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In this issue of the *Lutheran Education Journal* we remember former Editorial Assistant Jo Ann P. F. Kiefer. Mrs. Kiefer served as the Editorial Assistant for the *Lutheran Education Journal* from 1989 – 2005. She entered her heavenly home on October 11, 2018.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 8:38-39

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The Enterprise of Learning

Welcome to the Enterprise! Otherwise known as the *Lutheran Education Journal*. With this issue we are beginning our one-hundred-fifty-fifth year of continuous publication. This is something to celebrate! One-hundred-fifty-five years of educating teachers for Lutheran schools. One-hundred-fifty-five years of writing about education and about teacher education, all from a Lutheran perspective. Something more to celebrate. And, comparing ourselves to other academic-education publications across the country, we are the oldest and longest continuously-published education journal of them all. That is truly something to celebrate! And, as this Enterprise of Learning, we continue our mission of bringing you intelligent and knowledgeable articles, thoughtful columns, and timely book reviews written, for the most part, by our very own faculty. Now that's an enterprise!

With this opening issue of the 155th volume of the *Lutheran Education Journal*, we are pleased to present a new look. Our own Tracy Vasquez, Senior Graphic Designer, has designed this cover to communicate who we are and where this Enterprise of Learning is going.

Thinking about learning as an enterprise puts most of us into thinking about all of the for-profit ventures springing up in the field of education. There have always been educational entities that have served children and adults through a process of tuition. These include colleges, universities, preschools, childcare centers, as well as parochial and private schools serving elementary- and secondary-school students. In the past quarter-century, there have also been ventures such as school vouchers and charter schools that have challenged the concept of schooling as not-for-profit. In addition, there are tutoring centers and a variety of college-level courses and whole degree programs that are clearly for-profit ventures.

All of the above forms and practices in education are of interest to and the concern of the faculty of Concordia University Chicago. Some of them are our direct competitors. Others serve the children for whom our students are preparing their vocations.

The authors of the articles, book reviews and columns found in this issue are all concerned with the enterprise of learning. How is it best fostered? What do schools need in order to thrive? What do students, especially young students, need in order to learn and to thrive?

Both Annette VanAken and Marlene Meisels study novel ways to help young children learn to read and to, in the process, to become consumers of learning. Joy Mullaney and her colleagues have analyzed the factors that must be present for Lutheran schools to be able to survive and thrive. I am coming to believe that those same factors must be present for congregations to survive and thrive. Andrea Dinero and Carolyn Theard-Griggs propose strategies that will support the education of the whole child and of all children in all of our classrooms. Columnists Michele Gnan, Bogusia Ryndak-Mazur, Samantha Lazich, and Jamie Kowalczyk all discuss issues of learning in and around the classroom. Peter Pohlhammer's Words for Thought discuss learning from yet another lens.

Elizabeth Owolabi presents evidence of the strategies that will positively affect student retention at Concordia University Chicago. It is critical that we study her findings carefully with an eye toward adoption and implementation. These strategies should also be carefully studied by our sister institutions for adoption and implementation. In the same way, Lutheran high schools may find these proposed strategies useful and successful.

Youngmei Song and Margaret Trybus give us a picture of yet a different learner, the Chinese professor studying at Concordia University Chicago. The perceptions of these university graduate students are useful for our continuing work with international students in China and across the globe.

And, if this were not enough, we also have two book reviews for your consideration. Kurt Stadtwald and Ardelle Pate have given us a taste of each of the books they reviewed for our consideration. Don't miss their recommendations.

We are all in the learning business. From the literacy learning of early learners to graduate students/professors from China studying with us, we are focused on learning and on teaching. On education. This is, after all, the Lutheran Education Journal. As we begin the 155th year of continuous publication, we celebrate our focus on learning and on our support of Lutheran schools across the world. **LEJ**

Effect of E-books on Reading Level, Reading Behaviors and Attitudes of Second Grade Students

By Annette VanAken

Teaching reading is a primary focus for elementary educators and administrators. A foundational skill for school-based learning, reading is critical to future academic and vocational opportunities (Lesnick, Gorerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010). Yet, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NEAP) report, sixty-six percent of fourth graders in the United States are reading below a proficient level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Educational efforts have been made to address this issue as research has indicated that students reading below grade level in third grade continue to struggle throughout their academic activities (Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996) and are more likely to be unemployed or earn incomes below the poverty level than students reading at or above grade level (Kutner, Greensberg, Boyle, Hsu, & Dunleavy, 2007). Recognizing the need to increase reading levels and to reduce the achievement gap by end of third grade, the United States Department of Education adopted the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) revised in 2015 as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to guide educators. An additional critical component of these laws for educators is the Enhancing Education Through Technology Act of 2001 (EETT), designed to assist every student in becoming technology literate by the end of eighth grade (Enhancing Education Through Technology Act of 2001, 2002).

Long-term effects of reading ability outcomes and policies requiring technology integration have increased the purchase of technology tools such as mobile devices in the K-12 school systems (Gray, Thomas, & Lewis, 2010). However, evidence indicating the effectiveness of reading on mobile devices in different instructional reading environments is needed. In the 2012 Horizon report, Johnson, Adams, and Cummins (2012) suggested tablets as an alternative learning format to print materials for K-12 institutions and described them as ideal devices for learning because of their portability, display, and touch screens. In particular, Johnson, Smith, Willis, Levine, and Heywood (2011) projected widespread e-book adoption within one year or less due to the increased access to mobile devices, suggesting the potential of e-books to transform the reading

experience. As adoption of e-books read on personal hand-held devices increases in PreK–12 classrooms, examining how this reading format affects the learners' reading levels, reading attitudes, and reading behaviors in different instructional reading environments is imperative. As reading acquisition is not an innate ability but a complex learned process (Dehaene & Cohen, 2007), researchers and educators search to discover the most effective reading practices and tools to teach reading.

Theoretical Basis of this Study

The theoretical bases for this research examining reading levels, reading attitudes, and reading behavior are the perspectives of cognitive-load theory and social-cognitive theory. These two theoretical perspectives provide support for technology to support literacy development, particularly through the use of e-books on hand-held devices. More specifically, e-books on hand-held devices may support (a) cognitive-load reading level, (b) reading attitudes, and (c) reading behaviors.

Cognitive load theorists have posited that human cognitive architecture consists of a limited working memory that interacts with a comparatively unlimited long-term memory (Leahy & Sweller, 2011; Paas, Tuovinen, Tabbers, & Van Gerven, 2003; Sweller, 1988, 2011). On its own, working memory has serious capacity and duration limits that allow for the processing of minor cognitive activities; however, these limitations are eliminated when working memory interacts with cognitive schemata (Paas & Sweller, 2012). Depending on the schemata of the readers, material that is complex for one individual may be simple for another (Sweller, 2010b). When extraneous cognitive load exceeds working-memory capacity, meaning breaks down for the reader (Sweller, 2010b). The opportunity to build fluency through highlighting phrases and individual words, in alignment with Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD, may provide the reader with the means to co-construct meaning through interaction with the materials, thus supporting the development of the reader's schemata. Likewise, it is possible that the features of e-books presented within the learner's ZPD may serve to scaffold learning to support the readers' actual developmental level and their potential developmental levels (Abdullah, Hussin, Asra & Zakaria, 2013). These assistive features do not exist in traditional books, leaving the reader to access assistance from another individual or to move on without support.

Social-cognitive theory and Bandura's (1986, 1999) emphasis on triadic reciprocal determinism are the theoretical bases for examining reading attitude and behavior in this study. Bandura (1986, 1999) posited both that the environment influences thoughts and behaviors, and that thoughts and behaviors affect the environment. Attitudinal and behavioral changes are best accomplished through

conditional changes fostering the desired behaviors (Bandura, 1986). Utilizing mobile devices affords a personal and authentic learning and a behavioral experience for the learner different from the traditional learning environment (Shapley, Sheehan, Maloney, & Caranikas-Walker, 2010). Thus, the readers' attitudes may be influenced by the readers' behavioral changes from the e-book instructional reading environment. E-books on personal devices have the potential to provide a private, individualized reading experience influencing the reader's willingness to spend time reading. This change in reading behavior can lead to increased comprehension, potentially influencing the readers' attitudes toward reading.

E-books have the potential to influence learning outcomes. However, before educators begin to use e-books for reading instruction in K–12 classrooms, more evidence regarding their effect on reading level, behaviors, and attitude is necessary.

Significance of the Study

The current research represents a study essential for future adoption of e-books for reading instruction in the elementary classroom. Mandates from NCLB, ESSA, and the Enhancing Education Through Technology Act of 2001 (2002) have elementary educators and researchers interested in the integration of technology to enhance instruction. To meet the mandate to integrate technology, educators have included e-books to support reading, although research indicating e-books' effectiveness at different levels of literacy development is lacking. Particularly important to this study is the presentation of e-books on hand-held devices offering a new instructional reading environment for students. As literacy experiences prior to third grade are critical to the learners' future academic success, the widespread use of e-books as an instructional tool is dangerous without guidance gleaned from research results.

This research adds to the current knowledge base as the instructional reading environment of e-books on hand-held devices is largely absent from past research. Studies on the effect of e-books on early literacy skills have focused on stationary computer e-book encounters (Doty, Popplewell, & Byers, 2001; Korat & Shamir, 2012). As school systems and educators move toward the use of more technology in their pedagogy, this study contributes to knowledge regarding e-book implementation. To date most research utilizing e-books has focused on beginning, emergent-literacy reading skills and comprehension (de Jong & Bus, 2002; Korat, Segal-Drori, & Klien, 2009; Korat & Shamir, 2008). Segal-Drori, Korat, Shamir, and Klein (2010) have recommended expanding studies to second graders at different levels of literacy acquisition with adult support. This research provides information addressing a gap in the literature by using second-grade readers with transitional reading skills as the target population.

Determining the effect of e-books on reading attitudes contributes information to the gap in the literature. Several authors have suggested that attitudes toward reading affect the readers' academic performances through their influence on reading behaviors (Allen, Cipielewski, & Stanovich, 1992; Askov & Fischbach, 1973; Kaniuka, 2010; Martinez, Aricak, & Jewell, 2008). This study addressed the need to explore the inconsistent findings about the correlation of reading attitude to reading behaviors (Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999; Kush,, Watkins, & Brookhart, 2005; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997), while expanding knowledge about reading attitudes to the digital environment. Furthermore, connections to pedagogical practices regarding learner choice might be increased if research can shed some light on the influence that e-book access in the classroom has on reading attitude and behavior.

Research Questions

- R1: Does a statistically significant difference exist in reading level scores among the instructional reading environments?
- Use of e-books only in both instruction and practice?
 - Use of e-books during instruction, with a choice of e-books and traditional books during practice?
 - Use of traditional books during instruction, with a choice of e-books and traditional books during practice?
 - Use of traditional books only in both instruction and practice while controlling for pretest scores?
- R2: Does a statistically significant difference exist in reading attitude scores among the instructional reading environments, while controlling for pretest scores?
- R3: Does a statistically significant difference exist in reading behavior among conditions based on the medium in which second grade readers receive reading instruction, and read independently and for practice as related to the four reading environments?

Method

A quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest, non-equivalent control group study was utilized to determine if a statistically significant difference exists in independent reading levels when using e-books versus traditional books utilizing the perspective of cognitive-load theory. Additionally a quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest, non-equivalent control group study was used to determine if a statistically significant difference in reading attitude when using e-books versus traditional books using the perspective of social cognitive theory. The purpose of the post-test only, non-equivalent control group study was to determine if

a statistically significant difference exists in reading behaviors when utilizing e-books versus traditional books from the perspective of social-cognitive theory.

Intact classes were used for this study. Prior to the start of the school year, teachers and administrators worked together to place students in classrooms that balanced academic achievement levels, discipline issues, and other special needs. The goal of the placement process was to establish homogeneous classrooms with equal numbers of high, middle, and low achieving students in each classroom. Because these classrooms were organized in such a deliberate manner, randomization of students was not possible as is common in educational research conducted in classroom settings (Kraska, 2010). Thus, the quasi-experimental design was convenient and not disruptive to the educational setting. Although random assignment was not possible in the educational setting, the design employed in this study was acceptable (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

Variables and Instrumentation

The independent variable, instructional reading environment, is operationally defined as use of the e-book or traditional print book format. For the purpose of this study, e-books were defined as online, multimedia storybooks with audio narration, animation, and highlighted text features (Roskos, Brueck, & Widman, 2009) and check-for-understanding questions. Four instructional reading environments were used: (a) e-books only-used during small group instruction and independent practice, (b) e-books and traditional books-e-books used during small group instruction, e-books and traditional books during independent classroom practice, (c) e-books and traditional books- traditional books used during small group instruction, e-books and traditional books during independent classroom practice, and (d) traditional books only-used during small group reading instruction and independent reading practice. The leveled e-books used for this study were books accessed through the Raz-Kids website (<http://www.raz-kids.com/>). This online website allowed students access to book titles at their independent reading level. For the purpose of this study, traditional books were defined as leveled paper-format books.

The dependent variable for research-question one was reading level as measured by the DRA2 (Beaver & Carter, 2010). The DRA2 is designed to analyze a student's reading accuracy, comprehension level, and oral reading fluency yielding an independent reading level in grades K-8 (Beaver & Carter, 2010). The DRA2 assessment books are traditional print-format books. Each book is leveled based on the following criteria: (a) inclusion of repetitive language, (b) story structure, (c) literary features, (d) story appeal, concepts, vocabulary, and common experiences of primary students, (e) picture support level, and (f) text size, layout, line and words per page (Beaver & Carter, 2009).

The basic format of the assessment includes four steps: (a) the teacher introduces the text, (b) the student reads the first two to four paragraphs aloud while the teacher records word miscues and records reading time, (c) the student reads the remaining text silently, and (d) the student retells the story or shares story information with the teacher (Beaver & Carter, 2010). Reading level was operationally defined as the combined score of reading accuracy, comprehension, and ORF components of the DRA2. These DRA2 scores were combined to formulate the individual reader's independent reading level. DRA2 is used to “(a) assess reading engagement, oral reading fluency, and comprehension, (b) identify reading strengths and weaknesses, (c) determine students' reading levels, (d) inform reading instruction, (e) monitor progress in reading, and (f) aid in planning reading interventions” (Beaver & Carter, 2010, p. 182). For this study, independent reading level was assessed by combining accuracy, comprehension, and oral-reading fluency scores. The DRA2 served as the pretest and posttest. The DRA2 pretest served as the covariate and was statistically controlled in the analysis for the research question one.

