



LUTHERAN EDUCATION

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In This Issue.

6 You Can't Have Ethics without Stories

This article was first published as a blog on the website of Russell Moore. Although it's not coming from a Lutheran perspective, it is certainly coming from a Christian perspective. Dr. Moore gives us much to think about as we teach and encourage those around us. Story is a powerful tool, maybe even a weapon. Use it wisely.

by Russell Moore

9 Infusing Lutheran Identity into a Digital World

This editor has come to know Ardelle Pate since she has been a colleague at Concordia University Chicago. Our paths cross frequently and those crossed paths have led to friendship. Dr. Pate thinks deeply about how her faith can impact her students. Her faith has led her to complete the Lutheran Teacher Colloquy program.

by Ardelle Pate

16 Superintendent Core Competencies

Dr. Wilhite is Dean of the College of Graduate Studies. Drs. Schilling, Brierton, and Tomal are all members of the Department of Leadership. Their work on Superintendent Endorsement puts Concordia University Chicago in the forefront of this content, as well as in the forefront of the new Principal Preparation program. The work of these four professors has also “put us on the map” in developing these core competencies for School Superintendents.

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

27 Eight Mathematics Teaching Practices

Dr. Adam Paape is on the faculty at our sister school, Concordia University Wisconsin. He recently completed a mixed-methods study in math education. His work with two classroom teachers in the local student-teacher-supervision pool is a model for working with classroom teachers as well as a model for our work in teacher preparation.

by Adam Paape

37 Making Meaning of God

Dr. Larson's article rises out of her dissertation and out of the presentation she made at the last SCS conference. It is also a chapter in the upcoming book *Culture, Story, and Formation: From Theory to Practice in Ministry with Children*, to be published by Pickwick, an imprint of Wipf and Stock.

By Mimi Larson

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What's in a Story?

The answer to the above question often depends on who is telling the story. Is it a mother or a father? Is it a child? Is it a teacher? Is it a pastor? Is it a politician? Is it a professor?

Maybe the storyteller fits two or even three of the above categories. When my children were in middle school and high school, a frequent question at the dinner table was, “Mom, are you telling that story as a professor or as a mom?” A decade earlier the question had been whether I was telling the story as a mom or as a preschool teacher. A preschool teacher? How could I injure their elementary minds with a story so beneath them?

In this issue we have a variety of stories. Russell Moore’s story comes from a blog I discovered some weeks ago. Ardele Pate’s story comes from her own journey as a university professor who recently completed the colloquy as a Lutheran Teaching Minister. The story of School Superintendent Competencies is complex. It compels us to look at leadership competencies through the lens of schooling. But schooling is not the only place where leadership is important. Maybe what we need to do is simply broaden our concept of schooling to encompass the strategic coaching of a university professor and the wise and patient coaching of a preschool teacher sitting on the floor and playing with a small group of children who are discussing and demonstrating the story of the Good Shepherd as they play.

Teaching, as it is practiced, modeled, taught, and written about at Concordia University Chicago, is a multi-faceted enterprise. This enterprise includes the teaching and nurturing of the youngest in our society, beginning with infants. Within the enterprise of the Early Childhood Education Center, teaching is also directed toward university students, from the college freshman completing his first observation requirement to the doctoral student collecting data for her dissertation research. When that doctoral research is focused on faith formation, as in Mimi’s article, the core mission of the university is both highlighted and furthered.

From the ECEC we travel to the Literacy Center, where professors and students collaborate with classroom teachers to focus on the literacy development of children throughout

Lutheran schools in Chicago, in partnership with CLEF, the Chicagoland Lutheran Education Foundation. Their projects, where literacy is embedded in the real world, demonstrate both new and time-tested methodologies for classroom teachers and for university students. Sandra's discussion of literacy and language embodies that partnership.

It is not only in the literacy world where theory and practice, professor and classroom teacher meet. Similar meetings take place across the curriculum, where teachers invite professors to work alongside them, creating theory and strategic teaching together. Whether in biology or history or mathematics or earth science, professors and teachers find ways to work together for the furtherance of the enterprise of learning. Frankly, it's not teaching that matters. It's learning. Adam's research with two classroom teachers is the story of that enterprise of learning. It's an example of what happens across the Concordias, whether in Chicago or Wisconsin or in any of the other eight sister universities.

From elementary and secondary classrooms, we move to the stories found in the university classrooms themselves. From instructional technology issues and methods to the education of school principals and superintendents, the story of Concordia University Chicago is shared with students in many places and many ways. Ardele's story focuses on communicating a Lutheran identity as she teaches about technology. The work of Bob, Jeff, Craig, and Dan takes this Concordia across Illinois, supporting the development and certification of school principals and school superintendents in large schools and districts, and in small schools and districts. The forming of ethical leaders for the schools of the twenty-first century is an important enterprise in our College of Graduate Studies.

Beyond the classroom, we also form future school and community counselors. Israel's story of that enterprise focuses on the foundation of ethics as key to formation of the counselors we teach and the counseling they learn. Beyond the classroom, we also form students through prayer, through chapel, through Bible studies, through mission trips, and through concert tours. Dan's story focuses on only one of those formative vehicles, our daily chapel services, intentionally embedded in the ritual and song, the prayer and preaching of the Lutheran faith on which Concordia University Chicago stands. Thinking about the dust of our passage to heaven while preparing our students for life and vocation may seem like an impossible juxtaposition. Yet that very juxtaposition is the story of each of our journeys.

Each of the articles and columns gathered here is selected to honor our heritage as Lutheran Christians and to communicate the story of the multi-faceted enterprise of the Lutheran university in the twenty-first century. As you travel through the various articles that each tell a part of the story, enjoy the journey. **LEJ**

You Can't Have Ethics without Stories

by Russell Moore

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Editor's Note: Russell Moore is the President of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. He is a former seminary professor and the author of several books. The article reprinted here was first published online at Dr. Moore's personal website. It came to the attention of this editor on the FaceBook community LCMS Encouraged and Encouraging, where it was shared very recently. This article is reprinted here by kind permission of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, for your thoughtful engagement, especially if you are a Lutheran teacher. We all know the power of story in the teaching of Jesus more than 2,000 years ago. And we intuitively know the power of story in our own teaching. Russell Moore will give you new ways to think about both.

Biblical illiteracy is a problem, not just for the theological integrity of the church, but for the ethics of our everyday lives. You can't have morality or justice without stories.

In a previous post, I discussed biblical illiteracy by interacting with a new book, *A Concise Guide to Reading the New Testament* (Baker). The introduction to this volume makes a persuasive case that many contemporary Christians no longer know how to engage with the story arc of the Bible. He goes on, though, to argue that we often forget what the Bible actually is. If not a dictionary or an encyclopedia, what is it? The Bible is, among other things, he writes, “a faith-forming narrative.”

The book further makes the case that to understand the Bible we must understand “the irreducibility of narrative.” Most of us who are conservative evangelicals rightly reject the idea that the history of the Bible is merely illustrative—stories not grounded in fact but that point to the “real issue” of some experience with God or some demonstration of the way to live. The problem is though that sometimes we use the Bible the same way, only with the understanding that these stories really happened in space and in time. That's true, they did in fact happen, but we sometimes assume that the narrative is simply the way God is feeding us the abstractions of moral principles or doctrinal axioms.

We sometimes assume that the narrative is simply the way God is feeding us the abstractions of moral principles or doctrinal axioms.

Moral principles are important, as are doctrinal axioms, but they are rooted and grounded in the storyline of the Scripture. If we were to boil the Bible

down to a perfectly accurate summary of doctrines or directives, we would not be improving upon the Bible. We would not be drilling past extraneous stuff. We would be losing something essential: the story.

This is what Nienhuis means by the “irreducibility of narrative.” As he puts it, “no moral or summary of a story can take the place of the story itself.” That’s because stories in the human experience, as created by God, are more than just hangers on which to place abstractions. Stories speak not just to the cognitive capacity but to the imaginative as well. As he explains, “Stories immerse us temporally in a world other than our own, and in doing so, they provide us with a deeper understanding of our own identities, values, choices, and purpose.” This is precisely right.

Russell Kirk spoke of this as the shaping of the “moral imagination.” Stories, rightly told, shape us, almost always unconsciously at first. We vicariously are delighted or surprised or disgusted or outraged. It’s not just that we cognitively connect the dots but that, at some level, we actually experience these things. That power can be used in terrifying ways—see the use of Germanic folk myths in the rise of Hitler—or in life-giving, redemptive ways.

The prophet Nathan confronted King David with his sexual predation by telling the story of a wealthy man robbing the poor of his one ewe lamb (2 Sam. 12:1-15). This was not just to “illustrate” for David the meaning of the commandment against immorality. The story Nathan told bypassed the hardened conscience and the rationalizing intellect of David to allow him to experience horror and

The story of the “good Samaritan,” ...is...not just an illustration but a vehicle for a resistant conscience...

disgust at what turned out to be his own sin. Jesus did the same, repeatedly. The story of the “good Samaritan,” for instance, is again, not just an illustration but a vehicle for a resistant conscience to experience what it doesn’t want to acknowledge: compassion for the ‘outsider’ whom culture compelled to be ignored.

That’s how ethics works. It’s not simply that we are given a list of “dos” and “don’ts,” and we comply, or that we are convinced of all of the positive and negative consequences of our actions, and we are persuaded.

The Ten Commandments don’t work that way. This code of objective morality begins with “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” (Exod. 20:2). The Sermon on the Mount, likewise, comes in the context of Jesus’ announcement of himself as the fulfillment of Israel’s story, the year of Jubilee in the flesh. Likewise, the

moral admonitions of the New Testament epistles are situated within the story of the gospel, a story personalized in the constantly repeated testimony of the Apostle Paul.

Stories are often the vehicle for a resistant conscience to experience what it doesn't want to acknowledge.

As Nienhuis puts it, "The faith-forming narrative of Scripture provides us with a plotline within which we may orient our own lives today."

We need abstract commands. "Love the stranger." But those abstract commands come to us in the context of a story about ourselves and about the universe. "Love the stranger, for you also were strangers in the land of Egypt." We tell ourselves stories to justify our actions, and often we convince ourselves of false stories. We can even lull our consciences by repeating these false stories. We become like Christ by following his commands by the power of the Spirit, yes, but, beyond that, by joining ourselves to his life, to his story, as branches to a vine.

Some seem to believe that the times are so perilous that we should boil down the biblical witness to what's absolutely necessary: the fundamental doctrines and the lists of biblical principles on how to obey God and how to make it in life. Why would we, with the stakes so high and the time so limited, teach people the difference between Melchizedek and Jehoiakim? If we bypass the story, though, we bypass the core of the person. More importantly, we bypass the way God speaks to us. And that, the Word of God, is what can sanctify, can make us holy.

We can't have ethics or morality or justice without stories, without the Story. *LEJ*

Russell Moore is president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, the moral and public policy agency of the nation's largest Protestant denomination. Prior to his election to this role in 2013, Moore served as provost and dean of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he also taught as professor of theology and ethics.

