheets which are a sizable part of most school budgets. Teachers need time to work with colleagues, to share successes and challenges as they experiment with different projects and approaches to project work. These provisions of both materials and time are important for growth.

Weingarten concludes, "project-based learning helps develop skills students need and employers value, such as collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking" (p. 1). If projects develop the skills and use values that are needed for careers and employment, project-based learning must be made a priority for all teachers to incorporate into their classrooms.

As mentioned previously, training and professional development for teachers is equally important. Because teachers in classrooms will have to design curriculum to meet the Common Core standards, teachers will need to be trained in how to implement the standards for their grade level while also incorporating project work. In fact, teachers will need support through professional development to be effective educators as they pedagogically develop curriculum to meet the twenty-first-century standards and forward-focused approaches to learning.

Why Project-Based Learning Works

Project-based learning encourages students to apply the skills that they are learning in the classroom. It promotes student success and long-term growth. They may be learning extrinsically, but they can begin to use internal motivation to learn the content because they are working with real materials and answering real questions. The teacher may choose the content, but the students use their knowledge and skills to help them learn. The students and the teacher become experts as the students use complex questions, solve problems, and research the content and related questions to further their knowledge. The teacher helps by facilitating the project and aligning the standards, yet the students become accountable as they have a voice, interest, and concern about the content, the issues, and their own learning ("What is Problem Based Learning?" n.d.). Copple and Bredekamp (2009) support these practices as they discuss developmentally appropriate teaching to enhance development and learning. They state,

> To extend children's ideas, challenge their thinking, and further develop their social skills, teachers encourage involvement in collaborative learning and group problem solving, both of which require children to share their own perspectives, listen to the views of others, and negotiate shared plans and strategies. (2009, p. 297)

Dean, et al. (2012) reiterates the same thoughts, "Almost every model and iteration of what constitutes 21st-century learning includes two concepts that have become keystones of preparing students for future endeavors: collaborating

and creativity" (p. 45). Dean, et al. continue,

> …a project that exemplifies cooperative learning and the concepts outlined in the standards is the Flat Classroom Project…This project involves middle and high school students collaborating with peers around the world to identify key emerging technological and global trends…Students learn how the way they collaborate and communicate are affected by the tools they are using for the project…By giving students opportunities to learn and lead in cooperative groups, we are helping them develop those essential skills for higher education and the workplace. (2012, p. 45)

Skills for the 21st century support project-based learning. Project-based learning works in that students learn how to personally take the responsibility for their learning as they socially interact with their peers in order to clarify and deepen the concepts they are exploring. As students progress through the grades, they need the skills to think, interact, be independent, communicate, and reason. These key learning skills are ones that they will be able to take with them into their lives beyond school. These skills will benefit them not only in school, but also in future careers and life.

Conclusion

This article supports the use of project-based learning. It discussed an explanation of the history and theories behind project-based learning, a comparison of systematic or traditional instruction to project-based learning, the barriers and benefits of project-based learning to students. Project-based learning encourages development of the mind and inquiry of content. These activities support learning and thinking. There is integration of curricular areas, and performance on content and skills are easily assessed. Positive communication and collaboration are created as students interact and work with each other in the project. Project-based learning meets the needs of all students and encourages those students who are not as willing to participate in the learning.

Project-based learning allows students to explore their world and construct knowledge through genuine, authentic interaction with the environment. Students are engaged in the quest for knowledge, skills, and understandings. This quest encourages students to construct problem-solving techniques, implement research methods, and develop questioning strategies. The students become life-long learners.

Currently, in the United States, many aspects of education are fluctuating. While many of the shifts are focused on educational standards and initiatives, it is imperative that the teachers' practices and students' learning be in the forefront. One way to ensure these emphases is the integration of project-based

learning in the classroom. While there are barriers that prevent project-based learning, the benefits far surpass the obstacles. As students move forward in the 21st century, teachers, administrators, school districts, and governing bodies need to find ways to help students learn through project-based learning experiences so that all students find success in school and are ready to move forward as future learners, leaders, and workers in the today's society. ***LEJ***

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Lauren Wellen *received her Doctor of Education degree from Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois in Curriculum Instruction and Elementary Education. She is currently the Program Leader for the Masters and Doctoral courses in Early Childhood Education. She is a member of the Department of Literacy and Early Childhood and teaches literacy and early childhood courses to masters and doctoral students. Previously, she was an administrator and teacher at Concordia University Chicago's Early Childhood Education Center.*

Children are Active

A recent study has found that children have higher energy levels than trained endurance athletes (Birat, 2018). Therefore, to respond to these energy levels, their learning must be active. Learning must involve touching, talking, smelling, predicting, investigating, thinking, and comparing, to mention only a few. Project-based learning (PBL) is an instructional approach that provides for this active learning.