The dependent variable for research-question two was reading attitude as measured by the ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990). The assessment was standardized, based on a sample of first through sixth grade students, therefore a valid assessment tool for second grade students (Worrell, Roth, & Gabelko, 2007). The ERAS is a teacher-administered survey developed to assess student's recreational and academic reading attitudes (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Attitudes toward reading were chosen as a key factor in this study. Researchers have shown that attitudes develop over time, tending to be more positive in younger children, become less positive with age, and are related to the level of reading competency (McKenna et al., 1995). The ERAS consists of 20 statements assessing two components of reading attitude, (a) recreational reading and (b) academic reading (McKenna & Kear, 1990). The recreational-reading construct focused on reading outside the school setting. The academic-reading construct focused on reading in the school setting (McKenna & Kear, 1990). The ERAS served as the pre and posttest. The ERAS pretest served as the covariate and was statistically controlled for in the analysis for the research-question two.

The dependent variable for research-question three was student reading behaviors. Reading behaviors were measured by minutes engaged in reading documented on personal reading logs used in the classroom. Similar to research reported by Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988), student independent reading was recorded utilizing self-report reading logs recording the number of minutes read each day as well as the book title and author's name. To better assess time spent reading for pleasure, reading logs distinguished between assigned reading

books and books read by choice (Taylor, Frye & Maruyama, 1990). Daily log entries were tabulated and calculated by two means: mean number of minutes read for practice in school and mean number of minutes for assigned reading in school. Using these data, the researcher was able to look at relationships between assigned and practice reading. Teachers daily reviewed classroom reading logs. By signing the reading logs each day, teachers verified that participants engaged in reading for the time recorded. Total number of minutes read for each participant was analyzed to assess the relationship to reading attitudes and instructional reading environments.

Demographics and Sampling

The participants for the study were recruited from second-grade classrooms from a rural, Title 1 elementary school. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), the school's enrollment in pre-school through second grade was approximately 389 students. In this Title-I-school's population, approximately 67% of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunches, which was 19% higher than reported by the state of Michigan (VanOrman, 2013). The school population's ethnic diversity consisted of 94% Caucasian students with a Caucasian population of 96 % in the second grade; Hispanic students accounted for 3% of the student population, with 2% of the second-grade students being Hispanic, African American students accounted for 3% of the student population, with 2% of second graders being African American.

Summary of Results

An ANCOVA was used to test the null hypothesis for research question #1: Does a statistically-significant difference exist in reading level scores among the instructional reading environments, i.e., (a) *e-books only in both instruction and practice*, (b) *e-books during instruction with a choice of e-books and traditional books during practice*, (c) *traditional books during instruction with a choice of e-books and traditional books during practice*, and (d) *traditional books only in both instruction and practice while controlling for pretest scores*? Results indicated that a statistically-significant difference in reading level among the instructional-reading environments did exist. More specifically, results indicated that a statistically significant difference existed between two of the intervention groups. Second grade participants in the *e-books during instruction with a choice of e-books and traditional books during practice* treatment group (group b), displayed significantly higher reading levels when compared to second grade participants in the *traditional books only* (group d) control group. Statistically significance differences were not indicated at a $p > 0.0125$ among the three treatment groups. While the Bonferroni test has been traditionally used to control for family-wide error as it is straightforward, it is important to

note that the Bonferroni test is considered to be overly conservative by many researchers (Rice, 1989). Results provided statistical evidence to support the inclusion of e-books for reading instruction to improve reading level in this study's research sample. Although the results did not provide statistical support for all instructional reading environments, results indicated that treatment groups' reading levels were not adversely affected when compared to the control group. This study did not investigate physical environment, teacher-student relationship, or e-book features that participants utilized during instruction and practice. As past researchers suggested, e-book features can scaffold reading, thus support comprehension (Doty et al., 2001; Korat & Shamir, 2012; Matthew, 1996; Pearman, 2008). The physical environment and teacher-student relationship may have contributed to the non-significant results. The physical environment of each classroom varied in size and organization, possibly influencing the ease with which the reading devices were retrieved. In addition, differences in teacher-student interactions were observed that may have influenced the students' levels of engagement.

An ANCOVA was used to test the null hypothesis for research question #2: Does a statistically-significant difference exist in reading attitude scores among the instructional reading environments while controlling for pretest scores? Results indicated that a statistically-significant difference existed in reading attitude scores based on instructional reading environment. Participants in the *e-books during instruction with a choice of e-books and traditional books during practice instructional reading environment* (group b) had significantly lower reading-attitudes scores than participants in the *traditional books during instruction with a choice of e-books and the traditional only during instruction and practice* (group c) instructional reading environments. The results did not indicate that all treatment groups showed statistical support for the use of e-books in instructional reading environments to enhance reading attitudes compared to the control group, as the lower score indicated a negative effect. However, results suggested that the instructional reading environment did not adversely affect reading attitudes for two of the treatment instructional reading environments when compared to the control group. This researcher questions whether the teacher instructional experience was an influencing factor for these results. Past research indicated that expert teachers' classroom environments differ from those of novice teachers' classroom environments (O'Connor, Fish, & Yasik, 2004; Webster, 2010). Although none of the teachers was a novice teacher, differences were present in the years of teaching experience within the four classrooms ranging from 13–20 years. This researcher became aware that the teacher for the e-book during instruction with a choice of e-books and traditional books for practice treatment group was just completing her second year as a second grade teacher and feeling

a level of stress regarding her students' reading achievement. Although experience and social and emotional factors were not directly tested in this study, an analysis might have provided insight into why reading-attitudes scores for this treatment decreased from pre- to post-test.

Although the physical environments or the teacher-student relationship were not analyzed in this study, the researcher observed differences among the four groups. Although all students had equivalent access to e-books, classrooms varied in size and organization, possibly influencing the ease with which the reading devices could be retrieved. Physical environment contributes to the learners' enjoyment and learning outcomes (Berris & Miller, 2011). Information regarding the relationship between the teacher and the students could possibly influence student attitudes, as researchers have indicated the importance of teacher-student relationship to academic achievement and engagement (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011). Regardless of this information, results provided support for reading instructional environments to include the integration of e-books.

An ANOVA was used to test the null hypothesis for research question #3: Does a statistically significant difference exist in reading behavior among conditions based on the medium in which second-grade readers receive reading instruction, and read independently and for practice as related to the four reading environments. Results indicated that no statistically significant differences in reading behaviors based on reading instructional environment were present. Second-grade students in this study's treatment-group population did not display significantly different reading behaviors than second graders in the control group. The effect size for reading behaviors was small at 0.01 and power of 0.05. This researcher determined that the instructional reading environment was trivial. Although reading behaviors were not improved by using e-books in different instructional reading environments, the use of e-books did not negatively affect reading behaviors. Therefore, the use of e-books within the reading instructional environment should be considered.

Relationship to Prior Research

The results of this study regarding reading level were similar to those found in other studies, possibly due to the connection to e-book features (Ertem, 2010; Pearman, 2008; Verhallen, Bus, & de Jong, 2006). Previous research regarding e-books' effects on reading comprehension, a component of reading level has noted the potential of e-books' features to build or activate more complex schemata allowing more in-depth levels of reading comprehension (Ertem, 2010; Pearman, 2008; Verhallen et al., 2006). The possibility is strong that features of e-books presented on hand-held devices share similar supportive features. These features, such as animated illustrations instead of static illustrations, may provide

scaffolding for the reader (Ertem, 2010). Furthermore, the synergy created within the multimedia e-book instructional-reading environment including the highlighting of words while the narrator reads the text as well as adult support during and after reading may contribute to the statistically significant results indicating that the instructional-reading environment influences reading level (Korat, Segal-Drori, & Klien, 2009).

The results of this study indicated a statistically-significant difference existed in reading attitudes among instructional-reading environments; this difference was only significant for the *e-books during instruction with a choice of e-books and traditional books during practice instructional reading environment*. This instructional reading environment had significantly lower reading attitudes scores than participants in the *traditional books during instruction with a choice of e-books and traditional books during practice* and *traditional books only* instructional reading environments. Previous research conducted by Esteves and Whitten (2011) suggested that greater reading growth is not an indicator of positive changes in reading attitudes. It is also possible that the e-books provided through the Raz-Kids website did not meet the participants' reading interests, therefore affecting the readers' attitudes toward reading (Esteves & Whitten, 2011). However, instructional-reading environments including *e-books only during instruction and practice* (group a) provided equivalent support to *e-books during instruction with a choice of e-books and traditional books during practice* (group b), *traditional books during instruction with a choice of e-books and traditional books during practice* (group c), and *traditional books only during instruction and practice* (group d). An additional possibility for the results of this study on reading attitudes could be the role ergonomics played in the students' reading attitudes. Past researchers suggested that ergonomics played a critical role in students' interactions with technology (Dockrell, Earle, & Galvin, 2010). Although the results did not indicate that reading attitudes improved with the use of e-books, the results do suggest that e-books affect reading attitudes. While attempts to control for all of the cognitive and academic variables in the classroom, the social-emotional variables, including the dynamics between the teacher and the participants, were not accounted for. Past researchers Snyder, Acock, Vuchinich, Beets, Washburn, and Flay, (2013) suggested social-emotional components influence students' attitudes and behaviors. Thus, reading attitudes within an e-book instructional reading environment require further investigation.

The current study's null hypothesis that no statistically significant difference in reading behaviors based on the instructional reading environment condition was exploratory. Previous research conducted on reading behaviors was concerned with the number of pages read by participants, indicating that average and below average readers selected books of similar length resulting in fewer pages completed

by the below-average participants (Anderson, et al., 1985). This information may account for the lack of statistical difference identified within this study as book-reading levels for all participants were set according to the individual students' instructional reading level. In addition, the fact that data were only collected within the school environment may have contributed to the findings that reading behaviors showed no significant differences among the instructional reading environments. The possibility is strong that extra reading time was limited within the school setting, thus creating conditions where differences would be minimal. Examining reading behaviors within the home environment where free time for reading activities might be more readily available may provide additional insight into the effects of e-books on reading behaviors. Prior research has indicated that the home reading environment plays a critical role in students' reading behaviors and attitudes toward reading (Katzir, Lesaux, & Kim, 2009), while the amount of reading has been shown to increase when e-books are taken home (Oakley & Jay, 2008).

Practical Implications

The results of this study, specifically related to research questions 1 and 3 regarding reading level and reading behavior, provide support for the purchase and integration of e-books into the elementary school instructional reading environment. These findings contribute to the growing evidence of e-books' effectiveness to support reading instruction. Given these results regarding reading level, educators and administrators who have access to instructional funds or access to personal hand-held reading devices should consider the purchase of e-books and/or classroom sets of personal hand-held reading devices such as iPads for the purpose of reading instruction. Because reading levels of the participants using e-books on personal hand-held devices were positively affected in some e-books environments, educators and administrators might want to consider transitioning from traditional-books-only instructional-reading environments to instructional-reading environment that include e-books. In addition, this study provides statistical evidence that reading environments using either e-books or traditional books provide equivalent support for second-grade readers' reading behaviors. Within this study's results, no statistically significant difference was indicated in participants' reading behaviors among the instructional-reading environments. Since the integration of e-books into the instructional-reading environment did not adversely influence reading behaviors, educators with access to e-books should consider using them for reading instruction. Although results indicated a statistically significant difference for reading attitudes among instructional-reading environments, the results did not favorably support the use of e-books, thus further investigation is necessary. Given these mixed results,

educators and administrators should carefully consider the costs associated with the transition to e-book instructional-reading environments for second-grade students. However, if funds are available to purchase instructional materials, e-books and hand-held devices should be considered.

Educational environments are changing. In the 2011 Horizon report Johnson et al., (2011) projected widespread e-book adoption within one year or less, followed by the 2012 Horizon report, in which Johnson, Adams, and Summins (2012) suggested tablets as an alternative learning format to print materials. Most recently in the 2014 Horizon report, Johnson, Adams, Estrada, and Freeman (2014) predicted the rapid acceleration of intuitive technology such as the touch screens available on personal devices like iPads to be integrated into the classroom while the role of the teacher as a mentor to promote student-centered learning will occur over the next year or two. This study's results provide statistical evidence that e-book instructional-reading environments can support second graders' reading levels and reading behaviors and in some instructional-reading environments such as the e-book-only during instruction and practice and traditional books during instruction with a choice of e-books and traditional books during practice, provide equivalent support for reading attitudes to traditional-book environments. Although integration of e-books is recommended, given the results that reading attitudes were significantly lower for the e-books during instruction with a choice of e-books and traditional books during practice, than traditional books only during instruction and practice, and traditional books during instruction with a choice of e-books and traditional books during practice, it is also recommended that the less than favorable reading attitudes be investigated and addressed as not to negate the positive results.

Assumptions and Limitations

This quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest, non-equivalent control group and posttest-only non-equivalent control group design research attempted to limit the threats to internal and external validity. Through experimental design for the pretest-posttest, non-equivalent control group this study attempted to account for the participants' selection bias, history, maturation, and differential mortality. However, the limitations need to be recognized.

The current study needs to be interpreted in light of the study's limitations. Since intact second-grade classrooms were utilized, the lack of random assignment and the selection threat to validity due to non-equivalent groups were limiting factors and threats to internal validity (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003; Gall et al., 2007). However, all second-grade students who returned consent forms and signed assent forms had the opportunity to participate as this study did not exclude any second grade student. In addition, the pretests as covariates for

hypotheses 1 and 2 provided control for initial differences between the control and three treatment groups. The short-term nature of the study (four weeks), the inclusion of a control group selected from the same population as the treatment groups and classrooms homogeneous for gender, academic ability, and behaviors account for the threats to history and maturation. Regardless, the results are only generalized to the sample population for this study (Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2002.)

The Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey (ERAS) (McKenna & Kear, 1990) was a self-report measure, and it was assumed that the participants responded with true reflection of their overall satisfaction with reading. Past research results have indicated the ERAS is an effective tool for measuring reading attitudes for students in grades 1 through 6 (McKenna & Kear, 1990; McKenna et al., 1990). However, it is possible that participants may have been vulnerable to personal or environmental influences that may have swayed their responses (Borgers, de Leeuw, & Hox, 2000).

As an inherent threat to internal validity, the effects of repeated testing were minimized through the use of different equivalent forms of the DRA2 for dependent-variable reading level. The ERAS survey of reading attitudes did not provide an alternative equivalent survey. However, in the posttest-only non-equivalent control group design used to examine reading behaviors, no covariate was possible.

Homogenous groups were used to limit the selection threat to validity. A comparison proportion of gender groups for each of the four independent-variable levels via chi-square test of independence, as well as comparisons of the mean scores on the pretest DRA2 and ERAS measurements used as covariates, were performed to establish that the four reading environments were homogenous as relates to gender, thus helping to ensure against a selection threat to validity.