Infusing Lutheran Identity into a Digital World

by Ardelle Pate

The Digital Academic World

How is Lutheran identity fostered in a digital academic world? The digital world is taking on, and perhaps, taking over, the educational dialogue at the university level of most public and private universities. Lutheran identity can be fostered through one's connectedness with a community of learners and through relationships built between students and teachers through personalized, differentiated education.

What was once a practice of instructors nurturing didactic talks with students face-to-face has now changed dramatically with the fast-growing phenomenon of online learning. One issue within a digital environment is how to support the mission and vision of a university and how to continue to help develop a student's societal identity through personal and relational academic communication. Instructional design underpinned with theory, pedagogical approach, and strategy can respond to the need to focus on Lutheran identity within online academic environments.

The Philosophy of Digital Teaching and Learning

Two philosophical thoughts concerning the relationship between identity and moral character exist: John Locke's understanding that personal identity is dependent on personal experience and G.W.F. Hegel's assertion that identity is linked to a personal and social relationship with others. This secondary understanding is further supported by Wardekker and Miedema who indicate, "one cannot even make or retell individual memories without reference to the social relationships and schema that culture provides, and others understand" (as cited in Glanzer & Ream, 2005, p. 14). Their findings purport that the structure of the curriculum engages some form of identity formation, and that universities should make curricular changes to form students' Christian identity (Glanzer & Ream, 2005).

Erikson also adds his philosophical thought indicating that the primary task of young adults and adolescents involves the stabilization of identity (as cited in Glanzer & Ream, 2005). Glanzer and Ream further assert, "the Christian tradition is that one's Christian identity is one's most important

and fundamental identity over and above one's other identities (e.g., national, ethnic, familial, vocational, etc.). In fact, one can only properly understand oneself and these other identities in light of one's Christian identity and the Christian story that gives meaning to that identity" (p. 17).

Vieker (2015) claims that Lutheran DNA loaded up-front is something that encodes who Lutherans are as they develop and function as God's people. Lutheran identity is distinctively infused with the identity of a Christological Church and rooted in the Bible; it considers the Bible a rule and norm for judging doctrine. In essence, to be Lutheran is to be evangelical, sacramental, and confessional. Following the teachings of Martin Luther, Lutherans summarize their beliefs in three phrases: grace alone, faith alone, and Scripture alone.

Lutheran Identity and Digital Communication

Lutheran identity sees faith and life as relational, and part of Lutheran identity is to serve others (serving our neighbor) and thus honor God for the gifts he has given mankind. Oberdeck states, "Vocations provide something of benefit to Lutheran neighbors. Here, "neighbor" is defined in the broadest terms possible, from our spouse to our employer to the nameless person who receives the benefit of our labor" (as cited in Bull, 2016, p. 44). Thus, servant leadership places a person in relational bond with others, which translates to assisting all those in need. Basic denominational and confessional teachings involve Lutheran behavior as much as belief (Cimino, 2003). Lutheran identity is also found within the history of the church, and it is demonstrated through a rich tradition of liturgy, creeds, arts, and public service.

Lutheran identity also pertains to Lutheran educators who model servant leadership, spiritual leadership, and visionary leadership. In addition, they practice stewardship of resources, and give support and empathy to others. Through leadership, stewardship, and support, Lutheran educators also build relationships with their students. Oberdeck states,

...the vocations of learner and educator exist in an intricate relationship as one influences the other in a whirl of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skill acquisition. The vocation (i.e., dedication) of learner is lifelong and scripture supports the enduring nature of learning across the life-span, especially when describing our relationship to God. (as cited in Bull, 2016, p. 43)

The Community of Learners

To be part of a community of learners, one needs to be interconnected within the university. A university is an environment rich in activities, conversations, and academic pursuits. These rich resources need to connect

to all online students, who represent a cross-section of generations from baby boomers to millennials, all of whom exemplify needs resulting from societal changes; they all have different backgrounds and influencers that have shaped core values to varying technological communication needs (West Midland Family Center, 2016).

Students entering the university “are beginning to reject the cookie-cutter mold of traditional education in favor of one that promotes innovation, creativity, and adaptation to new environments and unique situations” (Saba, 2016). As in the traditional classroom, the learners look to the online instructor who is the facilitator of learning and the one who provides the social equilibrium. Swan, Garrison, and Richardson (2009) indicate that a dynamic balance of social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence enhances learning, giving the learner an equal voice in the teaching and learning process. However, the dynamic balance is upset when the textual conversation overshadows verbal subtleties.

When universities use linear and static instructional systems, learners are less likely to engage in dynamic interactions with others as their focus is to achieve predetermined objectives. When the instructional design is non-linear and organic and dynamic, interactions with the instructors, peers, and materials occur (Saba, 2017). Part of being non-linear and organic is to establish the community of learners, specifically for those who learn within the digital environment. This community of learners would allow students to communicate with each other outside of the parameters of the online class. If the online students can become part of a supportive community of peers, with activities and resources outside of the online course, they can generate and validate new knowledge and begin to assimilate into the university-at-large. As Glanzer and Ream (2005) state, “the final goal of transformation is not only for students to learn the Christian story, but also to own the story of the Christian church as their communal and individual identity” (p. 26). These students look for a dynamic, innovative experience that offers differentiation. Within the differentiation, students need the opportunity to converse in a non-linear, organic space. Because online conversations are textual, they hold no emotion and no identity. To augment the university’s identity into the community of learners, synchronous (real-time or same time) conversations spaces need to be added.

To infuse Lutheran identity into any digital environment, instruction needs to be personal (focusing on social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development), relational (responding to one’s recognition of an interconnectedness with others), and theoretical to distance learning theory. Just as personalized instruction enhances the learning environment for the

individual, relational acumen motivates adult learners, who want both respect and a positive relationship with a caring instructor (Scott, 2015). When instructors help students form communities of learners, they are “equipping students to serve and lead with integrity, creativity, competence and compassion in a diverse, interconnected and increasingly urbanized church and world” (Concordia University Chicago, 2017).

The Role of the Instructor

Distance learning theorists agree that teaching/learning is a personal and individual act, with the instructor playing a key role in facilitating learning (Saba, 2016). Holmberg, a distance learning theorist who advocated personalized education and guided didactic conversation, saw empathy as the primary role of the instructor and imparting knowledge as the secondary role. He postulates that if personal communication between the learner and instructor takes place in the framework of a friendly conversation, students understand the material more readily (as cited in Saba, 2016).

Moore’s theory of transactional distance states that transactional distance is really a psychological distance that varies based on the modulation of autonomy, structure, and dialogue which is measured by the quality and quantity of communication between the instructor and the learner. Shearer demonstrates in an experimental study that there is an inverse relationship between dialogue and structure. When dialogue increases, structure and the level of transactional distance decrease. When structure increases, dialogue decreases, but transactional distance increases as well. It takes skill, practice, and dedication to incorporate distance learning theory to achieve personal and relational instruction in online education (as cited in Saba, 2016).

Through more online synchronous interaction, teachers teach in a manner that is personal, relational, and learner centered.

Without the ability to freely converse with an individual outside of an academic, textual environment, personal and relational instruction becomes problematic. Every course needs to contain a dynamic balance among the social, cognitive, and teaching presences during the course of study. While research reveals that synchronous (real-time or same-time) communication offers more benefits than asynchronous (anytime, anyplace access) communication, merging both methods of communication is the best practice

Synchronous and Asynchronous Communication

Synchronous communication is more authentic, as it parallels traditional face-to-face practice, giving students immediate feedback, which promotes a sense of community (Boling, Hough, Krinsky, Saleem & Stevens, 2012; Haythornhwaite & Bregman, 2004; Hrastinski, 2008; Levin et al, 2006; Mabrito, 2006, as cited in Journell, 2013). Synchronous instruction can allow for fluidity in personal and relational nuances of Christian education, such as the ability to enlist Christians through the witnessing, one of the fundamental purposes of a Lutheran university.

Asynchronous communication is best with reluctant and independent learners (Harastinski, 2008; Larson, 2003; Lyons, 2004 as cited in Journell, 2013). In a research study using Blackboard Collaborate (Politis & Politis, 2016), the researchers found employing additional online interactive tools might enhance learners' motivation and determination towards online learning. The study suggested connectedness and readiness to use instructional technologies benefited both the student and the instructor. The use of any synchronous tool that allows for real-time video-streamed dialogue also allows for personalization and relationship-building.

Online Education at Concordia University Chicago

At Concordia Chicago, we walk together and act as the Latin meaning of the word Concordia suggests; the translation of “with” and “heart” describes the single heartbeat of all those Lutherans who share the commitment to the faith, doctrine, and confessions. Wardekker and Miedema state “there is no such thing as one right outcome regarding identity formation” (as cited in Glanzer & Ream, p. 17). In this complex, diverse 21st century world, the university fabric, especially the fabric of those within the faculty, draws from a diversity of backgrounds. Relationships must first be interwoven into the instructional design of the course, with careful consideration to promote and facilitate more personalized interactions beyond the textual to occur between the instructor and the student.

Because the media of the second decade of the 21st century offers a plethora of options for interacting beyond text, the instructional design must explore every option and school each faculty member on effective, personal interactions on these platforms. While many may be hesitant to venture into this venue of synchronous interaction, it is the only method of creating social and teacher presence that constitutes the essence of relationships that promote personalization. Through more online synchronous interaction, teachers teach in a manner that is personal, relational, and learner centered. *LEJ*

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Superintendent Core Competencies

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

*This article is taken from **Leading With Resolve and Mastery**, 2017. It is reprinted here by kind permission of Rowman & Littlefield, publishers.*

The concept of leadership traits has been well covered in the literature of educational leadership. The challenges faced by the modern school superintendent demand more than just traits. Today, the effective school leader must demonstrate effective core competencies that get results. While a few of these competencies may be exclusive to the work of the school superintendent, most cut across the broad spectrum of competencies inherent to any executive leadership role.

More directly said, this article presents twelve research-based core competencies that apply to superintendents and executives in leading any organization. Figure 1.1 illustrates the twelve core superintendent/executive competencies. These competencies are interrelated but, under closer examination, also present inherent challenges for the article.

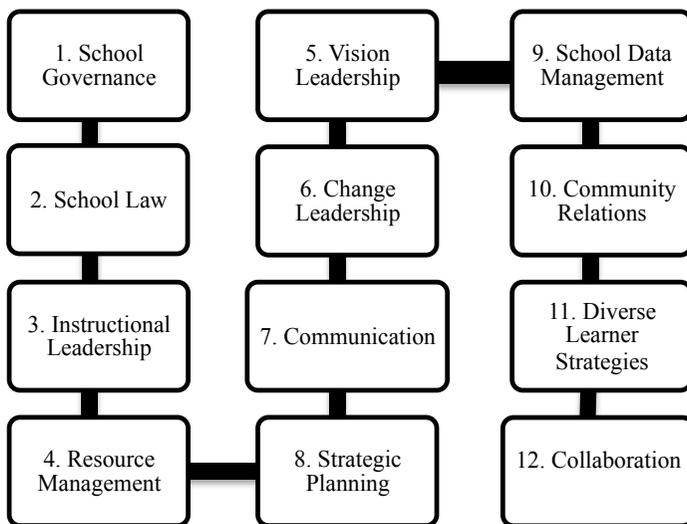


Figure 1.1 Core competencies of school leaders.