PBL enables students to master academic skills and content knowledge while developing the tools of activity necessary for future success. During the school day children are engaged in projects that are meaningful and relevant to their lives and future. Projects develop from children simply asking questions. Children are provided with rich learning environments that encourage the asking of thoughtful, important questions—the why. Research and investigation to find answers to these questions allow children to think critically and learn deeply. Learning is guided by the child's or children's inquiry, reflection, and collaboration.

Under guidance from adults and peers, students explore, discuss, design, share, and reflect on their discoveries. Project-based learning is integrated within the academic content and standards in the areas of math, science, language, art, and music. Through the collaborative research process with others, strong social, emotional, and spiritual skills are developed and refined. Working together to find answers not only intrinsically motivates children but also empowers children through the learning process.

Project-based learning is active and exciting. Where there is excitement there is rarely silence. Children and even adults who are actively engaged in meaningful projects are usually not aware of the sounds or noises that surround them. Their intense interest in what they are doing diminishes the sounds in the background. This is why as teachers, parents, or observers come into a somewhat noisy classroom during times of active PBL learning, adults should be encouraged to join in and not just watch from the side. The noise will fade into the background as the focus grows and an answer just might be found to a

question

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." Chinese Proverb. ***LEJ***

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What is different?

In psychology, we know that it is natural to notice difference, but to judge difference is not natural, it is learned.

In his book, *Neurotribes—The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity* (2015), Steve Silberman described two competing perspectives on autism from mid-century research, one from Dr. Hans Asperger, and the other from Dr. Leo Kanner. The dominant understanding of autism from Dr. Kanner, unfortunately, became a narrow view of people with autism as something negative and rare that needed to be repaired. This "different as negative" narrative became so ingrained in our society it is still a challenge to shift, or even explore other ideas. However, we can, we will, and we are. Fortunately, a broader and more inclusive criterion identified in the 1950s from Dr. Asperger, was uncovered in the early 1990s and provides progress with its dynamic understanding of people with autism as having varied needs, talents, and ways of being. The concepts of different/difference/diversity are influenced by perceptions (awareness) and attitudes (beliefs or actions).

For example, in a school setting, imagine all of your learners and their typical personality variations. Then include additional differences, such as disability, learning style, advanced/gifted, dually-exceptional, Deaf/hard of hearing, learners living in poverty, learners dealing with personal trauma or living a changing family situation—such as a parent deployed in the military; learners that are culturally & linguistically diverse (previously known as EL), and/or demonstrate a need for academic, functional independence, medical, or behavioral supports. It is unknown how many of these learners are seeking knowledge and skills in Lutheran education, but I imagine every reader of this journal has taught one student with one of these differences.

As educators, I believe one of our strengths in our ability to teach relies on our *ability to adapt*. Therefore, confirming an understanding of *different* is important. *Different* can be demonstrated by any learner who is or has experienced navigating an environment that is not designed for them, or who have lived in exceptional circumstances, such as:

a. may not be typically developing or
b. respond to teaching in unique ways, or
c. are new to their way of learning or
d. are accustomed to other structures.

I am confident that educators believe most of their students have many differences, that those difference can and will be met in the classroom. But as we reflect on a historical context of 'different,' we shall acknowledge that we have been conditioned by society and education to identify or find students who learn differently, speak differently, and act or respond differently. These differences could be noticed in speed, accuracy, interest or the lack thereof; in other words, we specifically are taught to look for students who may require a different approach. Thus *different* becomes our sphere of influence, our creativity, and our ability to adapt our approaches, rather than our ability to merely label difference.

Broadening our lens: A disability perspective of *different*

So, whatever our label, cultural identity, or lived experience, how can we, as a community of educators, provide and embrace difference and address diverse communication, language, social, emotional, physical, virtual, and health-related access needs to model awareness, acceptance, and equity?