External-validity concerns limit the generalizability given the fact that this study only included second graders from a rural southern-Michigan school. Of the 100 students, 88 second-grade parents and students returned the consent and assent forms to participate. It was determined that for a large effect size of $f = 0.40$, a sample of 81 records would be required. All students who returned consent forms and signed assent forms were eligible to participate in the study. This study did not account for the participants that declined participation as they may have differed from the sample population. In addition, a convenience sample was used with intact groups. Therefore, the results are only applicable to the current sample population (Shadish et al., 2002).

External validity was further threatened by the demographics of the community of the town in which the study took place. Results might differ had the population displayed more variances in ethnicity, as past researchers have

indicated ethnicity as a critical component influencing student achievement as it is often associated with socioeconomic status (van Steensel, 2006). In addition, the socio-economic level of the participants and the dependent variables may have affected the study results. Researchers Kayiran, and Karabay (2012) suggested that socio-economic status plays a critical role in reading comprehension, favoring of children from high socio-economic status families.

The self-reporting nature of the reading logs to measure reading behaviors posed a threat to the external validity for the study. It was assumed that participants' responses were true representations of their reading time. However, the self-report measure was a limitation in that the researcher could not guarantee the reports were free from external influences and that they were accurately and honestly completed (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

Additional threats to external validity were the novelty and Hawthorne effect. The novelty of the iPads for direct instructional purposes posed a threat to external validity. Although participants had utilized iPads within the classroom, teacher instructional practice differences prior to the study may have influenced the participants' use of e-books since they are different from the normal instructional-reading format (Gall et al., 2007). Finally, the Hawthorne effect was a possible external-validity threat, as blinding was not utilized. Parents, participants and teachers knew which treatment they were receiving and understood what the study was designed to measure, which may have caused them to act uncharacteristically, increasing their efforts to improve literacy skills (Gall, et al., 2007).

Recommendations for Future Research

Future investigations regarding the effectiveness of e-books to support young readers is necessary to continue to provide important information regarding their use in instructional environments. It is recommended that researchers consider investigating the e-book instructional-reading environment's effect on comprehension, fluency and accuracy as separate dependent variables. The current study investigated the effect e-book instructional-reading environments had on reading levels: a composite score of oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, and reading accuracy. Therefore, only the aggregate score, not scores for each individual item of the DRA2, were included in the study dataset. It is possible that the effect of these instructional-reading environments had a different effect on the individual components as past researchers have suggested that e-books increase reading comprehension (Doty et al., 2001; Korat & Shamir, 2012; Matthew, 1996; Pearman, 2008).

An additional recommendation for future research is to extend the current study to include participants' gender. This current study's small sample size did not allow for the investigation of gender. However, past researchers examining on

reading attitudes reported gender differences in reading attitudes in traditional-print book-reading environments (Martinez et al. 2008).

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of e-book instructional reading environments on the reading levels, reading attitudes, and reading behaviors of second-grade students. Results indicated participants in e-books during instruction with a choice of e-books and traditional books during practice displayed significant reading level gains on the DRA2 when compared to the control group using traditional books only for instruction and practice. Participants in the e-books during instruction with a choice during practice displayed significant differences in reading attitudes as measured by the ERAS scores when compared to the traditional-books-only control group as well as with the traditional books during instruction, with a choice during practice group. No statically significant differences in reading behaviors were found for the four instructional reading environments.

These results suggest that educators, administrators and school district personnel should consider e-books on personal devices as an alternative to traditional books. Educators and administrators should consider a transition toward the integration of the e-books in the instructional reading environment. Personal hand-held devices increase access, portability, and personalization of e-book reading-instruction environments, previously unavailable through stationary desktop computers and CD-ROM e-books. While this study supports integration when considering reading level and reading behavior, more investigation is still needed to address the attitude concern. **LEJ**

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Examining the Sustainability of Two Suburban Lutheran Schools by Addressing the Characteristics and Responses to Extraneous Variables

By Joy A. Mullaney, Paul A. Sims, Angela Tagaris,
Ardelle L. Pate, L. Arthur Safer

Purpose of the Study

This research targeted two suburban LCMS Lutheran schools and examined their sustainability through the lens of Stevens' lifecycle theory during the maturity stage and regeneration (Stevens, 2006), and Fullan's sustainability theory for schools (2005). The objective was to explore, understand, and describe the perspectives of school stakeholders (i.e., pastors, teachers, parents, and other church workers) as their discussions revealed themes related to sustainability. The intent of this study was to start to fill research gaps relevant to Lutheran school sustainability.

Review of the Literature

To place Lutheran education in context, it is necessary to understand the foundations of Lutheran identity. When describing Lutheranism, Schmidt (2016) stated one must consider the unique pieces of Lutheran theology that were taught and practiced since the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. The uniqueness of Lutheran identity distinguishes Lutherans from other Christian denominations. Doctrines, drawn from the Holy Scriptures, are what Lutherans know as truths (as cited in Bull, 2016). Of these truths, Lutherans have many distinctive elements, with the most basic being three principles, referred to as the three *solas* of the Reformation. (Kinnaman, 2015):

1. Our salvation is entirely a gift of grace from God and not our own doing.
2. We receive that grace through faith and not by any works we might do.
3. The sole norm and rule of all doctrine is the Holy Scriptures (p. 23).

These three *solas* form a concise basis for what Lutherans believe, teach, and confess. *Sola Scriptura* or Scripture alone means the Bible or Scripture is the inspired Word of God and is the sole source of what Lutherans believe and

practice; Scriptures judge the validity of practices. *Sola gratia* or grace alone is the assurance that salvation is based on God's grace alone, and not earned by our good works. *Sola fide* or faith alone assures God's gift of grace is received. *Sola gratia* (by grace alone), *sola fide* (by faith alone), and *sola Scriptura* (by Scripture alone) are the basis for Lutheran doctrine (Kinnaman, 2015).

Relating Kinnaman's (2015) description of the fundamental principles of Lutheran identity to the purpose of Lutheran education, Rietschel (2000) stated the first objective of Lutheran education was for the praise, glory, and pleasure of God. An objective for Lutheran education is to consider the truth that fallen man lost God's image, and that one must regain God's image and resume fellowship with God. This can be achieved through faith in the blood shed by Jesus Christ, and through the Word and the Sacraments which will nurture the growth of children. Lutheran schools facilitate students' growth in the knowledge of the Triune God, as well as the development of Christian virtues through the understanding of the Law (rules, order, behavior, sin) and Gospel (salvation through grace alone through faith) (Senkbeil, 2013). Korcek (2011) pointed out two doctrines central to Lutheran education: education and vocation. Veith (2011) summarized, "Baptized Christians are called to live out their faith in the world in the different stations of life to which God may call them" (p. xii). Luther's pastor Johannes Bugenhagen reasoned that since baptized Christians have high status in front of God, they are deserving of excellent education; baptism meant that fine education once only for the elite should now be offered to all Christians, including girls. The second doctrine significant to education is vocation. Luther's theology of vocation was grown out of baptism. Baptism is the mark of the everyday life of a Christian and allows for new life in Christ. In this new life, the Christian lives out his vocation (Korcek, 2011). Vocation, as Luther saw it, is not a calling to a church office, but a calling to all Christians to a life of holy service. God works through the Christian for the good of mankind. Christians are called to love and serve their neighbors, the workplace, their family, the church; and the liberal arts prepare one for service to the world. Lutheran schools not only fulfill this necessity but also prepare children in the catechism, thus equipping them for eternal life.

Lutheran Education

From the start of the LCMS in 1847, Lutheran schools provided members with schools to teach students not only the faith but to provide a language and culture platform for their German immigrant children. As the LCMS formed, it clearly outlined in Article III of its constitution that a major purpose of the synod was to establish and nurture Lutheran educational agencies, or elementary and secondary schools. With this emphasis, LCMS schools prospered. Growth

rates varied over the years and at times have declined (Holtzen & Krause, 2000). Refer to Figure 1. Noting the rapid decline since 1996, it is important for the mission of the LCMS that studies like this take place to inform and preserve LCMS Lutheran schools.

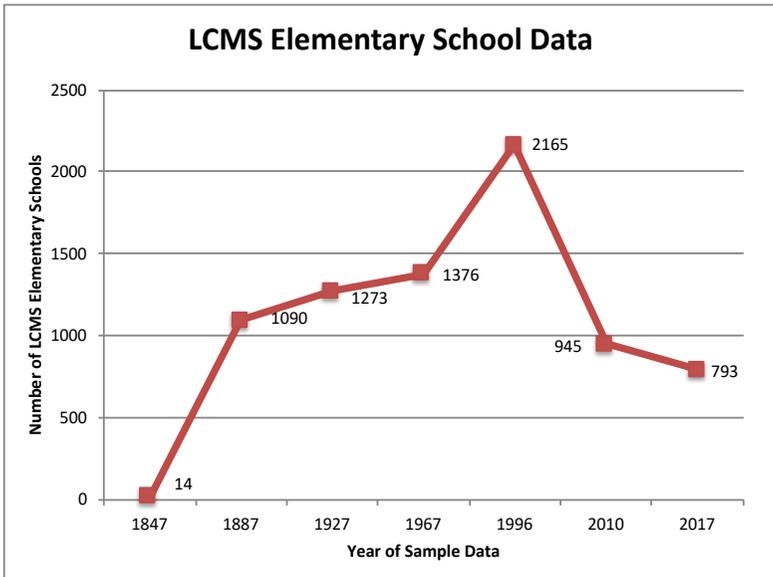


Figure 1: The Number of Lutheran Elementary Schools in the United States from 1847 to 2017. Incline in the number of elementary schools from 1847 to 1996 and rapid decline since 1996 is shown in this figure (Holtzen & Krause, 2000; LCMS, 2017).

The declining number of Lutheran schools and overall enrollment decline is clear, as shown by data provided in the literature (Holtzen, & Krause, 2000). Cochran (2008) also noted the rapid decline of LCMS Lutheran schools and the impending changes recognized in Lutheran schools. He acknowledged several factors and trends that have led to the decline in the number of Lutheran schools and total Lutheran school enrollment: parents make choices as consumers, fewer baptisms, changing demographics, and the economy are noted as such factors.

Stueber (2008) noted enrollment patterns and trends as well as insights into the future of LCMS high schools. Refer to Figure 2. Larger cities experienced many elementary Lutheran school closings; this affected Lutheran high schools, as most Lutheran high school students traditionally came from the feeder Lutheran elementary schools in the area. High schools downsized and struggled with funding; fewer students meant fewer resources. Six challenges emerged for Lutheran high schools including mission, spiritual development, leadership, technology, marketing, and change without compromising mission.

Despite the schools which failed, those who embraced the challenges in this environment thrived. Stueber (2008) noted three common threads that have emerged in thriving schools. The first trend centered on strategically moving the urban Lutheran high schools away from the urban area. The Lutheran Education Association of Houston is one such example. A second trend was the engagement of effective marketing to the school community; the hiring of enrollment management and marketing helped get the message to the community. Finally, thriving Lutheran schools put into place effective leadership in the board room where board members know their roles, creating vision and policy; school administrators share vision, model, and manage change effectively in thriving schools.

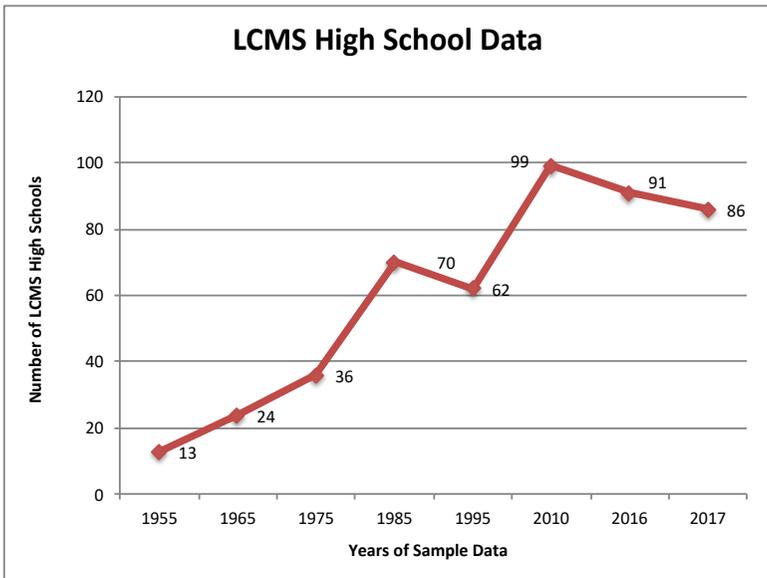


Figure 2. LCMS number of high schools in the United States from 1955 – 2017 (Holtzen & Krause, 2000; LCMS, 2017).

At the 66th Regular Convention in 2016, the LCMS recognized the declining number of Lutheran schools and enrollment decline as a problem (LCMS, 2016). From this national convention, through Resolution 8-03, the LCMS synod directed the Office of School Ministry to determine the cause of decline in total enrollment as well as the decline of the number of schools. Lutheran schools need leadership training, the support of Lutheran schools requires sustainability, and the study of reasons leading to enrollment decline is necessary (LCMS, 2016). In addition, the Office of School Ministry was to identify alternative funding models and consider classical education, online learning, flexible scheduling, hybrid homeschool and international models. The

LCMS indicated the Office of School Ministry should give special attention to the creation of unique models for congregations to consider, including those that will address tuition restrictions for lower income families. Research and recommendations are forthcoming and are expected to emerge at the LCMS 67th Regular Convention in 2019. The LCMS attention to issues and efforts to address these issues facing LCMS schools gives significance to this study.

Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Framework

Two theories support the problem of sustainability of Lutheran schools. Lifecycle theory compares a nonprofit organization, such as a Lutheran school, to the lifecycle of humanity (Stevens, 2006). Sustainability theory describes eight elements of a sustainable school (Fullan, 2005). This framework was integrated to underpin the researcher's questions, "What makes a Lutheran school sustainable according to the perceptions of stakeholders?" and "To what extent do extraneous variables affect the sustainability of Lutheran schools?"

Theoretical Framework 1: Lifecycle Theory

The lifecycle of a nonprofit organization such as a Lutheran school compares to the lifecycle of a human. Like people, an organization experiences life stages, including birth or start-up, growing or adolescence to maturing, and sometimes stagnation. In a nonprofit organization, stagnation results in decline or death unless there is renewal (Stevens, 2006). Lifecycle theory aligns with sustainable Lutheran schools, as they travel through the cycle of continuous renewal to sustainability.