Core competency #1: School Governance

Collaborating with school district board members in policy development

Effective school superintendents have always had to be highly competent in managing schools and leading school boards to craft policy and govern the district. This will undoubtedly remain a high priority of all superintendents and school boards into the future. For many, a source of confusion is an understanding of who actually “runs” the district. Is it the school board or the superintendent? The answer is simple. While superintendents are responsible for many aspect of the operation of the district, they report to and serve at the pleasure of the Board of Education. The superintendent is then, the agent of the Board of Education.

Core competency #2: School law

Understanding legal issues impacting district policy and operations

One of the most intimidating dilemmas of school leadership, and any corporate leadership as well, and certainly for the superintendent, is the need to follow the law closely while recognizing their own inadequacy regarding the intricacies of those same laws. Unless the superintendent has a law degree, which is rare, he or she will frequently consult with the attorney who represents school district when in doubt as to how to proceed. When asked how he or she ensures the law is being followed, some superintendents have been known to remark, “I keep our attorney on speed dial.”

Regardless of the access to attorney advice, a core competency for any superintendent is a broad but working knowledge of the legal issues that may impact district policies and operations. This may include laws that impact employment, human resource policies such as hiring, firing, and disciplinary action for students and staff, along with inevitable rounds of collective bargaining negotiations. Special education brings its own byzantine collection of legal issues that can change from year to year. Health and welfare issues regarding immunization requirements, medical and personal records for students and staff and, of course, the need to ensure confidentiality of both must be considered within the context of the law.

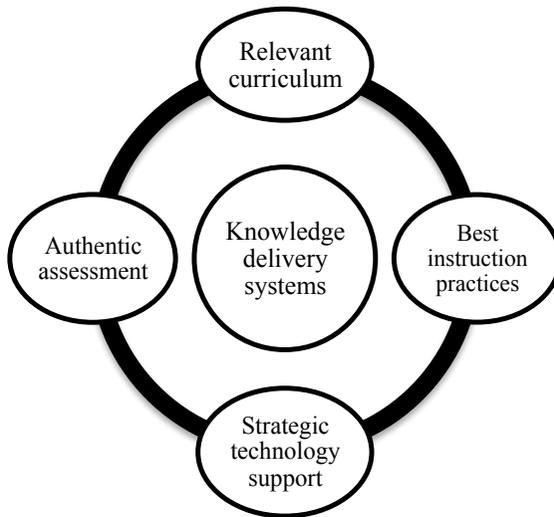
Core competency #3: Instructional Leadership

Demonstrating proactive, engaged leadership for district improvement of instruction

The role of the modern superintendent has evolved considerably over the last several decades. Once relegated to largely policy implementation and data gathering, the twenty-first century superintendent faces a plethora of new and ever changing K-12 standards, as well as increased accountability and global comparison. The leadership of curriculum, instruction, and assessment issues is now included in the duties of superintendents, casting them in new roles

as instructional leaders. Effective superintendents are wise to recognize that student achievement data will now dominate their professional conversations and can have a profound effect on their schools and district.

It is important to note that even the most effective superintendent cannot be an expert in curriculum, instruction, and assessment for all subjects and all grade levels. In a shared leadership model, subordinate professionals will lead in these areas. But the effective superintendent recognizes the importance of being proactive, involved, and engaged. Most of all, effective superintendents must ensure that effective knowledge delivery systems are being consistently used across the school organization. Figure 1.2 illustrates the integrated nature of



the components of the district model for knowledge and skill delivery systems.

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

To do that, they must know how to identify modern and relevant curricula, best instructional practices, the most authentic assessments, and the technology systems necessary to support these three important elements. The superintendent’s foundational knowledge of all four components will be greatly enhanced by consulting, collaborating with, and engaging those professionals directly involved in that knowledge delivery system.

Core competency #4: Resource management

Managing financial, facility, and human resources, processes, and regulations

The superintendent is the steward of taxpayer dollars which, in turn,

provide the resources necessary to operate the district. Superintendents have a fiduciary responsibility to manage these resources in an ethical and responsible manner. This includes financial resources such as state aid, grants, tuition payments, academic and athletic fees, activity fees, and any other money that flows through the district. While the superintendent may rely on an assistant superintendent for business, or on a business manager, the ultimate responsibility for the proper use of financial resources rests with the superintendent.

It is fair to say that most superintendents who find themselves in trouble do so because of the misuse of financial resources. This trouble typically results from improper co-mingling of money, use of district finances for personal use, improper use of grant money, or failure to accurately and honestly report to the state the manner in which financial resources are being used. Regardless of who has the direct responsibility for financial management, the superintendent, as the chief executive, would be wise to trust, but also verify that trust.

Core competency #5: Vision Leadership

Leading and motivating staff to achieve school and district improvement goals

Of all the competencies, the need to lead and motivate staff, or what some have called the vision thing presents the greatest challenge and, some might argue, is in short supply among too many of today's superintendents. Vision might be the most difficult competency to explain to the aspiring superintendent. One might begin by saying that the superintendent, as manager, sees only what is, what currently exists. The superintendent, as a true leader, sees the district as it might be. Or, as Robert Kennedy said, "Some people see things as they are and ask why, I see things that never were and ask why not" (Kennedy, 1968).

Visionary superintendents have the ability to imagine what the district can accomplish together. They have the ability to craft a vision with their stakeholders and then articulate and declare that vision proudly and publicly. They provide a compass for school improvement, ensuring that everyone in the organization remains focused on the vision. They are the cheerleader for the vision. The superintendent is the one who lifts the organization back into good standing when failures—and there will be failures—occur.

Most importantly, they inspire. They inspire others toward the vision. Simon Sinek, author of *Leaders Eat Last*, noted that in 1963 Dr. Martin Luther King, in his "I have a dream" speech, did not say, "I have a plan." He said, "I have a dream" (Sinek, 2014). Truly effective superintendents recognize that vision drives the plan, not the other way around. School improvement begins with vision and a compelling imagination of what the district might ultimately become.

Core competency #6: Change leadership

Leading and managing school and district change initiatives

Closely related to vision is the core competency of change leadership. It is unlikely that a new superintendent will be asked to maintain the status quo. If he or she is following a failed or underperforming superintendent, they will be asked to repair the damage done and to move the district forward. If they follow a successful superintendent, they will be asked to continue the work and advance the improvement of the district. Either way, change and leading change will be embedded in the work of the superintendent. More than merely introducing change, the superintendent must be able to lead and sustain the conversation about change and convince stakeholders that change is in the best interests of the district and the community.

Effective superintendents will need to understand the nature of change and its likely effect on the entire school community. Many well-intentioned superintendents, who have failed after attempting to disrupt a long-standing status quo, often lament that they did not anticipate the visceral, negative reaction of faculty, staff and, in particular, their unions. By understanding the impact of change on the organization, effective superintendents tap into the school organization's capacity not only for change, but also for the rate of change. They can anticipate the organizational angst as change occurs. Savvy superintendents understand that old political axiom that perception is reality and that optics matter.

Core competency #7: Communication

Communicating to school district faculty, staff, and stakeholders

Communication has always been a core competency for school leaders, including superintendents as well as leaders of any organization. Examine any book on leadership in the last twenty years and it will surely include many pages on the importance of communication. The effective superintendent recognizes that communication has evolved much like the job itself. Once upon a time, the superintendent communicated by way of staff meetings, memoranda, and newsletters. Today, the explosion of social media, including Facebook, Twitter, automated voice and email messaging, websites, and smart phone technology has opened up a myriad of new opportunities to communicate across a wider spectrum of stakeholders than ever before.

The savvy superintendent also knows that these same technological tools can be a blessing and a curse. Information travels farther than ever before. This may inhibit the superintendent from making prudent, well-thought-out decisions before the people affected by the decision are demanding answers. The need to manage a crisis before it shows up on Facebook or Twitter

challenges the superintendent to embed new protocols into the culture of the school organization. Doing so will challenge even the most experienced leaders. Information shared on social media may travel well beyond its desired location. In addition, the over-use of automated calls and emails to parents can quickly numb them to their importance and be ignored much like traditional print messages or letters sent home.

Core competency #8: Strategic planning

Developing and establishing school district performance goals

Today, a core competency and responsibility of a superintendent is to lead the process of strategic planning for the district. The board of education will look to the superintendent to educate, guide, and lead them and the community in this very important process. The process will require the gathering of needs-assessment data from all stakeholders, convening a strategic-planning committee comprised of a representation of those stakeholders and then bringing them all together to build the plan.

The strategic plan will serve as the overarching vision statement for the district. Once formed, the strategic-planning committee will be tasked with setting goals and a process to achieve them. The completed and board-approved strategic plan will likely span three to five years and if vibrant, will serve as a living document and a touchstone for the entire school community as the work of school improvement moves forward.

Core competency #9: School data management

Interpreting and using assessment and other school data

In today's high-stakes-testing environment, with so much public scrutiny on both district academic and financial data, the effective superintendent will need a thorough understanding of how data are gathered, interpreted, and used. Data-driven decision-making now anchors most strategic planning in school districts across the country. Data must be gathered effectively. More importantly, it must be easily analyzed and "speak" to school professionals in understandable ways that will assist them in adjusting curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies. Districts who fail to amass and report understandable data will quickly find themselves drowning in data with no ability to leverage those data for change and improvement.

Today, it would be difficult to find an educational leader who disputes the value of using accurate data in the decision-making process. School professionals across the country are using empirical data to make decisions about curriculum, instruction, assessment, and evaluation. The challenge for the effective superintendent will be to recognize the need to embed the use of data in the district culture while, at the same time, ensuring the thoughtful and

reflective use of less empirical metrics, sometimes called evidence, to measure success and outcomes. Such evidence might include experience, intuition, judgment, collaboration, observational information, and the more artful aspects of teaching.

Core competency #10: Community relations

Developing positive relationships and partnerships with community members

Once upon a time, a primary responsibility, and a board of education expectation of superintendents was their interaction and relationship building with the community. While that role still certainly exists, the emerging role of the superintendent as instructional leader has altered that dynamic somewhat. In addition to a long list of responsibilities, the superintendent is expected to be the chief instructional leader for the district. Ensuring a high quality of teaching and learning, once largely the responsibility of principals, now has been added to the superintendent’s job description. New and better technology and communication tools also have expanded and enhanced the relationship between the superintendent and the community.

The greatest community-relations challenge for the effective, twenty-first century superintendent will be to leverage the power of community involvement to enhance school-district improvement and support. In a very real sense, today’s superintendent is now the chief public-relations officer for the district. With financial resources dwindling, the superintendent must educate the community on the cost of a world-class education and what such an education will do for the future of their children.