Dr. Suzanne Stolz (2010) reminisced about her experiences as a student with an IEP and brings her diverse perspective as a researcher to understand and identify the "discursive frameworks [that are] apparent in young people's conceptions of disability." She identified that teachers hold a wide range of intentional and unintentional pedagogical tendencies that help to create the conception of disability that youth develop.

> Teachers have an unlimited number of tasks and responsibilities each day through which they may interact with disability…A teacher's questioning of stereotypical depictions of disability in textbooks can show an understanding of variation in disability. During any interaction, teachers can convey contrasting views that disability is a form of diversity to be valued or an unwelcome inconvenience, a need for accommodation or a need for kid gloves, something expected or an oddity. Teachers can suggest forms of interaction and participation and set up forms of organization or structure that avoid or preclude them. (p. 83)

Stolz (2010) and Silverstein (2015) provide ideas of what contributes to knowing difference and the implications of our message as educators and researchers, as well as consumers of knowledge and producers of knowledge. As we acknowledge how we shape our understanding of teaching for the unconventional learner, the crucial components of personal context, individual accessibility, and equity rise as most clear and imperative. Teaching to reach

all learners encompasses providing a foundation for all, such as (a) Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (http://www.cast.org/), then in addition providing (b) differentiation (http://differentiationcentral.com/what-is-differentiated-instruction/) of content, process, and product, and finally (c) concurrently incorporating individual access needs such as assistive technology (http://www.at4il.org/), so that our teaching is approachable and their learning is successful. It is important to admit that it may not be easy, but it is worth it.

Tools and Resources

Lastly, I recently reflected on my personal journey as a second-year professor. I have benefitted from diverse perspectives and varied strengths and needs from my colleagues and my students. I have particularly enjoyed learning with the unconventional, uncommon, or different and diverse learner in order to provide intricate and creative ways of teaching international students at the doctoral level. I truly believe my experience has been richer because I needed to ensure that I was providing best practices in UDL, Differentiation, and Individualized Supports. My students and I benefitted when I stretched my mastered skills and provided a *different* approach. ***LEJ***

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Serving the Language of the Student

by Simeon Stumme

Serving the daughters and sons of immigrant parents.

Concordia has a history of serving the children of immigrants. The founding purpose of the Concordia System was to educate teachers and ministers for positions in LCMS institutions serving German-speaking immigrants. Consistent with the cultural expectations of the time, much of the course work at the Concordias at that time was conducted in German.

CUC continues to serve the daughters and sons of immigrants. Latinx students, most of them born in the United States to immigrant parents from Mexico, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and El Salvador are a marked presence on Concordia University Chicago's campus. The recent university designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution recognizes affirmative efforts by the university to create a welcoming educational experience.

This semester, another step was taken to create a responsive, inclusive and supportive environment for Latinx students. For the first time in university history, an academic class, not part of the foreign language program, is being offered bilingually, in both English and Spanish. One SBS Noetics section, a required first-year experience class, was developed to include academic opportunities for students to engage with readings, to write and to discuss content in Spanish and English.

It has been my experience that having a class that has this linguistic fluidity does several things. First, it serves as a language development space; it is an opportunity to practice, develop and improve their Spanish in a meaningful setting. Second, the class positions Spanish as a legitimate academic language. Spanish is transformed from something to be used exclusively with friends and family to a tool of critical reflection and creation of knowledge. Third, the class expands the university's understanding of what counts as linguistically appropriate and valuable in a classroom. Finally, the class offers Latinx students a space where their linguistic and cultural legacy, the language of their immigrant parents, is valued and rewarded.

Current Latinx students might have different academic goals, countries of origin, home-language, and religious affiliations than the original German students that attended

Concordia Teacher's College and before that, the Addison Lutheran Teachers Seminary. But much like their predecessors, the current children of immigrants come to CUC to learn about the world they live in and how they can contribute to making it more equitable, democratic and open. Allowing them to do so using their home language signals to students, in a small way, that who they are and what they bring with them is part of what Concordia is; it makes CUC a more complete learning home for all students. ***LEJ***

Effective Education: Online Course Design for Adult Learners

by Kari Pawl

In recent years, the number of students enrolling in distance education courses in United States degree-granting higher education institutions has significantly increased. In fact, according to the Distance Education Enrollment report (2017) the number of higher-education students taking at least one online course surpassed six million, with significant increases occurring in private non-profit institutions. To meet the growing demands for distance learning, many colleges and universities have made developing online courses a top priority, as is the case with Concordia University Chicago.