Theoretical Framework 2: Sustainability Theory: Systems Thinkers

Fullan (2005) developed the sustainability theory related to schools, maintaining that sustainability and school improvement are directly related. In whole-systems change, what people do effectively in schools is a result of the system change. In sustainable schools, leaders are cultivated; continuous improvement is coupled with innovative practices; capacity is built both laterally and vertically. Fullan's theory (2005) defines leaders as the agents or developers of progressive transformations; however, one leader who acts in a progressive manner cannot cause sustainability of a school. In tandem with leadership development, short- and long-term results lead to sustainability. Newly cultivated leaders must have opportunities to practice developmental leadership in efforts to change the culture and systems of organizations, thus leading to sustainability (Fullan, 2005).

Research Methodology

The researcher located two sustainable Lutheran schools willing to fully participate in the study. The research design was a qualitative multi-case study.

Creswell (2013) stated that “a hallmark of a good qualitative case study is that it presents an in-depth understanding of the case” (p. 98).

Sample

To glean significant insight from participants, principals selected stakeholders who understood the climate and culture of the school; stakeholders included pastors, teachers, parents, and other church workers who possessed historical context. All participants were willing to engage. Written consent, with the option of disengagement at any time without consequence, from all participants was obtained prior to the focus group and interviews. Fifteen stakeholders participated in the study. From School A, six participants including the principal, director of Christian education (DCE), lead pastor, associate pastor, a teacher, and a parent/volunteer were involved in the focus group or interviews. In School B, nine participants included the principal, two teachers, a teacher aide/parent, lead pastor, DCE, a volunteer, and two parents interviewed or participated in the focus group. Only one educator, Principal A, participated in both the focus group and the interview.

Data Collection Procedure

To better understand the perceptions of stakeholders in two sustainable suburban Lutheran schools, in a focus group and individual interviews, the researcher asked participants about characteristics of sustainability, school responses to extraneous variables, and proactive actions that addressed potential barriers. Focus group and interview questions aligned to the two research questions as well as the two theories in the framework, lifecycle theory and sustainability theory. One focus group question and five interview questions were developed by the researcher for Research Question 1. One focus group question and eight interview questions were designed for Research Question 2. Refer to Appendix A for these questions.

Focus Group

An experienced LCMS educator facilitated the study with the focus group discussion on November 21, 2017 at School B with six stakeholder participants. Leadership from each school was assigned by the researcher to the focus group. A pastor from one school and the principal from the other school was assigned with the intention of moving the focus group conversation forward. Six participants included two from School A and four from School B. In the concluding focus-group activity, each participant individually wrote characteristics of sustainable Lutheran schools on Post-it Notes and then in two small groups categorized characteristics into main ideas.

Interviews

Following the focus group, ten individual interviews were conducted. The researcher conducted five interviews at School A on November 28 and 30, 2017 and five interviews at School B on December 5, 2017. Interviews were face-to face, with open-ended and probing questions asked in a semi-structured manner so that participants were able to define their experiences according to their perspectives. Interviews were digitally recorded on two devices and transcribed within three days. Transcripts were emailed to the interviewees for validation. Minor adjustments were made based on the respondents' feedback. Member checking ensured the accuracy of transcripts and diminished researcher bias. This triangulation completed the data collection process

Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher read the data multiple times as she established patterns and looked for similarities to develop generalizations. Notes were taken in the margins of the transcripts that related to the two research questions. During data analysis, the researcher coded the data using open-coding to ensure she was receptive to anything relevant; coding was organized on a chart with data being given names, brief definitions, and identified for later use. The researcher used induction to build concepts, themes, and theories using the understandings gleaned from the field through focus-group conversations and individual interviews.

Results

As the researcher analyzed the qualitative data in this multi-case study, she placed quotes of stakeholders into categories, then developed theories. From the categories, she constructed five predominant themes. First, stakeholders from both schools A and B emphasized the need to base all that they do around their mission or moral purpose. It is important for them to not only provide religion within their school day, but they place value on the integration of religion in each content area. School faculty and staff model Christian-like behaviors, and activities are planned to facilitate such. Keeping true to Lutheran identity is important to both schools, but they are welcoming of students and families from other faiths; outreach is a part of the mission as they bring the Word of God to those outside of the Lutheran circle.

Second, stakeholders expressed the commitment to the school as a prominent characteristic of a sustainable school. The churches cherish, value, and support their respective schools; there is a commitment to unity between school and church that includes a full life of involvement and trust in the school-church family. Parents have expressed trust in the teachers and administrators and feel that their children are safe and well cared for; they

feel the school holds the same values that they hold at home, thus affording continuity. Administrators construct opportunities for families to connect with each other to build community; they offer leadership roles for parents, students, and teachers so that all can be a part of the family. All of this is strategically planned in a sustainable Lutheran school.

Theme three revolves around the quality of a sustainable Lutheran school. Quality is of utmost importance in the selection and retention of faculty and staff. Administrators from both schools expressed their dedication to finding the best teachers and staff who not only have excellent teaching skills, but also have a solid Christian faith-base. The teachers are dedicated to their students, their families, professional learning, and a full life in church and school. School administrators recognize that there is a shortage of rostered teachers to call. If given the opportunity to call a rostered teacher or offer a contract to a non-rostered teacher, if all is equal, the rostered teacher will be called. If, however, the non-rostered teacher is more qualified and is strong in their Christian faith, then a contract will be offered. Quality programming and curriculum must also be evident in sustainable Lutheran schools. Continuous review and renewal of curriculum to ensure relevance will be evident in sustainable schools along with a wide breadth of programs and activities, such as fine arts, athletics, and co-curricular high interest clubs.

Fourth, quality leadership is an essential element of a sustainable Lutheran school. Leaders in schools A and B are not satisfied with status quo; they are committed to continuous improvement and cyclical review, evaluation, and change of all aspects of school programming. Leadership has changed with the times. No longer are sustainable Lutheran schools only for their church members as originally structured by the German immigrants. Rather, there is leadership commitment to strategically welcoming all demographics. Leaders in Schools A and B have proactively addressed threats and obstacles such as keeping up with technology and sustaining financials (through multiple sources). They address and communicate mission and vision, plus short-term and long-term goals through strategic planning. Church leadership designs governance with policy-based models, thus allowing school administrators to conduct internal operations within set policies. These leadership specifics are valued in Schools A and B.

The final theme constructed from the data is response to community needs. There are two parts to this theme. Schools A and B understand the importance of reaching out to the community. This is intentional. For example, both schools are in communities where the public schools do not offer full day kindergarten; in response to the communities' needs for a safe and high quality full-day learning environment, Schools A and B have offered

full-day kindergarten along with before- and after-school care available to working parents. Secondly, stakeholders from both schools felt the schools have sustained because they have built a solid reputation in the community through a safe and loving atmosphere and by offering quality resources.

Research Question 1:

What makes a Lutheran school sustainable according to the perceptions of stakeholders?

During the focus-group conversation, all stakeholders agreed that Lutheran school sustainability must encompass a unified church and school with commitments from all stakeholders; participants talked about a strong unified partnership and relationship between church and school with high value placed on the school. Focus-group members and interviewees stated the importance of modeling complete immersion in church life for the benefit of students. All stakeholders perceived the partnership as real where both church and school stakeholders want to work together for the greater good. Stakeholders discussed the core values of a sense of community, family, and love for one another in the church and school environment in their respective schools. Parent B highly values loving relationships in the school and church, and noted that faculty show children love as a parent would. She considered the school as a partner in parenting and is confident that teachers share the values of her family. She indicated that Lutheran schools allow parents to keep their children in a safe bubble and at the same time prepare them well for high school.

In the ten individual interviews, stakeholders discussed the special culture of moral code, Christian values, and Lutheran identity as a moral purpose or mission of the church and school. Pastors, principals, and teachers identified the moral purpose or mission of the school in terms of foundational understandings and being rooted in the Word of God as provided in Scripture. They perceived this as being played out in the schools as religion and Christian behavior integrated into curriculum and the entire culture of how stakeholders, including students, act toward one another in all places. Several study participants gave examples of Christian behavior on the athletic playing fields; Lutheran-school students have been known to pick up injured players on opposing teams, and study participants noted this goes with them in public and private high school settings. Stakeholders noted that a part of their mission is the outreach or drawing people into the church, and is seen not only through the school, but also through outreach efforts of the church. Moral purpose or mission was one of the eight elements of sustainability; all levels of the system

must uphold the moral purpose or mission of the school and system leaders need to model the moral purpose (Fullan, 2005).

A characteristic of a sustainable Lutheran school is that of continued professional learning through lateral networks. Although this was not a defined theme stemming from all participants, the quality of teachers was a subtheme. Teacher A described the dedication to professional learning through observations in public schools, attending curriculum writing at the NID (Northern Illinois District) and the Lutheran Education Association (LEA) professional-development workshops and conferences. They learned from their peers in the field. Teachers at School A attend the state reading conferences each year and prioritize participation through closing the schools on state reading-conference days. In Schools A and B, early childhood teachers laterally network every six weeks within the NID system. All teachers in schools A and B participate in professional development such as summer curriculum work through the NID. They attend and present at LEA conferences.

Participants discussed the need for a well-rounded education for the whole child and a breadth of program offerings. Sustainable Lutheran schools met the needs of the community and established a good reputation in the community through quality programming. Schools in this study offered not only Christ-centered, integrated, accelerated, and differentiated academic programs, but also a wide variety co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. Continuity emerged as a characteristic of sustainable Lutheran schools. Participants saw sustainability in Lutheran schools through the continuity of generational school attendance. However, Principal A noted that, in an LCMS school where she taught prior to her call to School A, that piece was missing. In her former urban setting, the school population was mobile but there was a strong continuity of school and church staff; thus, the continuity of staff moved the school forward and the school sustained. She perceived that whether the continuity is through school population or faculty and staff, sustainability will be present. Discussions were also centered on the importance in the quality of leadership, that of both faculty and staff.

Both principals described their policy-based governance as a successful model that was effective for their respective schools. While School A had a board called the Parish School Ministry to develop policy and School B does not have a board, the policy-based structures serve the same purpose. Decision makers created policy, and the leaders of the schools carried out school operations. School A's governance policy stated, "The Parish School Ministry is the policy-making body for the school. The principal is charged with carrying out those policies and programs with the aid and support of faculty and staff" (Parish School Ministry, 2017, p. 1).

Research Question 2:

To what extent do extraneous variables affect the sustainability of Lutheran schools?

In the focus group conversation, Pastor/Parent B described the change in demographics as an obstacle that all Lutheran churches and schools faced. He described the change of posture from the old German way of thinking; formerly, church leaders asked congregation members to bring their children to Lutheran schools and became angry when parents did not comply. He emphasized the importance of figuring out how to connect today's families to the schools. He explained that it is difficult for a century-and-a-half old organization to change its thinking about how to connect with families they currently have and how to discontinue traditional German ways of doing things. Pastors and principals in this study had a good understanding of the need for unconventional thinking with new perspectives and they acted on their creativity as they responded to community trends.

Principal B in his interview expressed the importance of visionary leadership and strategic planning to ward off barriers or obstacles that might prevent sustainability. He stated that strong leaders need to look at the big picture and lead people in a unified direction. He referenced a unified ministry that is communicated verbally, both publicly and internally; he insisted that this is what needs to happen for a sustainable and accessible school. He feels his school is blessed to have that.

Stakeholders from both schools identified financials as a variable they must continually monitor. Human resources and technology are the biggest financial factors. Technology must be constantly updated and supported to provide a quality education and to serve as a platform for curriculum. The need to provide multiple sources of income is perceived as necessary to sustain. Income sources not only include tuition, but also include fund raisers, grants, endowments, and (estate) planned giving. One of the schools is in the planning stages of partnering with local businesses. Both schools have recognized the importance of this strategy and have planned multiple sources of income and dedicated funds for quality education including technology equipment and technology support. Several stakeholders from both schools stated God will provide, when speaking of school needs, and acknowledged that when needs arise financials become available. "...God will supply every need of yours..." (Philippians 4:19, ESV).

Since tuition is one source of income for the schools, it is essential for schools to maintain enrollment. Often parents enroll their children with the intention to transfer enrollment to the local public schools. This often happens

after kindergarten and around grades five or six when parents feel the need to prepare their adolescent children for secondary school. According to the perceptions of participants, parents rationalize this, often citing middle school students need to make friends in the public school prior to high school; parents also report that their adolescent children must adjust to the size of the public school, number of students in classrooms, and different programming.

Principals reported strategic responses to the obstacle of enrollment decline. Principal A perceived internal marketing as an important strategy. An example of the internal marketing came about when the principal noticed she was regularly guiding school tours to local public-school teachers who were considering private schools for their children. Principal A and teachers in her Lutheran school strategically displayed creative student projects accompanied by Common Core State Standards (2018) and other standards addressed in the project. Potential parent/public-school teachers valued alignment to the posted standards and spread the word that school A is a quality school. Principal B addressed the latter variable of middle-grade students transferring enrollment to the public schools. His strategy was to hire an energetic middle grade expert as an assistant principal; she has much experience with and understanding of not only the age ten-through-fourteen adolescents' needs but also middle school philosophy and organization. The assistant principal for middle grades strategically organizes developmentally-responsive master schedules and social events.

A need for leadership in Lutheran schools is also an obstacle to face. LCMS Ministry provides a pool of administrative candidates; the interviewee anticipated that by 2018, 40% of Lutheran school administrators would retire (Krull, 2015). Although participants of this study did not speak directly to the potential lack of leadership in LCMS schools, this is a threat to all Lutheran schools and has been addressed by the synod (LCMS, 2016). Proactive leadership development is evident in both Schools A and B. Principal A has created a rotating shared-leadership model for teacher leadership, which is job-embedded. Opportunities for teacher-leaders include but are not limited to professional development, curricular, co-curricular, extra-curricular, and administrative leadership. Principal B created shared leadership and job-embedded leadership opportunities for teacher leaders; his leadership team consists of teacher leaders who do not think inward. Teacher leaders have earned Principal B's trust, so he does not micro-manage. He meets regularly with his leadership team to collaborate on short-term and long-term vision and planning. Both schools intentionally provide parental and student leadership opportunities as well.

Limitations

This study was narrowed to two LCMS suburban schools in the Northern Illinois District. These schools are unlike urban schools. Demographics have not changed much over the decades in one of these schools, funding practices will not be like urban schools, and missions may be different. Likewise, it would be difficult to generalize to Lutheran schools in different states due to differences in funding practices. As an illustration, Milwaukee, Wisconsin offers Private School Choice Programs, or voucher programs, that several Lutheran schools participate in, so the research in this study will only generalize and transfer to a limited number of Lutheran schools.