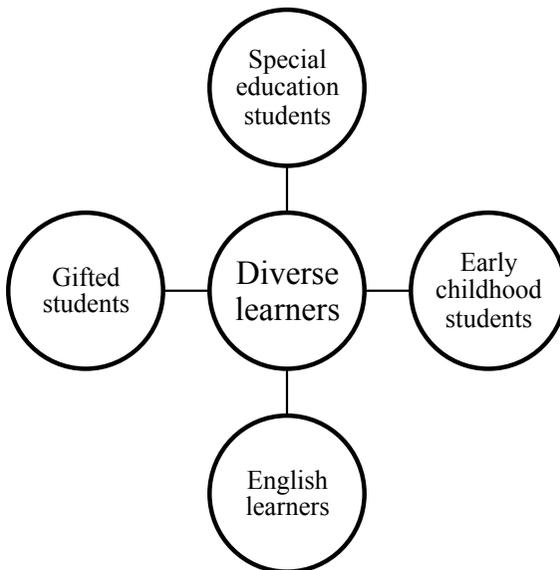


Figure 1.3 Diverse learner groups

Competency #11: Diverse-learner strategies

Ensuring effective instruction for diverse learners

As the chief instructional leader for the school district, the effective superintendent must ensure that the needs of all learners are being consistently and effectively served. In addition to the mainstream group of learners, superintendents and their boards of education face a growing challenge to meet the needs of additional groups of diverse learners who require specialized services. These groups are illustrated in figure 1.3. This includes special education students, gifted students, English learners (EL), and early childhood learners. Embedded in these four major diverse learner groups shown are also groups known as subsets that include minority students, students in poverty, students with social-emotional struggles, and students who consistently struggle for a variety of reasons.

The four groups of diverse learners and their subsets all require awareness, advocacy, and creative solutions to ensure that they are fully included in the broader learning community. Superintendents, as leaders of the whole district, must have both an acute awareness of these diverse learning groups, as well as deep understanding of their needs. They must become the champions of all students by ensuring that curriculum, instruction, and assessments incorporate strategies that fully recognize and meet the needs of diverse learners.

The effective superintendent, as a true servant leader, must be fully prepared to represent and advocate for these and any other student groups in the school who may have been historically under served. Doing so will test the ability of the superintendent to balance the resources of the district to ensure equity for all students. Striking an equitable balance in a world of shrinking resources will require a very special leader.

Competency #12: Collaboration

Building a collaborative culture across the school organization

Of all the superintendent competencies, none is more important than the ability to foster collaboration across the district. The concept of professional learning communities, when effectively implemented, has transformed many school districts into learning organizations where professionals gather together to analyze and act on data and evidence. The superintendent must be able to clearly articulate what it means to be a professional learning community. He or she must clarify what it means to be a learning organization and define collaboration as co-labor where professionals share effective practices and are mutually accountable to each other for positive outcomes for students.

The effective superintendent recognizes that consensus will not be achieved by mere declaration; that it is not enough to simply announce that the district

will be a professional learning community where collaboration will be the key. Consensus must be actively and consistently fashioned over time. Martin Luther King once remarked that, “a genuine leader is not a seeker of consensus but a molder of consensus” (King, 1967).

Richard Dufour, noted author on the topic of professional learning communities, explains the professional learning community phenomenon this way: “The professional learning community model flows from the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn. This simple shift—from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning—has profound implications for schools” (Dufour, et al., 2010).

Use of common language to describe the professional learning community is important, especially when it comes to understanding the integration of the professional-learning-community model across the district. Effective superintendents understand and can clearly articulate this model to all sections of the school organization as well as its stakeholders. As the model in figure 1.4 shows, the district as a whole makes up the greater professional learning community. The building is comprised of smaller learning communities comprised of grade levels, or departments or divisions. More deeply embedded are small teams of teachers acting as professional learning teams who are laser focused on curriculum content, instructional delivery, and assessment development and analysis of the data they generate.

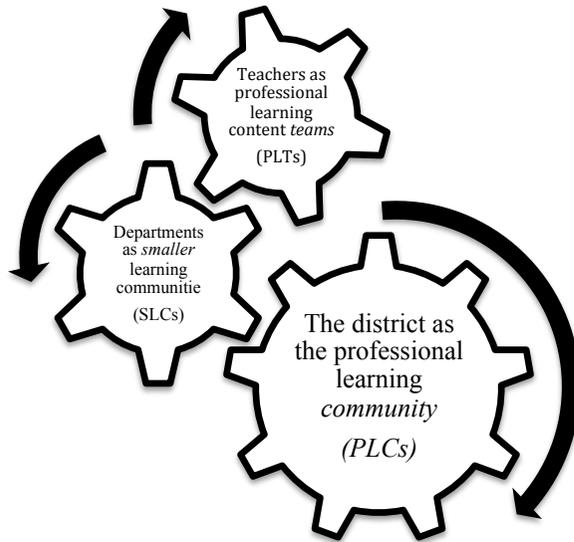


Figure 1.4 Integration of the professional learning community model.

The effective superintendent knows that this model reflects a true professional learning community. It is a process, not a program, and defines the inter-relational nature of the professional work of educators. As the professional-learning-community collaborative culture evolves over time, much of the decision-making is driven down to a small team of professionals. Within the larger community, the superintendent utilizes smaller teams of teachers, professional-leaning teams, to gather, analyze, and act on the data. Building-level school leaders, also acting as their own collaborative team, guide the professional-learning teams and ensure accountability for collaboration and outcome.

The professional-learning community/professional-learning-team model takes time to develop. However, the most effective superintendents foster a district culture where professionals possess a sense of urgency, a bias for action, one where they recognize that every professional is accountable, first to one another and then to the broader community. That each member of the team has a responsibility to honor their commitment to each other and by extension, to all of their students.

Effective superintendents must ensure that there is a deep and common understanding of the collaborative model across the district; that there is a shared commitment to creating a learning school as opposed to a teaching school. A learning school is focused on and serves the needs of students. A teaching school focuses, either accidentally or deliberately, on the needs of the adults in the organization. Superintendents must drive out the fear in the organization so that faculty and staff are empowered to speak truth to power, are not afraid to innovate, and are comfortable engaging each other honestly and with candor.

The core challenge for the superintendent, then, is to foster a culture where everyone in the district recognizes a common accountability for collaboration. Effective superintendents foster a collaborative culture where all the professionals in the district recognize that the era of the independent educator is over and that twentieth-century schools in our new, flat world must become laboratories of shared commitment, true collaboration, and bold innovation. *LEJ*

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Reflections on Professional Coaching: Eight Mathematics Teaching Practices

by Adam Paape

It gave me a little more thoughtful and purposeful way of coming up with the lessons. My teaching had kind of stayed the same. Doing the actual planning, I thought about what was going to make this lesson shine.” This quote is from Paulson, a fourth grade teacher. He made this reflection after I had coached him for a semester through the lens of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics’ (NCTM) eight effective mathematics-teaching practices. Table 1 is a list of NCTM’s effective mathematics teaching practices. In this exploratory study, I used the effective teaching and learning practices from NCTM’s book, *Principles to Actions: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All* as the framework for coaching five elementary school teachers throughout an entire semester. According to Dylan Wiliam (2015, p.17), “Teachers don’t lack knowledge. What they lack is support in working out how to integrate these ideas into their daily practice, and this takes time, which is why we have to allow teachers to take small steps.” My goal in this study was to create a collaborative process whereby my participants could take small steps in improving their mathematics instruction. In addition, I wanted to provide consistent professional-development opportunities for my participants. NCTM suggests that teachers need to, “continually grow in knowledge of mathematics for teaching, mathematical pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of students

	The Eight Effective Mathematics Teaching Practices
Practice 1	Establish mathematics goals to focus learning
Practice 2	Implement tasks that promote reasoning and problem solving
Practice 3	Use and connect mathematical representations
Practice 4	Facilitate meaningful mathematical discourse
Practice 5	Pose purposeful questions
Practice 6	Build procedural fluency from conceptual understanding
Practice 7	Support productive struggle in learning mathematics
Practice 8	Elicit and use evidence of student thinking

Table 1: *The Eight Effective Mathematics Teaching Practices*

as learners of mathematics” (NCTM, 2014, p.116). This article will highlight the experiences of two of my participants as they grew in their understanding of what it means to be an effective teacher of mathematics.

Coaching as professional development

For many teachers, professional development is equivalent to the one-day in-service with which we are all too familiar. I intended to extend my participants’ understanding of professional development to include this coaching experience. Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001), determined through a study of over one thousand mathematics and science teachers that teachers perceived professional development to be of higher quality when two features were present – sustainment over time, and substantial number of hours. My purpose in having a full semester to coach was to collaborate with my participants in a way that allowed them to best implement the effective teaching practices identified by NCTM.

I was intentional to give the teachers ample opportunities to reflect on their instructional growth.

Researchers have studied the effects of coaching from two different perspectives—peer coaching (e.g., Murray et al., 2009) and expert coaching (e.g., Polly, 2012). In my position as a university professor, it seems logical to perceive my role in the coaching exchange as that of an expert. However, I took steps to make the coaching experience much more collaborative than authoritarian. During our post-observation debriefing sessions, I was especially mindful to encourage my participants to think through their personal highlights and areas of improvements from the lesson they had just taught. While I would often recommend strategies to improve particular aspects of their instruction, I was intentional to give the teachers ample opportunities to reflect on their instructional growth.

The coaching cycle

My participants and I followed a specific coaching cycle for each of the lessons I observed. Due to time constraints, we were not always able to meet prior to the lesson I observed. In an effort to still have a pre-observation experience, I emailed my participants a series of reflection questions. The pre-observation reflection prompts included the following questions:

1. What do you hope to accomplish in this lesson?
2. What aspect of this lesson might be most challenging to the students?
3. What strategies might you try in case this difficulty occurs?
4. What would you encourage me to focus on? (NCSM, 2013)

My participants emailed me their reflections prior to my lesson observation. These teacher-created goals for the upcoming lesson helped to frame my focus for the observation. Through the participants' pre-observation prompt responses, I was also able to anticipate how the teachers would establish mathematics goals to focus learning. In addition, I was able to anticipate how the teachers planned to support students in productively struggling with the mathematical concepts of the lesson.

Coaching with Mrs. Anderson

Mrs. Anderson is a first grade teacher with almost thirty years of teaching experience. As a young learner of mathematics, Anderson liked knowing the answers to math questions, but she could never explain how she knew the answers. Over the course of our coaching episodes, She showed an aptitude for drawing out descriptive explanations from her learners. She noted that she appreciated having a different perspective in her classroom during the coaching experience, especially as I encouraged her to implement more student-to-student discourse. She and I worked through the coaching cycle in five separate instances throughout the semester.

At the end of the semester, Anderson said that she had experienced a personal transformation in her teaching practice that took her from simply following the pre-defined goals of her curriculum to an emphasis on the specific learning needs of her students. During my second observation, she used dot patterns with her learners to see how they would describe eleven dots as a sum of the individual dots.