The complexity of online course development is an important task that requires expertise, time, and thoughtful planning. Fortunately, there are common themes and patterns between both delivery modes of instruction (face-to-face and online) that propel student success, and can be used as a guide for planning. While the content of the Reading Specialist program offered at Concordia University Chicago is guided by the International Literacy Association's standards and Illinois State Board of Education learning standards, the structure is influenced by the principles of adult learning and professional development, and research-based best practices for online teaching.

Malcom Shepherd Knowles' (1980) was an American educator well known for the use of the term andragogy as synonymous to adult education. His model of andragogy is grounded on the following four assumptions of learning:

1. Concept of the learner
2. Role of learners' experience
3. Readiness to learn and
4. Orientation to learning.

These assumptions are used to describe the characteristics of adult learners as they gain more independence and become self- directed, use their experiences as valuable resources for learning, engage in purposeful and active learning and make practical applications of their learning. Furthermore, Knowles' (1980) model of andragogy informs the principles of professional development that are used to motivate and engage

adult learners. Zepeda (2012) offers strategies that include making the learning active and interactive, providing ample opportunities for learners to apply their knowledge, provide differentiated instruction and a variety of approaches that meet the needs of a diverse group of learners, provide ongoing feedback, and bridge the connection between prior experiences and knowledge.

The Department of Literacy and Early Childhood incorporates the principles of adult learning and professional development in the courses for digital delivery. In order to accomplish this, the subject matter expert (SME) needs to understand teaching and learning online and know effective practices to guide the development and instructional interactions between the instructor and students. A review of the literature about effective online teaching from the work of Barnes (2012), Stephenson (2001) and web publications from higher education institutions (Brown University, & O'Malley, 2017) include the following recommendations:

- Use clear course learning objectives
- Establish performance evaluation criteria and rubrics
- Interact with students frequently
- Provide authentic and effective feedback
- Stay organized/ time management skills, for both the instructor and students
- Chunk lessons vs. long lectures
- Manage small group sizes.

Without a doubt, designing online courses requires a team approach that embraces collegial discussions between professors and instructional designers. The Department considers this to be a fluid process as the professors carefully reflect on successes and determine areas for continued growth and learning. ***LEJ***

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Book Review
by Kevin O'Mara

Leading with Resolve and Mastery
by Robert K. Wilhite, Daniel R. Tomal, Craig A. Schilling, and Jeffrey T. Brierton
co-published by Rowman & Littlefield Publishing and AASA The School Superintendent Association, 2017
$32.00 Amazon books

The role of the public-school superintendent continues to evolve and change. What was at one time a simpler, more one-dimensional profession has become exponentially more complex. To be successful, the successful school leader has to wear many hats, many at the same time. These hats include that of instructional leader, curriculum and assessment expert, financial wizard, communications maven, goal-setter extraordinaire, collaborative specialist, resource manager, strategic planner, all the while being highly visible and approachable.

The authors have identified 12 core competencies that align with the role of the superintendent in today's public-school environment. These competencies are derived from a wide variety of peer-reviewed journals, current data from the state and federal levels, and working with professionals across the United States in the current setting. The authors' supposition is that mastery in these 12 core competencies will result in a high level of leadership capabilities for public school leaders or those aspiring to gain a role as superintendent.

The authors themselves bring a unique set of backgrounds to this research and these findings. All are in the profession of higher education, and all bring a variety of extensive public-school experiences to the table. Robert K. Wilhite, Ed.D. is currently Dean of the College of Graduate Studies at Concordia University Chicago (CUC). He also has served as superintendent, assistant superintendent, principal and teacher in a variety of public school settings. Jeffrey T. Brierton, Ph.D. is associate professor of Leadership at CUC. Formerly he was a public-school teacher, administrator and principal. Craig A. Schilling, Ed.D. is associate professor of Leadership at CUC, while also having served as a public school Chief School Business Official and as President of the Illinois Association of School Business Officials. Daniel R. Tomal, Ph.D. is a

distinguished professor of Leadership at CUC and has published over twenty books and hundreds of scholarly articles. Also he was previously employed as a senior public-school administrator. It is clear that these authors write with authority and knowledge, both from their personal experiences and from existing research in the field.