Conclusions

This study examined the perceptions of stakeholders in two Midwest LCMS suburban Lutheran schools through a qualitative multi-case study. Participants responded to focus group and interview questions to help the researcher explain perceived qualities of sustainable Lutheran schools and how school administrations faced external variables. Findings confirmed that perceptions of the characteristics of Lutheran school sustainability include commitment to Lutheran identity, modeling Christian behaviors, outreach, and moral purpose/mission. Church and school unity and the creation of a sense of family are perceived as necessary characteristics of a sustainable Lutheran school. Stakeholders perceive that it is necessary to offer a quality program to the community, strong leadership, and excellent faculty and staff to earn a positive reputation. Extraneous obstacles were perceived as variables which include financial burden, constant change in technology needs, location surrounded by excellent competitive schools, high local taxes supporting public schools, changing demographics, economic trends, and changing attitudes toward Christian education.

The theoretical framework of this research, including both the lifecycle theory and the sustainability theory, supported the findings in this study. Therefore, future researchers will find this study suitable to examine further the sustainability of Lutheran schools and strategies to combat declining sustainability especially in the face of external variables

Implications

Often when reviewing Lutheran school sustainability, the discussion revolves around finances and enrollment. While lack of financial resources and declining enrollment are the obvious answers to the inability of Lutheran schools to remain sustainable, much more encompasses sustainability. To embrace sustainability of Lutheran schools, Lutheran educators must embrace the topics of mission/moral purpose, vision, governance, communication,

leadership, community, quality, change, stakeholder involvement, continuous improvement, and accountability. The two sustainable Lutheran schools in this study exhibited strong connections to their moral purpose; their mission is foundational to all programming. Lutheran-school stakeholders will find value in regularly revisiting their mission and moral purpose to ensure teachers, staff, parents, and students are well focused in all they do. The mission and moral purpose should be central to all activities and offerings; mission should be stated often in writing, stated vocally, and demonstrated in actions.

The two schools in the study either moved toward or relied upon effective policy-based governance structures. It would be wise for Lutheran-school administrations to reflect upon their governance model and ask questions concerning the governance model used for the school; likewise, they need to review policy on a regular basis and give practical input and recommendations. In addition, they need to question whether school officials have the freedom to leverage their educational expertise and experience to make day-to-day school-related decisions. These may be difficult questions to address, but certainly worthy of discussion.

Lutheran schools wishing to become or remain sustainable support intentional teacher, student, and parent leadership. The synod addresses the necessity to grow new leaders, as in Resolution 8-02 from the 2016 LCMS national convention, *Upon This Rock* (LCMS, 2016) synod directed the Office of National Mission and the LCMS School Ministry to prepare leaders for early childhood to secondary levels of Lutheran schools. Stakeholders are more likely to embrace change if they are a part of leadership.

Considering the findings in this research, Lutheran-school administrators should consider themselves change agents in their roles as executive directors, principals, directors, and assistant principals. Whether early childhood, elementary, middle grades, or secondary it would behoove school leadership not only to adhere to best practices, but also to communicate thoroughly and often about best practices, the research behind those practices, and how the school implements best practices in their program-renewal cycles. Reeves (2010) emphasized the need to put learning from professional development into practice. Informed leaders will follow up on professional development to ensure educators have opportunities to apply their newly learned strategies, best practices, and curriculum. On a regular basis, Lutheran school administrators must respond to community needs by surveying the internal and external community to gain a sense of community needs, form task-force groups to collect informational data, assess these needs, and recommend changes.

During NID school administrator's regular conferences, a lifecycle model has been presented. Through reflection and self-analysis, coupled with outside

vertical evaluation, this process can be a starting point to knowing lifecycle status as it relates to the sustainability of the Lutheran school. Through the study of lifecycle theory along with sustainability theory, organizations can strategize to move their Lutheran schools forward toward sustainability. **LEJ**

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Appendix A
Focus and Interview Questions

Research Question #1: What makes a Lutheran school sustainable to the perceptions of stakeholders?
Focus Group Question #1 What are the qualities of a Lutheran school that create sustainability?
Interview Question #1 What do you believe are qualities of a sustainable Lutheran school? Please describe.
Interview Question #2 To what extent are these qualities present in your school? Please describe in detail.
Interview Question #3 What does moral purpose in a Lutheran school mean to you? Please describe in detail.
Interview Question #4 Which of these qualities of moral purpose do you observe in this school?
Interview Question #5 What are your perceptions of the resources and programs available of NOT in your school? Please describe in detail.

Appendix A (cont.)

Focus and Interview Questions

Research Question #2: To what extent do extraneous variables affect the sustainability of Lutheran schools?
Focus Group Question #2 How does your school respond to extraneous variables?
Interview Question #6 What obstacles or barriers has your school faces? Describe.
Interview Question #7 What proactive measures has your school put into place to combat potential obstacles?
Interview Question #8 How have these proactive measures been addressed?
Interview Question #9 Give some examples of how obstacles have been resolved.
Interview Question #10 Describe the outcomes.
Interview Question #11 Describe parental involvement in the school.
Interview Question #12 To what extent does parental involvement affect the sustainability of Lutheran schools?
Interview Question #13 Why do you believe parents choose public schools over private or private over public?

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Moving Literacy Instruction Out of the Classroom and Into Informal Learning Environments

What's A Zoo Got To Do With Reading? THE N.O.A.H. PROJECT

By Marlene Meisels

“**Y**ou have a Ph.D. in literacy, so what are you doing at the zoo? Teaching the animals to read?” This was a recurring quip I encountered from friends, colleagues, and others when they learned that I worked in an education department in a zoo. After many years teaching developmental reading classes, literacy methods for pre-service and veteran teachers, and using literacy as a catalyst for whole-school change in Chicago’s public schools, I found an offer one day that I could not refuse. The education department of a major zoo was looking for someone with a background in literacy. I was looking for a place to raise awareness about animals without abandoning my years of experience and study in literacy. It was the beginning of a beautiful, though unexpected, experience. While scores of teachers arrange field trips to scores of museums, zoos and other sorts of places, my observation has been that these resources are being underutilized. I’ll explain in a moment, but first I would like to share a short anecdote.

A colleague of mine has a wonderful illustration of a very telling field trip experience. Early in his teaching career, he took a group of elementary students on a field trip to the airport. As soon as the group stepped foot inside the concourse, kids tore loose, running and screaming, bedazzled by the planes close up and waiting for passengers to board. Now in a panic as he had lost control of his students, and worse yet, he may have just lost his students, the young teacher began chasing after them.

“Get back here!” Back here! Now! Everyone get back *HERE!!!* Maria! Where are you going? Yes, Jonathon! You too! *NOW*, I said! Alright, are we all here?”

The kids re-assembled and the novice teacher reviewed the rules for the trip: Stay together, no running, no screaming, and most importantly, stay together. Stay together! He asked whether everyone understood the rules, and all the kids said that they did. Order had been restored and the teacher gave

the signal to continue. But with the excitement of the moment, the barrage of stimuli in the shape of travelers, snack kiosks, alighting airplane passengers, again, the kids made a dash down the concourse. “Get back here! GET BACK HERE! I SAID GET ...”

The moral of the tale? Environment trumps curriculum (2004, personal communication).

While many teachers may not have had quite the same experience, the challenges to keep order and safety in check, and the decisions about what to do and how to do it in these kinds of informal learning environments are difficult ones. Museum and zoo educators are aware of this, and they are currently engaged in their own examination of how to teach in such environments. I am convinced that rich opportunities for study and learning await students whose teachers take a little extra time to plan for these experiences.

I have had the great pleasure and privilege of watching teachers grow in their understandings of teaching students in place-based learning environments, just as I have grown in mine. I have watched teachers shift from comments like, “You want me to keep my students in front of *one* exhibit for *45 minutes*? Are you kidding? You don’t know Manny. He’ll never make it” to “I can’t believe it. He stayed with it. He worked like the other kids, and he worked with them, too. I never thought he could sit still that long.”

Where This Led Me

In these times when resources are scarce and even when they are not, capitalizing on informal learning environments makes so much sense. We recognize the import in the school-improvement literature of in- and out-of-school learning. Informal learning environments like museums—and yes, zoos are considered akin to museums in the world of informal learning—provide rich opportunities to extend and strengthen in-school experiences. These environments can help students grow and appreciate the splendor of God’s creation.

It is because I have observed such growth in teachers and students, that I would like to offer a description of a literacy program I developed for an informal learning environment called N.O.A.H. (No One Aspires Higher), which integrated the teaching of science and wildlife conservation, and which used the arts to build reading comprehension skills. The program especially impacted students’ motivation to read.

I would also like to offer a few general suggestions for getting the most out of informal learning environments. Some of these suggestions may sound rather mundane and are based on the kinds of knowledge teachers already possess. But often teachers do not transfer these ideas when working with kids in museums and zoos, and therefore, I believe they are worth a mention.

To begin, I would like to address a concern that some teachers have expressed about conducting lessons at the zoo. For those of you who feel kids should be allowed to have fun and not be required to participate in a lesson: Students can and do have a great deal of fun and enjoyment when they are provided with a structured experience that allows for engagement, creative thinking, choice and exploration. In fact, I regret the numbers of students who have stated disappointment in their zoo or museum field trips—students who were allowed to wander without focus and without support in using zoo and museum resources. Every child has an adventure waiting to unfold, whether in regular or special education classes, and with some advance planning, the child can realize this adventure. But first, I will turn to the literature of informal learning environments, an area of knowledge development that we in the field of literacy do not usually encounter.

What's Unique about an Informal Learning Environment?

There are certainly some obvious differences between schools and museums and zoos. Informal environments contain collected artifacts that illustrate, whether living or preserved, representations of phenomena and processes. Learners are faced with many choices—turn left to this exhibit or turn right toward another. Linger and read or experience the exhibit or move rapidly past for a transitory moment of exposure to it.

Dierking (2010) writes about Oregon State University using principles of informal learning to revamp their math and science master's and doctoral programs, acknowledging the importance of free-choice learning taking place in arenas outside of the classroom. Interestingly, while changes in the way we are designing programs are happening globally, she notes that these approaches are “Rarely acknowledged at policy levels, though the centers of this learning revolution are not the traditional educational establishment of schools and universities, but a vast network of informal-education entities: museums, zoos/aquariums, nature centers, national parks and increasingly the Internet, podcasts, and other social networking media” (2010, p. 297-298).

Free-choice learning is being extended in ways beyond what people like Montessori, Froebel, and others discovered that informed the growth of early childhood education. In discussing the nature of learning, Falk (2010) notes the growth in our understanding of the very meaning of what it means to learn. He and others have acknowledged the importance of contextualizing learning in social, cultural, and other environments. He further emphasizes the very personal nature of learning, which is influenced by the context in which it is taking place as well as the collaborative ways in which learning occurs. He writes that “learning is rarely linear and is always highly idiosyncratic” (2010, p.269).

This leads Falk to conclude that we've been approaching learning research in a faulty way. Rather than posing the question, "*What did an individual learn as a consequence of this educational experience?*" he suggests, "A more appropriate way to frame questions of learning would be to ask, *How did this educational experience contribute to an individual's understanding?*... In this view, research on learning in general, and environmental learning in particular, needs to account for the fact that learning is always a highly personal process, highly dependent upon prior experiences, occurring within a highly situated sociocultural and physical context and involving multiple sources of experience and information, which collectively contribute to knowledge construction..." (2010, p. 270).

Findings from museum studies on informal learning environments reveal that learning can happen beyond an individual's content knowledge (about collections). We know now that these experiences can result in developing an acceptance of other cultures, and a kind of social learning that even results in learning about one's own social group as well as learning ways of discourse among families (Falk & Dierking, 2000). This suggests just a few of the rich kinds of growth that can emerge when informal learning environments are utilized.

In ways that I have not yet fully addressed in my own formal teaching, the words of bell hooks weigh on me when she writes, "In modern schooling the messages students receive is that everything they learn in the classroom is mere raw materials for something that they will produce later on in life. This displacement of meaning into the future makes it impossible for students to fully immerse themselves in the art of learning and to experience that immersion as a complete, satisfying moment of fulfillment;" and further that "students are socialized via conventional pedagogy to believe that their own 'now' is always inadequate and lacking" (2003, p. 166). She is especially referring to education at the college level in this quote, but there are implications for working with children as well.

In discussion with a colleague about hooks, he notes that "bell hooks asks us to consider free-flowing thought, the thinking and learning that happens simply through living in the moment—a harmonious exchange between the learner's mind and the world around him or her. It presupposes...starting where the learner is and validates the lived experiences and knowledge that all of our students bring to the discussion. This idea frames up our current discussion about informal education—both its role within our institution, its relationship to formal education and common schooling practices, as well as its potential in the movement for best practices in education" (Lukasik, personal communication, 2005). Informal learning environments present an arena that invites us to engage in free-flowing thought.

N.O.A.H./The Reading Ark (No One Aspires Higher)

Toward the end of preparing teachers to use informal learning environments, I led a team of educators to develop a literacy program that integrated environmental science, writing, reading and the building of reading competence. Selection for the literacy network of N.O.A.H. schools was based on several criteria. Schools were targeted if they demonstrated:

- How our literacy program would complement their existing programs;
- A long-term plan to sustain and extend the literacy and informal-learning-environment practices learned by teachers in our program after the initial funding year;
- An agreement among Local School Council members—a governing body unique to Chicago schools—the Principal, and the staff to support the project;
- School-wide reading scores of 45 percent or below;
- A minimum of 75 percent of students in Title 1 programs or receiving free lunch; and
- A location that helped us expand the geographic range in which children live who would visit the zoo.

I must admit that asking Principals to write a letter of interest with a statement about how they would sustain practices learned was a bit troublesome. Since we were working with struggling schools, leadership did not always have a vision about how to sustain and share practices. After all, if they had, the schools might not be struggling in the first place. Also, Principals had not yet participated in the program, and so could not effectively address this issue (although an in-depth meeting took place beforehand to discuss the program vision and potential outcomes, our expectations for the program, and the specific logistics of the program). Still, we decided that we would keep this criterion, because it brought up the issue of sustainability even before the first teachers' session, and it was helpful to have Principals struggle with the possibilities before other formal discussions took place.

The literacy program actually consisted of four components. First, and most important was a professional-development component for teachers who attended all-day sessions on their mandated professional-development days throughout the school year. The beauty of using these existing days was that teachers were free to meet at the zoo away from distractions and crises, and schools were relieved of providing substitutes because students do not attend class on professional-development days. (The drawback: You cannot be in two

places at once, and N.O.A.H. teachers were unable to attend professional development with other teachers in other programs. There was always a bit of persuasion needed for Principals, too, to allow teachers to attend all sessions.)

Second, a peer-leadership component for Principals was established that brought all Principals together for quarterly meetings at the zoo. The time was used to build theoretical knowledge about literacy, to solve problems related to logistics or teacher involvement, and ultimately, to plan how to share practices with other teachers once the grant period ended.