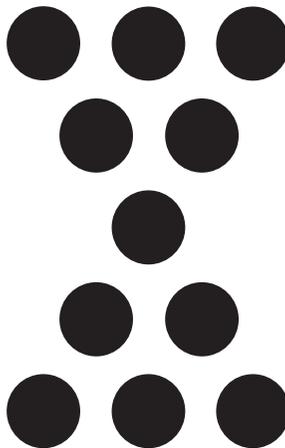


Figure 1: Eleven dot pattern.

In her efforts to engage her learners in a task that promoted reasoning and problem solving, Anderson showed her class the image in figure 1. She asked her students to explain how they counted the dots. This kind of explanation is an example of a higher-level demand as defined by Smith and Stein (1998), since She required her learners to focus on the procedure to develop a deeper understanding of the concept of addition. Her activity created an environment where the cognitive effort exhibited by her students required them to make connections within the representation. The activity also required students to use the specific vocabulary needed to communicate the pattern of the dots. For example, one student said, “I see an X in the shape, and then I added two more.” Another student said, “I see $3 + 2 + 1 + 2 + 3 = 11$.” Anderson used these student explanations to draw out additional ideas from her other learners.

While Anderson’s prompting elicited student thinking, she immediately intervened to express her own method for seeing the dots. Anderson described how she would cover the center dot to get two fives to assist in making an addition of $5 + 5 + 1 = 11$. Her “I did it this way” assertion caused the students to stop thinking. While her assertion was mathematically correct, it lowered the cognitive demand for the students and showed her learners that the teacher had a better way to determine the eleven dots. In our debriefing session, I encouraged her to allow the students to spend more time in diagnosing the pattern. This additional time for thinking would create greater opportunities for her students to determine that covering the center dot was a helpful method. Stephen Reinhart (2000) recommends that, whenever possible, a teacher should work to include student voice in mathematics instruction. This sends the students the message that the teacher expects the students to be active participants throughout the entirety of the educational exchange. Humphreys and Parker (2015) suggest that teachers work to develop both social and mathematical agency in their learners such that the learners develop a disposition towards being active in the educational exchange. In addition, Humphreys and Parker note that teachers need to “be very, very careful when we suggest things in class” (p.23). For many students, they are used to their teachers telling them how to think about mathematics. With a patient perspective that gives students time to think for themselves, teachers can provide students greater opportunities to reach the teacher-desired conclusions about the concept.

In our final lesson cycle, Anderson worked on procedural fluency in her students through first establishing the concepts of subtraction. She had her students working with partners on the floor. She gave each pair of students a collection of fourteen Unifix cubes of different colors. She also provided each pair of students with an individual whiteboard. From the start of the coaching

semester, I had encouraged her to get more student-to-student discourse. This lesson is evidence of her increased focus on discourse. Anderson posed a variety of subtraction problems for the students to act out with their cubes. She directed one student within each group to select the appropriate amount of cubes of one color to represent the subtrahend. Anderson directed that same student to connect additional cubes of a different color to represent the entire minuend. She then instructed the other student in the group to disconnect the subtrahend in order to show that the leftover pieces were the difference. Once both students agreed on the correct answer, they wrote a subtraction sentence on their whiteboard to communicate the mathematics appropriately in written form.

Throughout this entire process, Anderson's learners were seeing how the physical manipulation of the cube pieces created patterns in the subtraction process. For instance, She sequenced her questions to get the students to identify and make use of the structure behind the subtraction ideas she was emphasizing (CCSSI, 2010). An example of these structure-oriented questions was when She asked her students to represent $12 - 4 = 8$. After that, she asked her learners to consider $12 - 3 = 9$. One of her learners described his process as an extension of $12 - 4 = 8$, by adding back on to his stack of cubes with one additional cube. He had noticed the equivalency of $12 - 4 + 1$ to that of $12 - 3$. Having the students write out their subtraction sentences on their individual whiteboards allowed her to quickly see their work, diagnose their understanding of the subtraction concepts, and address any specific needs of her learners at that moment. I saw her provide interventions for a number of her learners due to her eliciting of student work through the whiteboards. This translation from the physical cubes to the written subtraction sentences supported the students in their development of representational competence (Huinker, 2015). Ultimately, this translation ability between physical and written representations forms long-term mathematical understanding in the students (Marshall, Superfine, & Canty, 2010).

By the end of our coaching experience... she had seen more students experiencing "light bulbs going off"

By the end of our coaching experience, Anderson made a shift to including more student-to-student interactions. In our exit interview, She said that, based upon the coaching experience using the eight effective mathematics teaching practices, she had seen more students experiencing "light bulbs going off" in

her classroom. She also reflected on her shift from being the primary explainer of the mathematics. She said, “Another big change is not saying this is the way we do it [the math], to just letting the students do it. It is still a big change in having them figure it out first or [having them] tell me how they do it, so the other kids can see the different ways of doing it. I’m doing a lot more of ‘You could do it this way or this way or this way.’” This shift in instruction is an example of a teacher growing in the fourth trajectory of Hufferd-Ackles, Fuson, and Sherin’s (2004) framework for creating a classroom community centered on discourse—the shared responsibility of students for their own learning and for the learning of others around them.

Coaching with Mr. Paulson

Mr. Paulson, a fourth grade teacher with over thirty years of teaching experience, remembered being a bright, but unmotivated student. Math was easy for him prior to his experience with Algebra. During his Algebra experience, he struggled and began to doubt his abilities. As a teacher, Paulson had great command of his mathematics classroom. He was willing to implement new, student-focused practices. While Paulson was the most experienced teacher in this study, he was eager to put into practice the strategies that I suggested to strengthen his teaching.

In my first observation of him, it was apparent that he had developed social norms within his classroom. He held students accountable for explaining their understanding and for asking questions when they did not understand. He was also very good at praising his students when they would participate in class. This created a safe place for his students to explore mathematical ideas (Stephan, 2014). From the beginning of the semester, it was evident that he had put forth significant time and effort to create a positive learning environment for his students.

When Paulson would ask a question, the majority of his students would raise their hands to give an answer. In our debriefing session after his first lesson, I encouraged him to think through strategies to engage the students who did not raise their hands. One strategy I suggested to him was to have his learners perform a turn-and-talk with a partner after he had posed a question to the entire class. During his next lesson, which covered decimal comparisons, he had his students perform a turn-and-talk during the first minute of class when he asked them to think of a number between 75.1 and 75.2. This simple move was a direct application of facilitating meaningful mathematical discourse through creating, “the purposeful exchange of ideas through classroom discussion” (NCTM, 2014, p. 29). He successfully encouraged all of his learners, not just those eager to raise their hands, to be a part of the active learning process. In

addition, he was now intentionally engaging his learners in the mathematical practice of constructing viable arguments and critiquing the reasoning of others through this direct student-to-student discourse (CCSSI, 2010).

I recommended to Paulson that he should consider revising his pronoun choice in many of his questions. He frequently asked questions like, “Can you tell me how you solved that?” and “Tell me how I should finish this addition.” One of our goals in the coaching experience was to create a collaborative culture in the classroom where the learners saw themselves as active agents in the learning experience. I recommended that he change his questions to be more inclusive, “Can you tell us how you solved that?” and “Tell us how we should finish this addition.” These small pronoun changes altered the purpose of his questions. The pronouns “me” and “I” when used by a teacher can send the unintended message to the learners that the teacher is the center of the learning exchange—that the teacher is the keeper of all knowledge. The shift to more inclusive pronouns in teacher questioning encourages students to begin to see themselves and their classmates as vital to the learning experience. This message is essential in a discourse-oriented classroom.

For my fifth and final observation of Paulson, I encouraged him to use mixed-ability groupings. I had him do this as an application of Jo Boaler’s Complex Instruction model to increase the opportunities for all learners to contribute to their group’s work. The four tenets of Boaler’s Complex Instruction are:

1. *Multidimensionality*: students work to express their mathematical understandings in a variety of ways (e.g., calculations, asking questions, proposing ideas, connecting strategies, making use of different representations).
2. *Roles*: predefined jobs for each group member (facilitator, recorder, resource manager, and team captain).
3. *Assigning competence*: the teacher identifies the struggling learners and looks for ways to praise those learners when they contribute to the mathematical work of their group.
4. *Shared student responsibility for learning* (Boaler, 2016).

His lesson focused on developing student understanding of basic fractions. In order to promote productive struggle, he was strategic in his use of fraction representations. See figure 2 and figure 3 for two examples of the part-to-whole representations that he gave to different student groups.

Paulson used a 12 inch by 18 inch sheet of construction paper to represent the whole. From a separate sheet of construction paper, he cut out smaller pieces of varying shapes into fractions of the whole. He provided each group with one of the smaller pieces. His goal was for his students to discover how the smaller



Figure 2: The triangle is 1/12 of the whole.



Figure 3: The square is 1/24 of the whole.

pieces related to the whole. For example, one group had to determine that their small piece was one twelfth by seeing how many of their piece would fit in the whole. His plan was that his students would eventually decide to use a pencil to see how many times they could trace the smaller pieces inside the whole. Some of his groups filled the whole with tracings of their fractional piece. Other groups, especially those with rectangular fractional pieces, determined how many columns and rows they could fill with their piece. These groups used multiplication to determine how many of their piece could fill the rectangular array that represented the whole.

Paulson purposefully selected specific fractional representations to engage his learners in conversations about key fractional concepts (Marshall, Superfine,

$$\frac{1}{24} + \frac{1}{24} + \frac{1}{24} + \frac{1}{24} + \frac{1}{6} + \frac{1}{6} + \frac{1}{6} + \frac{1}{6} + \frac{1}{12} + \frac{1}{12} = \frac{1}{24} + \frac{1}{24} + \frac{1}{24} + \frac{1}{24} + \frac{4}{24} + \frac{4}{24} + \frac{4}{24} + \frac{4}{24} + \frac{2}{24} + \frac{2}{24} = \frac{24}{24} = 1$$

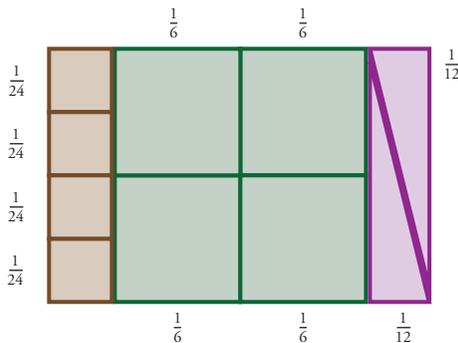


Figure 4: A graphic representation of the equation above.

& Canty, 2010). His lesson helped his students develop their understanding of fractions by using their geometric reasoning. However, in our debriefing session, I suggested that he add more challenge to his activity by having the groups work with more than one fractional piece. See figure 4 for an example of a potential challenge problem. In this scenario, students would need to connect their work from each of the given shapes to determine how the fractions form a common relationship to the whole. This would help students to see the benefit

of common denominators in fraction addition where:

As Paulson and I concluded our time together, he reflected on how he had become a more purposeful lesson planner because of our collaborative exchanges. He had become more deliberate in setting the stage for his learners to engage with the mathematical concepts in his lessons. He also reflected on his newfound desire to make his classroom into a community of interactive learners who saw value in the problem-solving process of other students.