The book is laid out in a fairly straight forward manner, introducing the core competencies and then writing about each of them chapter by chapter. The text itself introduces each chapter topic by aligning each objective to the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) and Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) standards. This alignment allows easy access for coursework alignment for those colleges and universities choosing to use this book in a graduate school setting. The 12 competencies are school governance, school law, instructional leadership, resource management, vision leadership, change leadership, communication, strategic planning, school data management, community relations, diverse learner strategies and collaboration. These competencies are introduced, explained fully, then are followed with suggested discussion topics and questions. An intriguing element in each chapter is the addition of one or more case studies. These case studies are especially helpful for aspiring leaders to tackle with colleagues and professors in a classroom setting so as to gain confidence and assurance in the topic under review.

The real strength of the book is the identification of the core competencies and their thorough explanation for inclusion. These are clearly documented as to their need for the successful school leader, aligned with ELCC and PSEL standards, and are notable for the way discussion items, key questions and case studies are included so they can be thoroughly understood by the reader.

As an associate professor, former public-school superintendent, principal and instructor, I recommend this book for any reader ready to fully understand the new role of the public school superintendent. ***LEJ***

Kevin O'Mara *is an Associate Professor in the Department of Leadership in the School of Graduate Studies, Concordia University Chicago after having just retired as Superintendent at Argo Community High School. He has been in education for thirty years as teacher, principal and Superintendent.*

Book Review
by Ardelle Pate

Digitized: Spiritual Implications
by Bernard Bull
Concordia Publishing House, 2018
$14.99

Are you a Berean or perhaps a Luddite when it comes to technology? Are you living under the Laodicean effect? Like the Bereans in the Book of Acts who did not blindly accept and follow Paul and his words, Dr. Bernard Bull tells us in his new book to examine and analyze what we are taught in the Scriptures (as the Bereans did) and consider the implications of modern technology on our faith and life. Do not, cautions Bull, become a modern-day Luddite (a person who is critical of modern technology) or take on the guise of an indifferent, passive Laodicean ("Because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you from my mouth," Revelations 3:16). The digital world is advancing quickly, creating a new world populated with culturally diverse people. Dr. Bull believes Christians need to be in this digital world.

In *Digitized: Spiritual Implications,* the author invites the reader to "grapple with the application of God's Word to these new and ever-changing technological circumstances" (p. 8), as we, as Christians, seek wisdom in navigating the intersections of faith and life in the digital age. Bernard Bull has written a Christian-focused book that flows. It is filled with colloquialisms and personal vignettes that are applicable to a wide audience, from the teen to the seasoned adult. The book is divided into two parts: examining attributes and experiences of living in the digital world and offering suggestions on engaging with others on these digital issues.

What makes this book unique is that Digitized can be a stand-alone, thought-provoking read or a book that catapults dialogue within a small group. It offers an aspect of life that touches everyone, from those who are wired to technology and those who are not. Part I addresses cultural shifts in technology and ethical and moral concerns that have surfaced within the last few years. The first series of chapters begin by exploring aspects regarding how technology is shaping us. These chapters look at society's current information addiction and speak to the resulting overload of information (some call it knowledge) that technology throws at us daily. Bull suggests

that information overload fails to promote deep, critical thinking; instead, it creates reflex reactions that can cause an emotional shutdown and induced numbness. He interrelates contemporary issues of balancing technology usage and human interactions with biblical advice, suggesting that most people feel that technology tools augment our lives with direction and clarity. Bull suggests that technology deludes because it creates life within a hyperreality. He questions whether we have become the consumer or product of technology. Within a chapter entitled "Technology as the Messiah," he describes how society tends to worship the technologies that improve the conditions of life, seeing technology as the beacon of light and hope for a better future. As he does in all chapters, he offers the reader moments of self-examination and reflection as to whether his assumptions regarding technology are valid.

As Dr. Bull delves into other contemporary concerns of our technological world, he grounds his words on Scripture. While our beliefs and values are shaped by the dominant narratives in the media, he affirms we need to have Christian discernment to evaluate our role as the Church in this digital age. Bull states this is especially true in terms of spiritual guidance, as we appear to place more value in hyperreality than we do in God's truth. Specifically, he asks whether Jesus' directive words, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19) applies to those within the digital world.