A third component provided a rich learning experience for students at the zoo, where teachers were expected to use techniques learned during professional-development sessions with their students. Zoo literacy staff assisted and coached teachers, both in sessions at the zoo and back in the classroom. Teachers were encouraged to connect lessons to topics and themes in their curriculum and to align with learning standards. At the end of each session, teachers evaluated their own performance as well.

Lastly, we provided a family-involvement component. As an example, for one year's culminating celebration, we asked families of N.O.A.H. students to co-author a story at home about animal or wildlife conservation. Families then brought their stories to the zoo, where they began their day by meeting a children's book illustrator. The illustrator provided a mini-lesson with some quick tips about how to illustrate. Meanwhile, about 20 other professional illustrators were working on-grounds at the exhibits, using the animals as models for their work. The families then took colored markers, pencils and crayons off to the exhibits to make their own illustrations. The artists were available if anyone had questions or simply wanted to observe a professional. Everyone then reconvened to share their stories and illustrations with other families.

Over the course of a year, teachers learned how to teach students to make scientific observations, collect and record data ("How to Think Like a Scientist"); how to engage students in one exhibit and to extend the experience to poetry writing connected to learning about a particular habitat; how to collaborate on writing an operetta about environmental science (after building some music background from my friend, Rita Simo, a concert pianist); and more. All of these experiences used the informal learning environment of the zoo as the backdrop for this learning.

A Few General Tips

Through my work on the N.O.A.H. Project, I gained valuable insights into the world of informal learning. I also gained insights into the mechanics of planning and providing successful informal experiences for elementary-school

students. I have found the suggestions below to make a world of difference in the quality of the zoo or museum experience.

- Prepare students in advance for what they will encounter and be sure to link the trip to something students are already studying. Preparation might take the form of a read-aloud, some library or online research by students or simply a discussion asking kids to generate questions they have about the particular animal they will observe at the zoo or an exhibit they will study at the museum.
- Select one exhibit to focus on (although consider dividing students into small groups, each at a different exhibit). By exhibit, I am not referring to a house, but rather a specific exhibit within a house. One animal and its environment, for example.
- Remember that exhibits are carefully designed to illustrate habitats, so consider observation of what surrounds the animals as appropriate for study, too. (If you are in a museum rather than a zoo, you will need to adjust, since not all exhibits are framed in this way.)
- Plan to spend 30-45 minutes at one exhibit rather than rushing to several. Plan to visit or study only a small portion of the museum or zoo. Students need depth, not breadth.
- Use the time for students to draw, make notes, and record their observations of animal behaviors, for example. (On one occasion, I asked students to draw detailed pictures of all the birds' heads in the exhibit they were observing. Later, they discussed differences in bill shapes, the significance of this, and how to guess what foods birds ate based on bill shapes. Even later, they read works of fiction and non-fiction about the birds they observed.)
- Get comfortable with sitting kids on the floor in front of exhibits. Be mindful that others want to look, too, but do not worry so much about blocking the exhibit. Usually, when kids sit on the floor in small groups, other visitors have enough space to view as well.
- When providing instruction on zoo or museum grounds, look for unusual corners or spaces you can exploit to gather your class together. These kinds of unplanned classrooms abound in informal learning environments.
- When giving directions at the exhibit, be sure to ask students to turn their backs to the animals, away from the exhibit and look at you. It is very difficult to upstage an animal. Remember, environment trumps curriculum.

- It is these kinds of informal experiences that have the potential to lead to that desired “flow” so well described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). **LEJ**

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Agency as Advocacy: Addressing the Needs of the Whole Child by First Empowering the Whole Teacher

by Andrea Dinero and Carolyn Theard-Griggs

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To educate is, in short, to set out to create and sustain informed, hopeful and respectful environments where learning can flourish. It is concerned not just with knowing about things, but also with changing ourselves and the world we live in.

- Smith (2012)

Pre-service teachers enter their university programs with hope and optimism, and a commitment from their higher education institution to learn key elements of the profession of teaching: curriculum development, assessment, instructional strategies, classroom management, professionalism, planning, preparation, and reflection. However, are they taught about their agency or a necessary commitment to lead change? For pre-service and in-service teachers to understand their evolved role in an educational system as change agents, two things must happen: they must acknowledge their position of agency and enact their capacity for change. Thus, instruction in agency and “the knowledge base for changing the conditions that affect teaching” (Fullan, 1993, p. 11) are essential as components of supporting the ‘whole teacher’ as an advocate.

Position of Agency

Consider messages conveyed about “agency” through ones experiences, beliefs, and interactions. Learning to identify undeveloped agency (Stolz, 2010) and exercising agency are critical elements of fostering the whole child and the whole teacher. If teachers are not supported in becoming change agents, then it is possible that the opposite kind of sustainability may occur. Farber (1991) identified that as many teachers start in the field with believing that their “work is socially meaningful” and then that feeling can morph into frustrations and dejection towards the profession, causing them to “[reassess] the possibilities of the job and the investment one wants to make in it” (p. 36). Without a sense of agency in the school, teachers cannot maintain the optimism with which they began. Ultimately, teachers need support in developing agency as a form

of advocacy; if teachers are not trusted by their students or validated by their administrators as they learn to exercise their agency and lead reform efforts, student success may be marginalized and teacher effectiveness diminished.

An example is modeled by an educator who teaches the concept of agency:

“I am powerful [Engaged]. I make choices that take my life in directions I want to go [Healthy]. I imagine the many possibilities [Challenged] and ways I can access the world around me [Supported]. Without my own individual agency, I wonder what unfortunate place I might be [Safe].”
(Stolz, 2010, p. 187)

Stolz, an activist, educator, and disability studies scholar, points out the authentic feel of agency, the sense of having some say and some control. The Whole Child tenets, as applied to the example, show the potential for collective impact where the skills can be taught. Even if, and when, there are competing priorities, there is power in efficacy and agency for students and teachers to develop and thrive as advocates.

Enact their Capacity for Change

In addition to the agency of a teacher, interaction is the next step in enacting capacity for change. Advice from writer, advocate, and educator, Rusul Alrubail, places value in three areas: “Positivity, listening to understand rather than to reply, and respect are always important elements to consider when attempting to make a difference, big or small.” (Alrubail, R. in *Making Connections*, People’s, 2016.) By applying Alrubails’ three areas, with an advocacy emphasis, ideas for effective teacher change agents can more readily impact many urgencies large or small and immediate or gradual:

- Recognize and address the needs of all students
- Advocate for supportive and appropriate services to do the work of teaching and learning
- Seek to transform schools and classrooms into learning institutions whose aim is to develop citizenship, character, and moral aptitude in students through interdisciplinary studies and rigorous curriculum
- Create safe communities of learning
- Lead the dialogue on meeting the needs of the whole child, not just as student
- Serve as teacher leaders, mentors, and coaches.

In an effort to pursue necessary change that leads to effective school reform, addressing the needs of the whole child by first empowering the whole teacher presents as a priority. The larger educational context is responsible for advocating for the needs of the teacher as a professional, as a person, as a learner, and as an advocate.

Stakeholders must commit to the work of teacher agency so that necessary, critical, and sustainable student advocacy can be fully realized.

Grow Change as a Positive

“Role models play a crucial part in helping children answer questions about the way they want to be in the world. Kids need people to look up to and identify with, and they also need opportunities to think about what exactly it is they admire or question in heroes. Often, curriculum focuses on heroes on a large scale, outside of our own communities.... Allow students to identify individuals in their own lives who embody heroism by being change agents.

Using the structure of the writing process, students will profile someone who, in their eyes, has made a difference. Students will also think about what other roles people play in conflicts and why people might choose not to stand up for principles they believe in.” (Framework para. 1. Retrieved from www.tolerance.org/lesson/change-agents-our-own-lives)

The Teaching Tolerance lesson framework described above, “Change Agents in Our Own Lives” (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016), identifies a key aspect of change agents—the current and tangible individuals in our daily lives that make change a reality.

Fullan and Quinn (2015) discuss change this way, “Effective change processes shape and reshape good ideas as they build capacity and ownership among participants. There are two components: the quality of the idea and the quality of the process.” Teachers committed to this process satisfy the need for children to have models that are enthusiastic about change and growth. Therefore, ideas need to grow, thus administrators and other colleagues can work towards an openness to change ideas, and a quality process of collaboration to seek, foster, and shape those ideas. As hockey legend Wayne Gretzky once affirmed, “You miss 100 percent of the shots you don’t take.”

Throughout our careers as K-12 teachers, administrators, and college professors, we (the authors) have celebrated the change agents that did not miss an opportunity. We have directly observed exemplars of teachers driving change forward: designing accessible grade level text on a school-wide systems level (Supported); transforming behavioral supports at an Alternative School by implementing PBIS (Engaged); Middle school teachers recognizing the need to include students in the conversation on how to address bullying and promote restorative justice practices from the perspective of the adolescent (Challenged); Teachers serving in informal roles as advocates for students in an outside of the classroom through home visits, attending student events, and having an active voice in the community (Safe); and Administration including personal growth

and development in the strategic plan for the district (Healthy).

For more ideas see Free Resources to Free Your Inner Change Agent (p. 92) in *Educational Leadership's* Summer 2016 issue.

Next Steps: Self-Assess for Action and Sustainability

Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach, a veteran educator and author of *The Connected Educator: Learning and Leading in a Digital Age* (2012) recommends Questions for the Change Agent in You:

- Do you see opportunities for positive change that others at your school do not see?
- Do you have new ideas about where to look for new ideas?
- Are you the most anything?
- If your ideas or mission didn't come forth, who would miss you and why?
- Have you figured out how your school's history can help to shape its future?
- Are you getting the best contributions from the most people?
- Are you consistent in your commitment to change?
- Are you learning as fast as the world is changing?

When used as a guide, these questions can help frame a growth journey that culminates in effective and empowered teacher agency as a form of advocacy to 'change ourselves and the world we live in.' Let's ask our learning community, in what ways are we already taking action and where are we at risk for that other kind of sustainability? **LEJ**

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Improving Student Retention, Engagement and Belonging

by Elizabeth Owolabi

Introduction

One of the major challenges currently facing higher education is student attrition. The United States has the highest college attrition rate among the world's most developed nations. The U.S. is falling behind in educational attainment and achievement at a time when education is critical for upward mobility (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2011; O'Keeffe, 2013). College graduation rate is at an all-time low in the United States. "...About 60 percent of students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at a 4-year institution in fall 2010 completed that degree within 6 years; the 6-year graduation rate was higher for females than for males (63 vs. 57 percent)" (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018, "Undergraduate retention and graduation rates," para. 1).

Highly selective institutions tend to have higher graduation rates. There are differences in graduation rates based on institution classification: public, private-nonprofit, and private-for-profit institutions. The institution's admission policy also has an effect on graduation and retention rates. For example:

...The 6-year graduation rate was 59 percent at public institutions, 66 percent at private nonprofit institutions, and 26 percent at private for-profit institutions. The 6-year graduation rate was 63 percent for females and 57 percent for males; it was higher for females than for males at both public (62 vs. 56 percent) and private nonprofit (68 vs. 63 percent) institutions. However, at private for-profit institutions, males had a higher 6-year graduation rate than females (28 vs. 23 percent). (NCES, 2018, "Undergraduate retention and graduation rates," para. 6).

Historically, individuals from low socio-economic strata, marginalized groups, and racial minorities have not had equal access to higher education. This has changed significantly as federal student loans and financial aid have become more readily available to diverse student populations. As access to higher education improves; retention and graduation have become critical challenges facing higher-education institutions. A large number of American students are leaving college without completing their degrees, and many of them have accumulated huge student loans. Scholars in the field have argued

that the society as a whole has done a better job of opening up access to higher education but collectively, we have not paid enough attention to student success and retention. To fully reap the benefits of open access, access has to be met with success. As Strayhorn (2015) indicated, “Access without success is useless, but access with success is everything” (p. 58).

Federal and State Completion Agenda

America is losing its competitive advantage of having the most-educated workforce in the world. We were once a world leader in the proportion of our population between the ages of twenty-four and thirty-five holding a college certificate or bachelor’s degree, but this is no longer the case. Many countries are catching up and America is now lagging behind other countries in educational attainment. According to the World Top 20 Project (2018), in 2017, U.S. ranked 16th out of 209 countries around the world. In his remarks on education reform, former President Barack Obama, argued that “America cannot lead in the 21st century unless we have the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world” (Obama, 2009, “Remarks on education reform,” para. 4). He urged Americans to once again take the lead in higher education attainment. In the past decade, there were policy initiatives from the U.S. government and the state government to increase degree and certificate completion and job placement, with special attention to the fast-growing first-generation, under-represented, and economically-disadvantaged populations.

The federal/state governments and accrediting bodies now require higher-education institutions to ascertain quality and ensure that students persist through college and can earn their degrees. Setting reasonable and ambitious goals to move students toward degree completion is one of the criteria for accreditation by most regional accreditors. For example, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Criterion 4.C. reviews whether institutions demonstrate “...a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs” (HLC, 2018, “Criterion 4. Teaching and learning: evaluation and improvement,” para. 4). State governments collect longitudinal data and student-unit records to inform policy decisions on their completion agenda. Again, the need for degree completion is evident as half of the fastest-growing occupations in America require a Bachelor’s degree or more (Tinto, 2012). Consequently, young adults without an earned college degree are at a disadvantage to compete in the job market. Furthermore, earning a 4-year college degree is a path to upward mobility, higher socio-economic strata, and access to prestigious positions within society (Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin, 2005; Tinto, 2012).

High student-attrition rates do have negative financial implications for higher-education institutions that are tuition dependent. Institutional survival is now contingent upon the number of students that successfully complete their degrees. As Tinto (2012) observed, “some institutions, primarily the smaller tuition-driven colleges, have teetered on the brink of financial collapse. Indeed, many have closed their doors in recent years with many more predicted to follow suit” (p. 2).

Student enrollment remains a challenge in higher education, which also has implications for student retention. Higher-education enrollment has been on the decline. Enrollment tends to vary by the type of institution and by the institutions’ admission policies and selectivity. Highly-selective higher-education institutions have always experienced huge increases in student enrollment while smaller tuition-driven colleges and universities are experiencing a significant drop in enrollment of traditional undergraduate students (Tinto, 2012). As institutions experience low student enrollment from their homogenous feeder high schools, they have changed their recruitment strategies to include huge marketing campaigns with minority and underserved populations. They have also intensified their recruitment efforts, which have resulted in minimal increases in overall student enrollment. These have resulted in more diverse student bodies which are comprised of first generation students, racial minorities, women, and students from low socio-economic strata.