Conclusion

During each coaching cycle experience, I was able to use the eight effective mathematics teaching practices to frame the pre-observation interactions, my observations, and the post-observation debriefing sessions. While observing Anderson and Paulson, I was able to make instructional recommendations based upon the effective mathematics teaching practices that fell in line with the research found within NCTM's Principles to Actions: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All. Since my participants and I agreed that the practices, as defined by NCTM, were beneficial to both the students and the teacher, we all experienced a positive collaborate environment throughout the semester. *LEJ*

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Making Meaning of God

By Mimi Larson

*Editor's Note: In 2014, Mimi Larson successfully defended her dissertation in early childhood education. Her empirical research was done in a preschool classroom of the Concordia Early Childhood Education Center. Her research has been presented at two national conferences: the National Association for the Education of Young Children in November 2015, and the Children's Spirituality Conference in June 2016. The following summary of her presentation at the Children's Spirituality Conference is a chapter in the forthcoming book of the Society for Children's Spirituality entitled *Story, Culture and Formation*, to be published by Wipf and Stock. The next conference of this Society will be the Children's Spirituality Summit, June 27–29, 2018, at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee. This conference explores children's faith development and spiritual formation from a Christian perspective. More information about the upcoming conference is available at www.childrengrowth.org.*

The Faith Experiences of Preschool Children

Part of being human is to make meaning of our experiences. We question why things happen. We seek to understand new ideas. We look for meaning in the stories we hear. Children are no different as they make meaning of the world they encounter. But their ability to make meaning comes through the common experiences of childhood. Through discovery and play, wonder and stories, reflection and language, young children are able to make meaning of their lives and experiences. Children are capable of creating understandings and form knowledge through language, stories, play, and relationships. This research aimed at understanding how these common experiences of childhood help young children engage and make meaning of faith. Is it possible for preschool children to engage in the biblical story and understand abstract spiritual ideas? We will discover that faith for young children is fostered through exploration and intentional experiences, all within a strong atmosphere of faith.

Exploring the Literature

Christian education has been highly influenced by developmental theorists. Piagetian theorists believe that basic theological concepts are difficult for a child to understand, for a child's religious development is intricately connected to their cognitive development. Within this train of thought, a young child does not have the cognitive ability to understand faith. These ideas, along with

the stage-based theory of cognitive development, have affected the church's understanding of moral development (see Fowler, 1981, and Kohlberg, 1984, for extended discussion).

John Westerhoff and Lev Vygotsky emphasized the importance of community and social experiences that form the context for children's understanding and learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Westerhoff, 2000). For Vygotsky, it is the social relationship with others, containing interaction, language, and thought that forms a foundation for an individual's learning (Court, 2010). Children are capable of knowing things before they can verbalize or articulate them. For Westerhoff, it is not the words that create a place for meaning and understanding for the child. Instead, it is the child's experiences, the experiences connected with words that truly matter for the child and his or her faith development. Faith "is an action which includes thinking, feeling and willing and it is transmitted, sustained and expanded through our interactions with other faithing selves in a community of faith" (Westerhoff, 2000, p. 89).

Spiritual stories can encourage a sacred space for children to wonder and awe, a natural quality that is nurtured and developed through exploration.

Traditionally, education is thought of as one person imparting knowledge to another person with the goal of producing a specific learning outcome in that individual. Westerhoff challenged that view, believing in an enculturation model that emphasizes "what one person has to bring to another and the dialogical relationship between equals" (Westerhoff,

2000, p. 80). This idea of interaction, not instruction, undergirds his theory of faith development. Faith requires the interaction between "faithing selves" in order to emerge, to make meaning, to expand and develop in character and content. This is a relational faith, and it is in the intersection between these experiences, these interactions, these sharings, where faith is nurtured and grows.

The Means of Making Meaning

Experiences provide the context for young children's ability to make meaning where they explore, play, discover, and wonder. They experience enormous growth in their physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development. Through language, stories, play, relationships, and experiences, young children are able to grasp information and create understanding.

Language is a means for children to express their understandings and is more than words. Language also encompasses actions, emotions, and attitudes

(Cavaletti, Coulter, Gobbi & Montanaro, 1994). Drawing is also a form of language (Cox, 2005). Since drawing is a communicative form of language and meaning-making (Tay-Lim & Lim, 2013), it is through their art where children are able to express their ideas and understandings (Chang, 2012; Pahl, 1999). This research contained a drawing activity following the biblical storytelling where children drew pictures and then engaged in a dialogical relationship where they were invited to share their understandings.

Play is a common childhood experience and it is through everyday lived experiences such as play where children make meaning. Play enables a child's ability to make meaning (Yust, 2004). Elkind (2007) contends that for early childhood, play is "the dominant and directing mode of learning" (p. 7). When children play, they have the opportunity to experience and try out new ideas which bear no consequences since it is only play (Eaude, 2005). Vygotsky (1978) asserts that in real life, action overrules meaning. Yet, it is in play where "action is subordinated to meaning" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 101). As children engage in play and make meaning through these experiences, they are equipped to integrate these new ideas into both their family and community life (Paradise & Rogoff, 2009).

Stories provide a narrative framework for children to interpret meaning (Hall, 2007). Robert Coles (1989) contends that storytelling provides a better and richer sense of ourselves and our experiences. He states: "Novels and stories are renderings of life; they cannot only keep us company, but admonish us, point us in new directions, or give us the courage to stay a given course. They can offer us kinsmen, kinswomen, comrades, advisers—offer us other eyes through which we might see, other ears with which we might make soundings" (Coles, 1989, p. 159–160). In terms of a child's spirituality, it is within stories and rituals where children are encouraged to explore, question, and wonder about spiritual and sacred understandings. Spiritual stories can encourage a sacred space for children to wonder and awe, a natural quality that is nurtured and developed through exploration.

Because of the connection between cognitive and social learning (Ainsworth, 1969; Rogoff, 1990), relationships contribute to a child's meaning making. "Children's spirituality involves living, exploring, and belonging by building close relationships with peers" (Harris, 2007, p. 271). Social relationships help children respond to and make sense of significant moments and nurture the inner realm of the child. Through the everyday tasks of living, parents, caretakers, and other significant adults can nurture this inner spirituality.

Implications of Making Meaning in Terms of a Child's Spirituality

Current research on children's spirituality rarely discusses early childhood

or preschool children, and little data are available on what meanings young children can actually make of their spiritual experiences. One reason for this might be the belief that faith and the verbal articulation of faith must be linked. This belief is disconcerting since it means that several populations may not be able to possess faith such as those with dementia, the intellectually disabled, and the young. Research shows that children are capable of being deeply spiritual (Stonehouse & May, 2010). They are capable of reflecting on spiritual questions (Gersch, Dowling, Panagiotaki & Potton, 2008). They are even able to make spiritual meanings (Lipscomb & Gersch, 2012).

The Present Study

With these understandings from the literature, this qualitative study explored how preschool children make meaning of their faith experiences. This study was set in a full-day preschool classroom in a Midwestern Christian early childhood center, and the purposeful and information-rich sampling contained a total of twenty-six three-, four-, and five-year-old children in which approximately fourteen to eighteen children participated in the research activity each day.

For four consecutive weeks, the children engaged in their regular Christian education time three times a week. The first experience was a storytelling experience where the teacher read a children's storybook based on a biblical story. The second experience utilized Young Children and Worship (Stewart & Berryman, 1989), a form of godly play storytelling that encourages children to engage the biblical story through words, questions, silence, movement, and wooden figures. While the third faith experience was not originally included in the research design, it emerged from the lead teacher's desire to continue exploring the week's biblical story and contained music, stories and dialogue between the teacher and children. The biblical stories chosen for this research included the story of the Good Shepherd (based on Ps 23), the Good Shepherd and the lost sheep (based on Psalm 23 and John 10), the Good Shepherd and the wolf (based on Psalm 23, John 10, and Matt 18), and Jesus and the little children (based on Matt 18, Mark 10, and Luke 18).

After the first and second experiences, children were encouraged to participate in a drawing activity, creating a meaningful picture from the story or an expression of what the story meant to them. Both the researcher and lead teacher were present at the table to ask questions of the children, encouraging their dialogue and expression of thoughts. Following the drawing, children were interviewed and asked to share their pictures and thoughts. The storybooks and story figures were available throughout the week for children to use and engage with.

In terms of data collection, observations were founded on the children's actions and behaviors, dialogue and questions, and non-verbal interactions. Similar to photo elicitation, the children's drawings were used to facilitate the interview questioning, gaining insight to the children's understandings and meaning-making. The discussions at the drawing table included a combination of group talk, self-talk, and specific dialogue between the adults and children.

Documents were also gathered and consisted of the children's drawings and weekly teacher reflective journals. Since children create meaning through a variety of means such as non-formalized play, informal conversations, and other behaviors, the teacher journals were utilized to capture any meaningful behaviors, dialogue, comments, or questions that occurred throughout the week from the children that related to the faith experiences.

Data were analyzed based on what Westerhoff (2000) describes as Experienced Faith where faith is experienced enactively and children have the freedom to explore, wonder, question, try, imagine, create, observe, copy, play, experience, and react. The eight individual coding categories were defined and any additional codes that emerged through further reading and analysis of the data were added. Further understanding regarding a child's demonstration of meaning-making was assessed based on language, actions and behaviors, and interaction with others.

How Children Make Meaning of God

Children approached meaning-making through a combination of verbal communication, play, story, art, and mirroring behaviors in which relationships were a critical link between engagement and articulation of understanding.

Meaning Making through Verbal and Non-Verbal Behaviors

In their faith experience, children utilized both verbal and non-verbal behaviors when making meaning of faith. For example, after hearing the story of Jesus and the children through the Young Children and Worship storytelling technique, a four-year-old girl mimicked the storyteller's movements as she walked the little children figures out of the city toward the Jesus figure, placing the disciple in between Jesus and the children. Looking at the story figures on the floor, she exclaimed: "Stop! Jesus is too busy for you!" She then picked up the Jesus figure and stated: "Let the little children come to me." Placing the disciple off to the side, she holds the Jesus figure in one hand, bringing the children one by one to Jesus, having him kiss each child.

Later, that morning, this same four-year-old demonstrated the combination of verbal and non-verbal behavior in her drawings and interview. While she was drawing, she non-verbally represented the story with the familiar characters of Jesus, the disciples, and the children. She drew quietly, stopping at one point

to verbally explain to herself, “I’m drawing another one because so there are two disciples.” In describing the picture to the interviewer, she stated: “It’s the disciples who said S-T-O-O-P...that means ‘stop’...Jesus is too busy for you!” When asked what she understood of Jesus, she shouted, “Let the little children come to me!” and shared that Jesus loves the children and kisses them on the cheek. This verbal description resembles the previous non-verbal behavior that occurred during play where she held Jesus and had him kiss the children.