The second part of the book relates how we encourage others and apply the Ten Commandments to all aspects of our lives, including our digital lives. Dr. Bull's suggestion in the second half of the book is simple: educate ourselves and others. We need to teach ourselves and others how to prayerfully and thoughtfully build relationships with others via our e-mails and other digital communications, including presentations and the social media. This book puts the Christian center-stage with a request that each person stand and never think one's reach is too short (too young or too old), even when one thinks the playing field is uneven. Voicing a Christian value-centered concern for the technology movement that affects all mankind takes the strength of all Christians, but sharing the voice with others, especially through a Bible-study-centered conversation, enlists a community. Within this section, the focus lies within the author's plea for all Christians to engage with the digital world by building relationships and becoming a Christian witness. When he asks the reader to prepare for battle in the digital world, he is firmly stating that the digital world is laden with values that are being amplified within our current society. The direct individual involvement of Christians through a church website, social media, blogs, podcasts, or online community insures that God's Word is infused within an otherwise bleak cyberspace.

Personally, as an educational-technology professor at Concordia University

Chicago, I have been moved by the straightforward challenge to directly engage in conversation concerning our ethical and moral involvement with the digital world. Because standing up for Jesus is part of our call, Christians worldwide need to have an important voice, whether that voice be in Bible studies, dinner-table conversation, tweeting, or blogging. Dr. Bull concludes the book saying people of faith need to recognize that countless value-laden issues most certainly exist in the broader digital and technical world, and if Christians are silent, they may find themselves living in a society where standing up to moral convictions places them in conflict with the law.

Bull indicates that the problem with technology is the trap of legalism—turning cultural preference or personal preference into law. We risk believing that our subjective viewpoints are aligned with the timeless and unchanging truths of God. We create commandments for ourselves that we then place on the shoulders of others as well (p. 8). Yet, this book is anything but commandments: it is a guide for discussion. We need to teach each other about the ethical pitfalls of technology that we have socially accepted as a norm before it is too late. *Digitized: Spiritual Implications* is certainly a book that can help us achieve this purpose. ***LEJ***

Words for thought
by Shirley K. Morgenthaler

Jesus Loves Me

A few years ago I read an article reporting an interview with Billy Graham. Dr. Graham was asked what was, in his opinion, the most important verse in the Bible.

The interviewer wanted to know what the summary of all of Dr. Graham's study and research could tell the public. Billy Graham was by this time primarily retired and greatly limiting his public appearances.

Dr. Graham thought for a moment, then looked at the interviewer. He smiled and said, "Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so." The words of this famous children's song summarized, for Dr. Billy Graham, everything taught in the Bible. Since the recent death of Billy Graham brought his name and his legacy into public conversation again in for some weeks, I wanted to share these words as the Words for Thought for this issue.

As a ritual from my childhood, I sing my prayers each night. Some of those songs are the same songs I prayed as a child. Now the Light Has Gone Away, Dear Father in Heaven, I Am Jesus' Little Lamb, and Jesus Loves Me are songs of worship I sing every night as a part of my bedtime time with God. I sing, think, pray, and meditate. In recent months, my meditation has centered around Jesus Loves Me. That meditation began soon after the preschool and kindergarten children from my congregation's school sang this song at the beginning of a worship service. They sang two verses. The second verse began with "Jesus loves me, he who died heaven's gates to open wide." Good so far. Then came "He will wash away my sin. Let the little child come in." My theological antennae went up very quickly. He WILL wash away my sin? Wait a minute! It's already a done deal. That's what he died for. Once, for all. I learned that from the Catechism a long time ago. Now for the next line. Let the little child come in. Come in WHERE? That line is simply obtuse language for a little kid. Not good to have children learning something they will have to unlearn in later-grade catechism classes. Also not good to have children wondering where exactly they were going to be let in to after Jesus finally washed away their sins at some future and unknown time!

Time to do a little revision to this ubiquitous children's song. Time for some serious meditation to get the job done. Over the next several months I tried out a variety of new word combinations until I finally hit upon something I liked. Something I thought young children could understand. And something that was theologically correct so that children would learn now what they would also learn later.