Differences in Retention by Student Population

Open access means the college population is becoming more diverse. Heisserer and Parette (2002) identified ethnic-minority students, academically-disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, students from low socio-economic strata, and probationary students as being at risk of non-completion of their degrees. Collier and Morgan (2008) argued that first-generation college students need to be included in the at-risk student populations. In general, the term “first generation” is used to describe college students for which neither parent has completed a four-year higher-education degree. These students are the first in their families to attend a four-year college/university to earn a bachelor’s degree.

Some of the first-generation students may not be as successful as their counterparts because they do not have parents at home with college experience who can provide advice and support on how to navigate the terrains of higher education. Also, some of the minority students or students from low-socio-economic backgrounds may not be well prepared for college and may face academic challenges as a result. Some could become trapped in a continuous

cycle of developmental education without any opportunity for academic success or progress toward credit-bearing courses. When students from underserved populations are faced with these obstacles in the first year of college, they may have a negative perception of themselves. Some even doubt their decision to attend college and their own ability to succeed. All they need at that period of self-doubt is confirmation from faculty or institution staff that they don't fit in or they don't belong or they don't matter, and they will give themselves the permission to quit.

Tinto (2012) observed that the largest proportion of institutional leaving occurs in the first year and prior to the beginning of the second year. The first year of college is considered the most vulnerable period in a student's academic career because students are making a transition from home to college for the first time. During this period, the majority of the students are separated from their parents and are coping with their new lives as young adults, making decisions for themselves. Integration into the social fabric of the institution may also be a challenge during this first year (Lee, Olson, Locke, & Michelson, 2009). There is a higher likelihood of degree completion for students who persisted beyond the first year of college.

New Perspectives to Improve Student Persistence and Completion

Tinto presented two perspectives on student retention: the institutional and the student perspectives. He argued that for several years student retention was viewed from an institutional perspective with an emphasis on actions that institutions can take to retain their students. He further argued that "students, however, do not seek to be retained. They seek to persist" (Tinto, 2016, para. 1). While there is a relationship between these two perspectives, they are not the same. In order to promote student success, institutions have to look at retention from the students' perspective. Students' ultimate goal is to earn a college degree without any regard to the institution in which it is earned. The responsibility of the college or university is to ensure that students persist to earn that college degree. Persistence from the students' viewpoint requires effort and motivation even when faced with what appear to be unsurmountable challenges.

The institution's capacity to affirm, encourage, and provide appropriate support to ethnic-minority students, students with disabilities, students from low socio-economic strata, probationary students, and first-generation students may increase students' ability to persevere against all odds. A number of researchers claimed that social isolation in school is more strongly associated with low academic interest for ethnic-minority students than ethnic-minority students (Walton & Cohen, 2007; Zirkel, 2004).

Walton and Cohen conducted two experiments on how a belonging-uncertainty, a sense of not knowing where one fits in, undermines the motivation and achievement of people whose group is negatively characterized in academic settings. “The intervention aimed to lessen psychological perceptions of threat on campus by framing social adversity as common and transient” (Walton & Cohen, 2011, p. 1447). They observed that the intervention buffered African-American students’ sense of fit against academic adversity, “it raised African Americans grade-point average (GPA) relative to multiple control groups and halved the minority achievement gap...It prevented students from seeing adversity on campus as an indictment of their belonging” (Walton & Cohen, 2011, p. 1447).

The capacity of universities to increase degree completion is contingent on the increase in the number of students who want to persist to completion. If universities successfully meet student’s needs for social and intellectual growth, retention will be a natural outcome of those institutional efforts. This will require institutions to understand how student experiences on campus shape their motivation to persist. There are effective strategies that institutions can use to enhance student motivation. For example, higher-education institutions can be more intentional in developing inclusive programs that lessen the impact of social isolation and loneliness.

In his most recent writing, Tinto (2016) identified students’ self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and perceived value of the curriculum as factors that can influence student motivation to persist. Yamauchi, Taira & Trevorrow’s review of over ten years of research indicated that “academic and social engagement had indirect effects on student persistence through institutional commitment...” (Yamauchi, Taira & Trevorrow, 2016, p. 460). These authors argued that engagement is related to persistence, retention, and grades. It is key for all student learning and especially for culturally-diverse students without role models. These scholars emphasized dual responsibility for student engagement, namely at the student level and at the institutional level. Students have the responsibility to be engaged in meaningful activities. Institutions, on the other hand, have the responsibility to provide activities that will engage those students (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Quaye, Griffin, & Museus, 2015).

Student Engagement

The majority of higher-education institutions in the U.S. and Canada administer the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) annually to first-year and senior students on college campuses. The survey measures the extent to which students are engaged in and are exposed to proven educational

practices that correspond to desired learning outcomes. Institutions use the data to improve undergraduate education. As NSSE (2018) articulated:

Student engagement represents two critical features of collegiate quality. The first is the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities. The second is how the institution deploys its resources and organizes the curriculum and other learning opportunities to get students to participate in activities that decades of research studies show are linked to student learning. (NSSE, 2018, para. 1).

Student Engagement and Retention

A true measure of learning is what students know and are able to do. Kuh et al. (2005) claimed that “what students do during college counts more for what they learn and whether they will persist in college than who they are or even where they go to college” (p. 8). A number of researchers have indicated that the time and effort students devote to their studies and other educationally purposeful activities is a predictor of their learning and personal development (Pace, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; 2005). Yamauchi, Tara & Trevorrow (2016) observed that engagement is related to important student outcomes such as persistence, retention, and grades. Their critical review of research findings affirmed that academic engagement and social engagement together had indirect effects on student persistence. Engagement is associated with the degree to which students were committed to staying at a particular school (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Carini (2012) identified the following dimensions of engagement: behavioral investment, cognitive investment, emotional investment, and social investment. Behavioral engagement consists of actions students take on their part to foster their own learning such as coming to class and completing assignments. Cognitive engagement is described as the students paying attention and problem solving. Emotional engagement is the interest and enthusiasm students show for the task at hand. Social engagement is the feeling of being connected to classmates and teachers and a sense of being in a supportive campus environment. According to the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine (2004), students tend to view the curriculum as relevant when they have emotional engagement. This could mean that emotional engagement is essential before cognitive engagement is possible. It is critical that schools address the needs and interests of their students. Students will devote time and energy to learn new materials that they have considered relevant and that meet their needs and interests (Tinto, 2016).

Research has shown that student experiences on campus (social and academic adjustment) were related to a student’s decision to persist at the university (Woodsley, 2003). Other researchers have provided evidence that

commitment to the university and involvement in campus activities (social and academic) are strongly related to retention (Astin, 1984, Beil, Reisen, Zea, & Caplan, 1999; Cadet, 2008; Milem & Berger, 1997, Mutter, 1992). Social interactions with their peers, contacts with faculty, and perceived value of the quality of their academic experiences are indicators of whether students will persist at that institution. It will be difficult for a student to depart from an institution after spending a considerable amount of time there (Astin, 1984).

Scholars in the field have suggested that there is a dual responsibility for engagement and retention (Tinto, 2016). In this case, students have a responsibility to be engaged in meaningful activities and the university has a responsibility to provide activities that will engage them. It is imperative that institutions provide learning opportunities that are relevant, meaningful, and meet the needs and interests of the students. When students are emotionally engaged, they tend to have a positive view of the curriculum. Engagement also includes the ways in which the institution allocates resources and organizes learning opportunities and services to induce students to participate in and benefit from such activities (Kuh et al., 2005). Quaye, Griffin, and Museus (2015) advocated that educators need to shift their pedagogical practices to match the needs of students of color who are often required to assimilate in predominantly white institutions. Engaging students in purposeful learning activities will improve retention and lead to higher graduation rates. The best-known engagement indicators as described in the “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education” include: student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, time on task, high expectations, respect for diverse talents and ways of learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Other researchers have also provided evidence on the impact of sense of belonging on student success and retention (Strayhorn, 2012; Tinto, 2016).

Sense of Belonging

Abraham Maslow (1954), in his explanation of basic human needs, affirmed that people are generally motivated to fulfill basic physiological needs for food and shelter, as well as those of safety, love/belonging, and esteem. All people have an innate desire for self-actualization which is a desire to fulfill one's individual potential. However, this level of need can only be attained after lower-level needs for food and shelter, love and belonging have been met. The ultimate goal of education is to inspire students to self-actualize and strive to reach their full potential. The highest level of need on Maslow's hierarchy of needs is attainable if all other lower-level needs have been met. According to Maslow (1962) all people share a strong need to belong.

There are various definitions of belonging. Strayhorn defines sense of belonging as:...a basic human need and motivation, sufficient to

influence behavior...students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers). It's a cognitive evaluation that typically leads to an affective response or behavior. (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 3)

In the literature, sense of belonging is often associated with "sense of community." McMillan and Chavis (1986) define belonging as "a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p. 9). In a similar sense, Goodenow (1993a) defines sense of belonging as "students' sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others (teachers and peers) in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class" (p. 25). In an earlier study, Strayhorn (2008) viewed sense of belonging as relational:

Sense of belonging consists of both cognitive and affective elements. An individual assesses his/her position or role in relation to the group (cognitive), which, in turn, results in a response, behavior, or outcome (affective). Sense of belonging, then, reflects the extent to which students feel connected, a part of, or stuck to a campus... for example, some scholars measure sense of belonging as how much others would miss you if you went away (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, as cited in Strayhorn, 2008, p. 505).

Sense of belonging is also a sense of fitting in; being part of a group, a community, membership in an organization with acceptance from other members of the group. Strayhorn (2012) observed that college students stress the importance of social acceptance, support, community connections, and respect to their own identity, well-being and academic success. Sense of belonging is so important that it is literally a matter of life and death for some students. Strayhorn (2012) in his review of the literature identified seven core elements of sense of belonging which are summarized below:

Core Elements of the Sense of Belonging

1. *Sense of belonging is a basic human need.*

Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Strayhorn (2012) explained how important belonging is to all human beings. First the basic need for food and shelter have to be met before belonging, esteem and self-actualization, the highest level in the hierarchy of needs. If goals of the middle motivations, like sense of belonging are not met, the higher-order needs such as self-actualization, which is the ultimate goal of higher education, cannot be met. Strayhorn argued that

sense of belonging is a basic human need and, is also a basic need for college students. Belonging is critical to a sense of self and crucial for meeting the higher-order needs like knowledge, understanding, and self-actualization. Students cannot experience higher-order needs until the need for sense of belonging has been met.

2. *Sense of belonging is a fundamental motive, sufficient to drive human behavior.*

All of us yearn to belong, which is the motive behind our actions, and the reason that we act in certain ways. Some have joined churches, the military, girl's/boy's scouts, peace corps. While some of these actions and behaviors may be prosocial, others are antisocial. "In their desperation or longing to belong..., to feel worthwhile, some impressionable youth may join a gang..." (Clark, 1992, p. 289). Strayhorn (2012) explained that the drive to belong is so powerful that it keeps people in bad romantic relationships that may even be toxic to their own existence. People stay in such relationships because "all people want to feel cared about, needed, valued, and somewhat indispensable as the object of someone else's affection..." (p. 19). In educational settings, "the need to belong can drive students to or against academic achievement norms." (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 19). Brilliant female students may underperform in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) to fit in with other girls. In their need to belong, students may dis-associate "...with adults and achieving peers in schools, and consequently satisfy their need to belong by affiliating with those who promised them security, community and support in exchange for their commitment to anti-academic values" (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 19).

3. *Sense of belonging takes on heightened importance in certain contexts, at certain times, and among certain populations.*

In certain contexts, sense of belonging becomes very important when one is "a newcomer to an otherwise established group" (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 20). It is quite challenging for newcomers to become fully accepted and integrated into an established group because it is human nature to be clannish and tribal and view others as outsiders. Hence the heightened need for belonging for individuals in a new context. Sense of belonging is also important at "late adolescence when individuals begin to consider who they are (or wish to be), with whom they belong, and where they intend to invest their time and energies" (Chickerings & Reisser, 1993; Sanford, 1962 as cited in

Strayhorn, 2012, p. 20). Also, it is critical among certain populations especially those that have been marginalized (Goodenow, 1993a).

In the context of a department or classroom, sense of belonging has the greatest influence on outcomes (e.g., adjustment to college or achievement in college). Goodenow (1993b) argued that issues of inclusion and belonging can predominate to a point that “until members resolve where they stand in a particular social setting they face difficulty in attending to the official tasks at hand” (p. 88). Strayhorn (2012) applied this same concept to higher education and argued “that college students face serious difficulty in attending to the tasks at hand (studying, learning, retaining) until they resolve one of their most fundamental needs – a need to belong” (p. 20).

4. *Sense of belonging is related to, and seemingly a consequence of, mattering.*

Schlossberg (1985) defines mattering as “feeling that one matters, is valued or appreciated by others.” Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) identified five dimensions of mattering a) attention (noticed in positive ways, commands interest), b) importance (cared about, special, object of another’s concern) c) dependence (feeling needed, reciprocity, d) appreciated (feeling respected) e) ego extension (believing others share in one’s success).

Mattering emphasizes the relational aspect of sense of belonging. To meet the need to belong, an individual must feel respected, valued, appreciated and that someone cares about them, that he or she matters. This sense of belonging is what most families provide for their members and what others seek from social organizations and anti-social organizations.

5. *Social identities intersect and affect college students’ sense of belonging.*

Strayhorn (2012) argued that although a sense of belonging is universal and all human beings have a need and desire to belong, individuals experience belonging in new and different ways based on their social identity as college students. “Social identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion) ...intersect and often simultaneously affect college students’ sense of belonging.” Individuals may have to negotiate multiple dimensions of these identities (Asian male who is gay; Black woman who is from a working-class family). Each identity may send conflicting messages which must be negotiated for a successful outcome.

6. *Sense of belonging engenders other positive outcomes.*

There are some obvious benefits to satisfying the need for a sense of belonging. It leads to positive and prosocial outcomes such as engagement, achievement, wellbeing, happiness, and optimal functioning. Research has shown that sense of belonging in college influences persistence intentions. (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007). Strayhorn (2012) urged higher-education institutions to create campus environments that foster sense of belonging so students feel connected with other students on campus. He believes once students establish a positive relationship with others on campus, it will be difficult for them to break such a relationship, and as such they may choose to continue their college career for the sake of the relationship.

7. *Sense of belonging must be satisfied on a continual basis and changes as circumstances, conditions, and contexts change.*

Sense of belonging is a basic human need and motivation which needs to be met on a continual basis. It is not static, it changes as circumstances and conditions change. Any disruption to one's sense of belonging may have negative consequences and individuals may need to reengage in meaningful relationships or activities that foster a positive sense of belonging to feel connected to the community once again.