This young girl demonstrated how young children are able to integrate and flow between the verbal and the nonverbal as they seek to make meaning and articulate understandings. Relationships also have an impact on the child’s verbal and non-verbal behaviors. A skilled teacher is able to draw out verbal explanations, helping children articulate the meanings and understandings. As educators, it is important for us to learn to listen to both children’s verbal and non-verbal behavior in order to understand how young children make meaning of their faith.

Meaning Making through Language and Images

As children spoke, they utilized various forms of language to articulate their faith, and these various forms of language reflect the creative and varied way children are able to make meaning. These forms of language include a descriptive and concrete language, a symbolic language, a theological language, a fairy tale or fantasy language, and a private or inner language.

Meaning Described with Descriptive and Concrete Language.

The children utilized descriptive and concrete language to express their understandings of faith. For example, when asked who the Good Shepherd is, a child replied: “That’s Jesus.” When the teacher explored by further asking “Who is Jesus?” the child, unable to articulate the connection between Jesus and the Good Shepherd, physically pointed to the Bible and said “that you’re reading” and then pointed to the wooden shepherd figure in her hand and stated: “Him.”

In an interview with a three-year-old child, she also used descriptive and concrete language when describing her picture with these words:

Girl: (pointing to a line on the side of her page) This is God.

Researcher: That’s God? And what is this?

Girl: Those are the sheep that go blah blah.

Researcher: They go blah blah?

Girl: Uh-huh. Blah blah.

Researcher: They what?

Girl: They look like babies that play?

Researcher: They look like babies that play? Does Jesus play with the sheep?

Girl: No. He only watches...

Researcher: He what...

Girl: He's big and his heart still beats because he is so big.

This three-year-old girl described the lambs as babies and Jesus as big with a heart that still beats. In drawings, she used images such as a vertical line to demonstrate God. These concrete and descriptive images express her understanding of the meanings she has ascribed to the biblical story and are rooted in her experience. Another child demonstrated this concrete and descriptive language when he explained that Jesus “cares for the sheep and eats breakfast with them every day.” This breakfast experience, one in which the child has partaken, was utilized to concretely describe his understanding of the caring relationship between Jesus as the Good Shepherd and the sheep. Just like children eat breakfast with their parents, the sheep eat breakfast with Jesus.

These concrete and descriptive images express her understanding of the meanings she has ascribed to the biblical story and are rooted in her experience.

Meaning Described with Symbolic Language.

The data also demonstrated the children's use of symbolic thought and language in describing meaning. They exhibited this by stating that we are all sheep, or as one child exclaimed “the lambs are us!” Whether by words or created drawings or objects, the young children used a symbol, such as a sheep, to form a representation of a real object or person, all of which aids their making meaning.

In particular, there was one five-year-old girl who demonstrated this interplay between the verbal and creative thinking. Upon hearing the story in the first week, she exclaimed that she understood who the sheep were in the story. During the second week, she spoke of “sheep-people” and in her drawings, called the sheep “people.” The third week, looking at a picture of Jesus with children, she shouted out “Look at all the sheep!” After being told that there were no sheep in that specific picture, she mimicked the picture and illustrated the people following Jesus as sheep who were following Jesus, the Good Shepherd. In the fourth week, she continued drawing pictures of sheep. When asked why she was drawing sheep since there no sheep in the biblical story for that day, she explained, “The sheep are the people.” When questioned what that might have to do with the story, she responded by stating: “The sheep are them, the people...kids.”

This interplay of symbolic and imaginative understanding was also

demonstrated in her drawings. When the story told of parents bringing their children to see Jesus, she drew a picture of grandma and grandpa sheep with a kid sheep at the feet of the shepherd, who she verbally described as Jesus. She continued to demonstrate her ability to make meaning through imaginative and symbolic thinking by describing Jesus leading his sheep to the door, initially described as a city, then clarified to be the sheepfold, and later identified as a church. On the last day of data collection, she created the story of the Good Shepherd out of clay. Engaging in symbolic language, she explained her creation, describing Jesus as the one who “takes care of the sheep.” Her symbolic meaning-making was captured even past the completion of formal research when she was able to expand this symbolic thinking to other biblical stories. When hearing the biblical parable of the prodigal son, the little girl “burst out” and exclaimed that the story was just “like the Good Shepherd!” She went on to explain that “the daddy was like the shepherd and he loved the son, even though he went and was lost, they still had a party.” This young child demonstrated the ability to make meaning of symbolic language within the biblical stories.

Meaning Described with Theological Language.

Whether it was a form of imitation or mirroring behavior, the young children also utilized a form of theological language to describe meanings of their experiences. Upon seeing an illustration of three crosses, a child described it as “the sign of the cross,” a phrase used in the classroom as well as in the church to describe a crossing motion that the children made to signify the cross of Jesus Christ. Children also utilized typical “Jesus” answers, in which a child quickly responds to any spiritual question by answering “Jesus.” The teacher or storyteller would ask additional questions to push past the surface “Jesus” answer, which would engage the children in deeper thought and understanding.

For the children, theological language was simple and concrete, yet it demonstrated significant meaning-making. For example, a four-year-old girl simply described salvation and Jesus as the “door to heaven.” She expanded this meaning by illustrating Jesus with sheep following him to heaven. While her simple description might have mirrored or replicated a phrase both seen and heard in an earlier story, she explained that “Jesus is leading...is leading the sheep home” where Jesus is opening the door to heaven and the sheep willingly follow Jesus because he knows their names.

Meaning Described with Fairy Tale and Fantasy Language.

In understanding their experiences, preschool children utilized what could be described as a fairy tale or fantasy language to express meanings. They described the protagonist in the story (in this case, the Good Shepherd) as “the

good guy” and antagonists (the thief or the disciples) as the “bad guys.” They described the disciples as mean and the wolf as harmful. They talked about the Good Shepherd who saves and of the sheepfold as being safe. They knew there were scary and dark places in which the Good Shepherd would rescue the lost sheep.

In the play activity, children utilized this language as well to demonstrate meaning making. As a three-year-old boy played with the wooden figures, he made Jesus the hero whose adversaries in the story were the disciples. He described the Jerusalem city as “the church” and placed Jesus “at the top of the church.” With the children looking up to Jesus, he said, “they are learning about God” while singing to himself “The B-I-B-L-E” song. Later, he has the disciple figures trying to enter the church (Jerusalem city) and placed Jesus in their way. As he attempts to have the disciples knock Jesus down, he did not let Jesus fall. Holding Jesus to face the disciples, he said: “You are not the boss of me,” and then brings the protected children figures to the hero Jesus, quietly whispering, “thank you.” He then proclaimed to himself: “Jesus loves the children.”

Meaning Described with Private or Inner Language.

Private speech is a process where children talk to themselves, describing their actions, asking themselves questions, or repeating phrases, attempting to utilize language “as an instrument of thought” (Frauenglass & Diaz, 1985, p. 357). In this research, children demonstrated the use of private or inner speech usually during an authentic and personal activity such as drawing pictures or playing with wooden figures. As mentioned earlier, the three-year-old boy and four-year-old girl talked to themselves while playing with the wooden figures. This is a demonstration of private speech. During drawing time, a little boy drew a picture of Jesus welcoming the children and the disciples trying to stop them. While drawing, he kept repeating to himself, “little children come to me.” Another boy drew a picture of Jesus with people, telling himself: “Remember...remember Jesus died on Easter.”

Children demonstrated various different types of language and images to express their faith understandings. As educators, we must remember these various ways of articulation, and while there are similarities, each child is different. It is important to learn each child’s unique and personal faith language in order to understand what meanings they are attributing to the biblical story.

Meaning Making through Storytelling

The way a story is told matters. In this research, children engaged in a variety of storytelling activities, each unique in presentation and style. Different types of storytelling encouraged different ways that children could make meaning.

The Importance of Exploration.

Meaning-making was demonstrated through exploration in both the Young Children and Worship activity as well as the teacher-led activity. Children led the meaningful exploration, usually, by asking questions as they searched for further understandings. Sometimes, the adult (either the lead teacher or storyteller) was needed to encourage deeper exploration by asking clarifying questions and challenging children to better articulate their understanding, making connections with prior understandings.

The Importance of Relationships.

While different in style, each of the storytelling activities incorporated relational interactions, and these relationships were important to a child's meaning-making ability. Children were more responsive in the storybook and teacher-led activity, dependent on the teacher's initiation of the discussion and questions. This style of interaction exposed a separation between the adult and child where the adult was more learned and the children were recipients of that knowledge. In order for the children to make meaning, the adult was needed to scaffold them to higher understandings. The Young Children and Worship activity exhibited a different type of interaction—a more relational and participatory experience. Here, there was cooperation between the adult and child where they participated as co-learners, exploring individual understandings that were then shared in a collaborative meaning-making process. In each of these situations, the meaning-making process was based within relationships, where learning is a co-constructive process involving both child and teacher (Bodrova & Leong, 1996).

The Importance of Repetition.

The repetition of the stories facilitated the children's ability to make meaning. The children demonstrated deeper understandings as the story was told in different ways. It was the repetition of the story that provided the space for children to engage with, make associations within, and ultimately demonstrate deeper meaning and understandings about the story. On the first day, children experienced the story for the first time, making observations and asking clarifying questions. As the children continued with the story throughout the week, their engagement deepened and language improved. Children began to state deeper associations in comparison to the earlier descriptive observations, and their questions prompted deeper discussions and explorations. Westerhoff (2000) described a similar process when discussing how children learn: Children learn first through experience, then by imaging and stories, followed by use of signs such as conceptual language. The data here demonstrated this movement from experience to story to language.

The Childlike Ways of Meaning Making

In order to understand how children make meaning, adults must pay close attention or risk overlooking a serious and purposeful activity. While this appears to be child's play, young children are engaging in a serious activity of meaning making that occurs through play, reading a storybook, drawing, or mimicking behavior—all activities that appear to be childish and inconsequential. Yet, it is here that children engage in a serious activity that helps them understand what they have experienced.

This research demonstrated that for children, meaning making is an integrative process. Young children combine verbal and non-verbal behavior and utilize a variety of language and images. Activity, including repetitive activity, facilitates their ability to personally respond, react, and make meaning of the biblical story. In this study, children played with the story figures, drew pictures, and dialogued with others to make meaning of what they experienced. And it is here, in these multiple means of knowing, where children wrestled with faith and theological understandings.

How does this, then, impact our work with young children in the church? Educators can shape an atmosphere for spiritual meaning-making by creating intentional experiences for children to engage in. Through a variety of different and repetitive activities, children can explore, engage, and express their faith in their own unique ways. These experiences engage emotions as well as cognitive facilities where children can respond both physically and intellectually. Nestled within relationships with adults and other children, young children have the ability to engage with biblical story in a holistic and integrative manner. For those who pay careful attention, they are privileged to view a young child's faith develop through a mosaic of meaningful channels. *LEJ*

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God's Story; Our Story: Woven Together by God's Gift of Language

Have you ever stopped to think about the awesome gift we have as God's children in our ability to express ourselves both orally and through the written word: our gift of language? Language is what we use to tell our stories. Language is the reason that we are able to understand God's work in our life. Language is the vehicle by which we think, learn about the world in which we live, communicate with each other and above all share the tremendous story of God's redeeming work for our salvation.