Here is verse two:

Jesus loves me, this I know, and He died
Heaven's gates to open wide.
He has washed away my sin
So that I can live in heaven.
Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so.

Some years ago, I also heard a verse three to this song. I have never seen it in writing, but I did remember it. And I remembered a problem or two with it as well. What you are reading here is my revision for it. Verse three:

Jesus loves me when I'm good,
When I do the things I should.
And He loves me when I'm bad
Even though it makes Him sad.
Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so.

My meditations continued. I considered possibilities for verse four. Maybe even verse five! Could there be more? Phrases and lines danced through my head and replaced any other meditation I tried to do. After much thinking and sorting and revising, here are verses four and five:

Jesus loves me, He will be
Always near to walk with me.
He will guide me every day,
When I work and when I play.
Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me and I'll stay
Close beside him every day.
I'll tell friends about his love.
There's a place in heav'n above.
Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so.

Almost finished. But there were phrases and ideas still rolling through my meditations. What would I do with them? Was there yet another verse waiting

to happen? Here it comes! Verse six:

> Jesus loves me, Yessireee,
> And His Spirit lives in me.
> He's my Savior, I'm His child.
> God looks down on me and smiles.
> Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me.
> Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so.

Yes, Jesus does love me. Yes, He walks beside me. Yes, He encourages me to stay close by his side. Yes, He guides me all day long. Yes, He loves me whether I'm bad or good. Yes, He loves me enough to die for me and open wide the gates of heaven. Yes, His Spirit lives in me and strengthens me day by day. Yes, He's my Savior. I'm His child. Yessireee, He loves me all day, every day. That's what the Bible tells me. And those are the *Words for Thought* for Spring, 2018. ***LEJ***

A Final Word
by Rev. Daniel Gard

"Learning" and the Resurrection

In this Spring 2018 edition of Lutheran Education Journal, teaching professionals explore with you the topic of "Learning." I remember as a child when my mother, a 5th grade teacher, would monitor my studies, especially in mathematics, my least favorite subject and therefore the one I was most likely to avoid. In her opinion (not mine), it was not sufficient just to get through the next test. She insisted that I actually understand the concepts so that I could build on them.

This issue of LEJ has caused me to reflect on what it might mean to actually learn about the distinctive heart and center of Lutheran education—the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As I write this it is early in the Easter season. Still fresh in my mind is the Resurrection account of St. John 20. Here are the stories of two individuals' encounters with the risen Christ: Mary Magdalene and Thomas. Both knew of Jesus' promised Resurrection but neither had actually learned what that meant. Their "learning" was terribly shallow and lacked any real depth at all. However, this was about to change.

You know John 20 quite well, I am certain. But notice how Jesus changes their shallow learning of His promise to rise from the dead to a deeper learning about how the universe itself was changed. Mary was horrified that the body of Jesus was gone—her learning of Jesus' promise was far too shallow. Yet an encounter with One she thought to be a gardener and who simply spoke her name, "Mary," changed all of that. She then deeply knew and understood and uttered "Rabboni"—Aramaic for "Teacher."

Then there was Thomas who is forever known by the title "Doubting" Thomas. Others had told him the Jesus was risen but he needed proof—to see and feel the wounds in Jesus' hands and side, wounds Thomas had witnessed on Good Friday. Like Mary Magdalene and the disciples, he had heard the promise of Jesus to rise again. But when Jesus appeared behind locked doors and showed him His hands and side, Thomas could only say "My Lord and my God". He learned, deeply, the truth of Jesus and, by strong tradition, that deep learning would eventually lead Thomas to die a martyr's death in India. No longer is he known only as "Doubting Thomas" but as "Saint Thomas the Apostle."

So, what does this have to do with Lutheran education and this issue of LEJ? My teacher/mother's insistence on learning deeply the concepts of mathematics (and every other subject) was important. But the eternity of our students is not dependent on these things. In contrast, deeply learning who Jesus is and what He has done to redeem the world and every student does change everything in this world and into eternity. Here is where Lutheran educators have the great privilege of leading students to the foot of the Cross and to an empty tomb. The Resurrected Jesus will encounter them right where He promised He would do so: in His Word…in the water of Baptism…in the blessed Feast of the New Testament. There teacher and student together are encountered by the Christ of Easter and together deeply learn and exclaim, "Rabboni" and "My Lord and my God." ***LEJ***