When you think about the incredible process that happens in our brains as we acquire and then use language to interact with the world, it becomes clear that our ability to use language is so amazing that we can't even begin to understand how it all happens. Yet it is through language (the Word) that God comes to us and establishes a relationship, a covenant that leads to our salvation. He takes His story and folds our story into His arms and comforts us with His joy and peace. And all this happens because we have language. We are the only creatures of God that have this wonderful ability to understand how God works in our lives. Could it be that being made in the image of God is actually tied to our gift of language?

As a literacy educator, I am involved in preparing teachers to be nurturers and stewards of this gift of language given to the students in our care. As a strong advocate of using children's literature as a curriculum tool, I can't help but see how the stories we tell, read, and write are the means by which children learn to read, to write, to listen, and to speak effectively. It is our mission in the Lutheran school to help our students see that language and literacy are the most powerful tools we have to live as God's disciples in all aspects of our lives. *LEJ*

With every Person Comes a Story

Every late afternoon, before I begin my class I attempt to think about how my feelings may affect my teaching. If I feel frustrated or overwhelmed when I arrive to the class I make sure that I give myself three minutes to acknowledge these feelings. Yes, colleagues and friends, it is true...even professors in the field of counseling and psychology have their days. Thus, I take a deep breath and make a plan for managing these emotions so that I can fully engage with my students. I make sure to ask myself the intention behind my questions and activities as we move through the material, a skill learned in my clinical training when working with clients during therapy and just as valuable. I make sure to greet my students as they walk through the classroom door and make sure to ask everyone how they are doing and feeling before beginning class. I do my best to acknowledge and empathize with everyone's feelings and stories that they share, and when applicable I will give a general explanation of my own feelings, "Yup, today is bit of a rough day, but I'll get through it" or "Lot's going on today, but it's time to make future leaders." While this serves as a method to acknowledge my feelings, I want to model for my students emotional regulation and self-reflection. Both of these are critical in the development of future counselors, but also what our faculty have prided themselves on when working with these future leaders in the field. In essence, we are helping to develop social and emotional skills in adults.

Now, while we are lucky enough to have a vast amount of students that have a solid foundation of emotional intelligence, the development of these skills can prove to be a complex process. For starters, let's understand what Emotional Intelligence (EI) is. According to Goleman (1995), who was among one of the first to popularize the term EI as he claimed it, "can be as powerful, and at times more powerful, than I.Q." While there are a number of various definitions of EI within psychological literature, the gist of the concept is the ability for an individual to identify, regulate, and manage emotions in the self and in others (Goleman 1995; Salovey & Mayer 1990; Sutton & Wheatly, 2003). Therefore, increased ability of this type of intelligence allows individuals to not only have positive

interactions with others, but, to some degree, also have the capacity to better predict others' thoughts and feelings, and to engage in appropriate levels of empathy. Research also indicates that there are strong correlations with career and academic success (Garner, 2010). Other research indicates that higher levels of emotional intelligence are associated with other positive outcomes, such as physical and mental health (Goleman, 1995; Malecki & Elliot, 2002). How is this possible you ask? Simple, because it is likely that emotionally intelligent individuals earn the trust of their superiors, make colleagues feel valued, and have the potential to attract admirers wherever they may go in their careers and life (Singh, 2003). Yet, it is not so simple when one considers that many of us were not taught these skills as children. Not to mention, that many have not understood the possibility or in some disciplines, the need to cultivate them. Hence, my earlier point in regard to helping students develop these skills. Therefore, outside of having an opportunity to have socially and emotionally competent parents, guardians or teachers in your communities as you forged ahead in your life, our specific training in all things social-emotional are at best...zilch.

So let's imagine the possibility of learning these skills at a young age. What would be the value in developing EI? The literature on EI first points to Howard Gardener (1983) who views intelligence broadly. His landmark book on the *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* found a growing group of researchers expanding on his ideas such as Salovey and Mayer who introduced the concept of emotional intelligence in the early 1990's (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004; Mayer et al., 2001). According to Goleman (1995) EI can be separated into five domains: a) Knowing one's emotions: self-awareness recognizing a feeling as it happens; b) Managing emotions: handling feelings appropriately; c) Motivating oneself: emotional self-control delaying gratification and stifling impulsiveness; d) Recognizing emotions in others: empathy—the fundamental “people skill;” and e) Handling relationships: the skill of managing emotions in others.

Essentially, the combination of these abilities will assist in fostering self-esteem, leadership and social emotional development (Goleman, 1995; Richburg & Fletcher, 2002). Learning and mastering these abilities is a goal that we, as educators, strive to teach our students. While the verdict is still out on the best approach to an emotional intelligence curriculum (Sutton & Wheatly, 2003), it is apparent that teachers still lack training to promote emotional competence in children and their own emotional management (Denham, Basset, & Zinsser, 2012). Despite this issue, the research indicates that development of these skills is imperative not only for professional and personal well-being of students and educators, but also how it enhances student

learning (Hyson, 2002; Sutton & Wheatly, 2003).

We know that with every child or student comes a story and understanding what makes our students “tick” emotionally can be important in helping with individual learning as well. To be effective as educators, we need not only to achieve rapport, we need to be empathic, to be in control of our emotions in order to model leadership. Let’s go make future leaders. *LEJ*

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The Ecology of Ministry: Beyond Shepherds and Shepherding

Our understanding of shepherding as service to others is foundational for our understanding of ministry. Jesus Christ is referred to in both Old and New Testaments as shepherd—a model shepherd for us to emulate. He is the Good Shepherd, one who cares for the flock of God’s people. We, too, are exhorted to be shepherds of the flock. Jesus told the disciples, and especially Peter, to be shepherds of the flock—the Church—of God.

The analogy of shepherding may have been more helpful to the people of Jesus’ day than to us, however. They had real and everyday experiences with sheep and with shepherds. They knew in real, not abstract, ways that Jesus was telling them to be consumingly concerned with the welfare of those in their care.

They knew that He was telling them to lead gently and lovingly, never harshly. They knew that He was telling them to protect their “flocks” from danger, especially from dangers of which they were not aware. They knew that He was telling them to find wholesome and nourishing food, and to feed their flocks in safe and protected environments. They knew that they were to walk with their flocks, supporting them in their life journeys much as a shepherd stays with and walks with his sheep.

Let’s review for a moment some of the key passages of Scripture where our concepts of shepherds and shepherding are built. One of the major passages is Psalm 23. The entire psalm uses the shepherd metaphor of the Lord as the model for caring. This metaphor is made considerably stronger by the fact that Jesus refers to Himself in John 10 as the Good Shepherd. Isaiah, too, refers to Christ as one who tends His flock like a shepherd, who carries the lambs in His arms.

Both Peter and Paul, then, take the metaphor to the next step. They specifically exhort the other disciples and church leaders to model their ministries after that of the Good Shepherd. Paul encourages us to “be shepherds of the Church of God” (Acts 20:28). Peter more specifically entreats us to “be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care” (1 Peter 5:2).

The picture in each of these passages is one of peace, care, compliance, safety, and concern. The concept includes quiet, time for reflection, with calm and competent leadership.

Shepherds protect. They are ecological preservationists. They resist and protect from change in the land scape, for change in the landscape could mean danger to the sheep. Shepherds look for calm... for peaceful meadows, for refreshing and quiet streams.

But this is not always possible! Life isn't always peaceful. The human flock isn't always as compliant as the wool bearing variety. Busy-ness replaces time for reflection. Keeping the sheep safe is sometimes a thankless, hopeless task!

There are problems and pitfalls in the shepherding mindset. There are situations and opportunities where shepherding is not the answer. Sometimes we challenge rather than protect. Sometimes we run ahead rather than walk beside. Sometimes we prick and stir up rather than preserve and calm. Simply put, there are times when a different analogy might be useful. *LEJ*

This column is an excerpt of a monograph Dr. Morgenthaler produced for the Lutheran Education Association in 1992. The full monograph can be found at <http://www.lea.org/Portals/10/Monographs/BeyonShepMorgenthaler.pdf>.

“My Dust Is Safe”

As I write this the Lenten season has begun. Here at Concordia University Chicago, our community gathered for Ash Wednesday just as we do every year. And once again I placed ashes upon the foreheads of young people who are filled with promise and hope for the future. But then I spoke these words to each of them, “Remember that you are dust and to dust you must return.” I have to admit that I had to fight back a tear or two as I spoke these very true words. Wherever God leads them in their vocations they, like every generation, will someday return to dust. Of course, that is not the end of the story.

This has caused me to reflect upon the vital mission of Lutheran education. This edition of *Lutheran Education Journal* speaks to multiple aspects of our vocation of bringing Lutheran faith-based education to a world in need. That need has always existed but it seems to me to be more acutely obvious in this strife-filled world of 2018. As I reflect back on my own 34 years of ministry, the context of Lutheran education has changed radically. But I know that you already are more than aware of this. You live it daily.

I do not know what the future holds for any of us, at least in terms of our existence on this side of heaven. When I began my ministry in 1984, I would never have imagined the dangerous world of students in 2018. None of us saw 9/11 coming and the on-going war on terrorism both overseas and in threats to our own land. Who would have foreseen the violence of mass murder even in schools where children are supposed to be safe to learn and grow? Or who would have known that today’s students would be positioned to hear of God’s beautiful plan for marriage as a life-long union of one man and one woman being contradicted and undermined by the culture’s promotion of sexual expressions that reject what it means to be a human created by God?

I could name other changes, as could you. But each of them is both a challenge and an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the mission we serve. There is a reality far greater than that which fills the daily news and the worries we might all have. Each student is a unique creation of God who is so

loved by their Creator that He gave His only Son that he or she would be His forever. Yes, they are dust just as my generation is dust and as were earlier generations who have already returned to dust. Adam was formed from dust and we, the children of Adam, share his mortality that came with sin.

Even the most ardent secularist cannot deny human mortality. And this is precisely where Lutheran education separates itself from all others. Ours is not an education that leads to hopelessness, fear and separation from God and our fellow human beings. Ours is an education that is rooted in, and breathes out the greatest reality— God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to Himself. Lent takes us on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. But Lent does not finally leave us at a place of death. It leads us to Easter and the great news that Jesus is not among the dead but alive.

And so we are centered in a reality that promises more than returning to the dust. In Baptism, Jesus' death and Resurrection becomes ours. The dust to which we must return is not the end of the story. He has already brought us from death to life eternal. And no fear, no worry and no power of sin, death or Satan can take that away. An 18th century ancestor of mine is buried in New Jersey. A lengthy inscription on his tombstone concludes with this beautiful confession:

My dust is safe
My soul at home
To meet with joy
When Christ shall come.

May our Lord bless our work in proclaiming the blessed Savior. *LEJ*