Conclusion

Higher-education institutions in the U.S. are experiencing challenges with student persistence and retention. As student enrollment declines, tuition-dependent institutions are recruiting from underserved populations who previously did not have easy access to higher education. Access to financial aid is making education more affordable for under-privileged students. Such improved access now means that more and more college students are ethnically diverse, first-generation students, and are from the lower socio-economic strata. Institutions are good at making education accessible, but that does not guarantee degree completion. Federal and state governments and regional accrediting bodies are now holding higher-education institutions accountable for degree completion to increase America's competitive advantage.

Students who are ethnic minorities, academically disadvantaged, have disabilities, are from low socio-economic strata, and/or are first-generation college students are at risk for degree non-completion (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Heisserer & Parette, 2002). The capacity of universities to increase degree completion is contingent on what they do to ensure that more of their students want to persist to degree completion (Tinto, 2016). This requires institutions to

understand how experiences on campus shape student motivation to persist and institutional understanding to enhance such student motivation. It is imperative that institutions take these differences into consideration in programming and provide additional support as needed so diverse groups of students feel a sense of belonging, and are supported in achieving their academic and professional goals. Students are motivated to learn, and succeed in their studies when they are in a supportive campus environment. Sense of belonging, students' feeling of mattering, and their being able to count on the support of faculty and staff to meet their academic needs, social interests, and desires are all critical elements for fostering student success and student retention. **LEJ**

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Perceptions of Chinese Scholars at Concordia University Chicago

by Yongmei Song and Margaret Trybus

The exchange of professors between Concordia University Chicago (CUC) and Hebei University of Economics and Business (HUEB) in China was made possible by a joint program between the two institutions. The goals of the program were to improve Chinese teaching by exposure to Western curriculum and design development, and to further research in the academic fields of business, economics, law, cultural communication, and linguistics. Nine scholars from (HUEB) came to CUC for six months, during which time they conducted research, attended graduate courses, and experienced cross-cultural exchanges with CUC faculty. A seminar series on teaching and learning in higher education, classroom visits, interacting with an academic mentor, and engaging in cultural experiences made this program enriching to all participants.

Mentor program

Each Chinese scholar partnered with a CUC faculty mentor assigned to him or her based on their common academic field. They met on a weekly basis to discuss academic development in the courses they taught and current international trends in their respective fields. According to Hansman (2001), cross-cultural mentoring relationships where a person with more experience works with a less experienced one enhances both personal and professional development. Over the course of six months, mentors and mentees not only developed professional friendships but discovered that over time, they formed close relationships as colleagues and friends which can be expected to continue after the time at CUC (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2002).

What is apparent is that the context of student learning in Chinese universities is changing from a focus on the teacher as the expert to the teacher as facilitator. During classroom observations, the Chinese scholars were able to see how their mentors approached facilitating learning and then discussed the impact of that approach and ways to model the same techniques in HUEB. One scholar said, “The instructor first generalized the lecture, then facilitated discussion by walking around the classroom and getting involved in each group’s discussion.” Most scholars felt that American students are active in class activities, and they are ready to express themselves. One scholar said, “Although

my class is much bigger than American classes, after I go back to China, I will try to listen to each group and engage in their discussion.”

Additionally, several Chinese Scholars conducted research and field investigations with their mentors, which resulted in writing papers and giving presentations to CUC faculty and administration. Each scholar, together with his/her mentor, delivered a slideshow on his/her research, addressing topics of particular interest and need in their fields. Table 1 represents the variety of topics related to the academic fields of the Chinese scholars.

Table 1
Chinese scholar presentations

Academic field	Title of the presentation
Linguistics	Critical Literacy in a Chinese EFL Reading Class
Economics	The Comparison of Agriculture in China and the United States
Innovation Management	Innovation and New Thinking in Decision-Making
Law	Comparison of Copyright Law System: China and the United States
Marketing	Case Study Research Project 2018 on Asian films
Human Resources	Reshaping the Cultivating Mode of International Talents Based on Competency Model
Financial Management	Financial Decision System of Shared Models based on the Study of Sharing Bicycles
Economics	Two-Way FDI in China and the United States: Prospects of Past, Present and Future

The presentations were a significant outcome of the mentoring relationship. Research areas were discussed and the mentors coached the scholars to help them with the content and delivery of new ideas. For many scholars, their partnership and friendship with the mentor may continue cross-culturally

across the ocean even after the program. One of the scholars felt that “Our joint case study could reap the harvest when the program drew to an end, but I will restart another cooperation with my mentor after the program.”

Classroom visits

The scholars not only partnered with their mentors in research investigations, they also visited and observed undergraduate and graduate courses at CUC. Sitting in the classroom as students, the scholars listened attentively, while observing the teaching style and strategies the mentor used. They were also curious to know how CUC faculty assess student performance and learning outcomes in both formative and summative assessments. This included reviewing CUC course curriculum and assignments, online discussions, and assessment documents. As observers of the class, the scholars found both similarities and differences between Chinese and American curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Similar to Chinese classes, observations indicated that some American students are quiet in group activities, and some American instructors lecture throughout the class. However, different from Chinese students who do not volunteer responses without being asked (Pine, 2012, p. 85), their American counterparts freely volunteer to express ideas and insights. Different from a quiet Chinese class, most American classes observed were dominated by group discussions and group presentations, which required pre-class preparation and in-class effective engagement. In China, the professor usually elaborates in great detail for fear that the students might not understand. However, their American counterparts seem to generalize the topic without elaboration in detail, which may be due to requiring the students’ pre-class preparation often including online discussions based on required readings. This method indicated that American professors’ instruction was much easier for undergraduate students to grasp the content, compared with Chinese scholars’ experience teaching in the same field. The Chinese instructors felt that their own levels of understanding may go deeper when teaching their subject matter, especially in business classes.

Different from Chinese professors who “primarily help students dig deeply into the meaning of a text but seldom help the students express what they might think or feel about the text,” their American counterparts help students understanding by drawing the students and their experiences into the learning process (Pine, 2012, p. 93). Chinese teacher-student relationships are greatly influenced by Confucian ideology which requires the student’s respect for the teacher (Li, 2012, p. 51-52). The American professor seems more like a friend than a teacher to the student. As one scholar said, “What impressed me deeply

was the good atmosphere of interaction between the professor and the students resulting in a friendship.” Another apparent difference in the two systems was regarding assessment of student learning. In China, universities place more weight on summative assessment, most commonly a paper and pencil test. American professors attach more importance to the students’ formative performance which requires the students’ to engage in online discussions and classroom activities. The Chinese scholars are working toward expanding their understanding of different types of assessment in order to shift from traditional methods to more diverse ways to evaluate student learning.

Weighing the similarities and the differences during the class observations revealed different class sizes in China which are often are 50–100 or even more in a lecture hall. A second difference is also seen in student performances where in China students are quiet and inactive perhaps due to the cultural value of respect for teachers and their prior learning experiences. Finally, the teaching methods in CUC are flexible and faculty adjust the delivery of instruction to meet student needs. In China, instruction is delivered based on the textbook material and consequently teachers lack the motivation to make changes. The classroom visits benefited the Chinese observers, and helped to improve their confidence to enhance instructional delivery in order to improve student achievement in China (Grimm, E. D., & Kaufman, T. & Doty, D., 2014). One scholar said, “Since the instructor and I teach similar courses, I can borrow a lot from how he crafted the lesson and how he facilitated the class.”

Seminar courses

The scholars attended two courses. One was a weekly Seminar. The intent was to further individual writing based on reflections of different perspectives the scholars were reading in relationship to their own teaching or research. For instance, they learned the importance of generating problem-posing education in comparison with traditional banking education, so that students are engaged in higher-level thinking. This supports making education more relevant and meaningful to students, as well as going beyond knowledge attained through a textbook. As a result of this Seminar, the scholars began to examine their positionality bias which may impact their thinking and expectations about student learning (Takacs, 2003). The Seminar enabled the scholars to discuss, debate and rethink their way of teaching through a different lens. At the same time, the Seminar helped the scholars develop ways to improve their academic writing in their disciplines. One scholar felt, “The instructor recommended a couple of useful academic books, some of which are of great help to my paper writing.”

The other course the scholars took was a doctoral course in Curriculum

Theory and Design which provided scholars with advanced teaching theories and lesson design. All the scholars agreed that they learned about models of teaching which are applicable to different curriculum structures, and different student needs. For example, the theories presented included constructivism, multiple intelligences, differentiated instruction, and experiential education, all of which the scholars were not familiar with. The theories were also the basis of instructional strategies which included inductive and deductive reasoning, concept attainment, role play, advanced organizers, and cooperative learning, to name a few. The CUC faculty member worked to teach the course in a constructivist manner so that the scholars were very engaged and active. Guest speakers, members of the graduate faculty, also enhanced the course by sharing their expertise in related topics. As they learned about Bloom’s taxonomy, the scholars realized that higher levels of learning require application and synthesis of knowledge in order to be understood and developed (Bloom, 1984). According to one of the scholars, “I’ve got a systematic understanding of the teaching models in this course, which will help me improve my teaching in the future.”

During the doctoral course, the scholars were able to produce engaging presentations that demonstrated the connection between the theories they were learning and the practice within the curricular field. Table 2 shows the model of teaching and the content focus.

Table 2
Presentations in Curriculum theory and design

Models of teaching	Content focus
Role play	Chinese son working on problem solving with family members
Deductive and inductive method	Definition Exemplification Relationship between Deductive and Inductive method
Advanced organizer	Foods at Chinese Spring Festival
Concept attainment	Stereotypes – Gender differences

Cultural experiences

In addition to the research and study on campus, the scholars went off campus exploring the United States ranging from museum visits, sporting events, a jazz show, and a visit to a manufacturing plant. The cultural experiences were intended to capitalize on the Chicagoland area, and several scholars also toured other geographic regions of the U.S.A. This enabled the scholars to get a sense of culture living in a western country.

Since Chicago is home to world-class museums which make up the best attractions, the scholars visited the Field Museum, Museum of Science and Industry, and Oriental Institute Museum at the University of Chicago. It was no surprise that the museums, with rich collections in Chicago, do cater to diversified needs of people in different walks of life. For example, children can enjoy the Children's Museum at Navy Pier, fans of science will find Museum of Science and Industry of interest, and art enthusiasts the Art Institute of Chicago. The Chinese found the museums a great resource for understanding civilization that appeals to people of all cultures and ages. This experience enriched their understanding of the global community and the importance of documenting the past and exploring the future.

The United States is seen as a sporting power to the outside world, including China. Seeing a National Basketball Association (NBA) game was unique to the scholars since basketball is not as popular in China as in the USA. The excitement of the crowd and the frenzy of the atmosphere provided a unique experience. However, the nation's sporting culture is not only featured in the high-profile NBA, but it is best reflected in low-profile daily sports that the average citizen participates in. For example, CUC has its own baseball team with an excellent record, children play baseball after school with the company of their parents, and local residents jog in the streets. Such is a nation of sports. In China, sports are seen as a way to promote healthy living through exercise such as square dancing, yoga, and tai chi. Organized sports in China are very similar to high schools and colleges as in the USA, but in China, academics are more valued than sports.

Chicago is undeniably the city where jazz is thriving and evolving, so the scholars could not miss the *Blue Man Group* show which epitomized pop culture in the USA. The use of light, sound, and movement created an atmosphere that was bold and loud to the scholars. Pop culture can also be found on a street corner in Chicago where a band plays their music and where a solo singer performs with the beat of a drum. Such is a real American pop culture, which was eye opening to the Chinese scholars.

The United States is also home to hundreds of Fortune 500 companies in the world, one of which is Kohler located in Wisconsin. The scholars made a

two-day trip to Kohler visiting the Design Center, its factory, and the factory-town community. Kohler provided a good lesson to the scholars, particularly to the business professors. Of interest was learning about the core values of Kohler that create beautiful living spaces for families. Kohler stands out as not just being concerned about its employees, but also guaranteeing the quality of its products to its customers.

From HUEB in China to CUC in Chicago, from East to West, the six-month experience for both the Chinese and American university professors established personal and professional relationships. In the short sojourn in the United States, language and cultural differences are always the two major challenges for international scholars and students (Li, W. D. & Chen, S. S., 2017). Due to the acculturation process, the scholars had to adapt in order to integrate into the culture of the university and the community. The language challenges were apparent for both groups of educators. In the classroom, some scholars found it hard to understand what the instructor delivered. In a bank, it was similarly difficult for some of them to open a bank card. However, over time and through hard work and study, these barriers were minimized and the scholars, working with the Americans, helped each other.

Communication was also a clash. For instance, it's common for the Chinese to make a call or use *WeChat* to reach each other, whereas Americans prefer emails. There was a sense of frustration from the scholars in the beginning, since these differences required a change in communication practices. Another observable difference is that it's common for today's hospitable Chinese to treat their friends in a restaurant instead of at home. Several of the Americans preferred treating friends, including the scholars, at their home. Even if at home, it's common for the Chinese to prepare a hearty table of hot meals for a party and all sit at the table chatting without moving around, whereas their American counterparts may be more social—walking around, chatting with one another, etc.

Although differences existed between the two cultures, the scholars could still feel the American people's hospitality. "I was impressed by the party at the mentor's house and I could feel the hospitality of average American families," recalled one scholar. The CUC faculty was very concerned with the comfort level of the scholars, and realized the importance of bridging any cultural divides in order to make this a positive experience for all.

Conclusion

The six-month program built good relationships between Chinese scholars and their CUC mentors in order to realize the research cooperation between the two groups. Although the scholars are no longer on campus, their cooperation

will continue as co-authored papers will further research goals. Additionally, this program built confidence for these Chinese scholars in that their English language was elevated and their practices improved by learning systematic teaching theories. This program also built international perspectives for these Chinese scholars in their acculturation into American way of life. Finally, this program intensified cooperation at the undergraduate level between the colleges of business at the two institutions. **LEJ**

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How is Luther to be Remembered?

1517: Martin Luther and the Invention of the Reformation
by Peter Marshall. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
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At this point, writing about the commemoration of the quincentennial of the posting of the *Ninety-five Theses* is like finding a lump of fruitcake in the back of the refrigerator, whether or not you like rum and candied fruit.

Unless we are, however, complete captives of our attention span, what we certainly must have taken from the 2017 celebration of the Reformation is that it commemorated events that, unlike leftovers, do not have an expiration date—that the Reformation has an ongoing significance in the matrix of human affairs called history and in the lives of uncounted people living and dead. The Reformation's perceived meaning for groups and individuals over the past five centuries is the subject that Peter Marshall, Professor of History at the University of Warwick, takes up in *1517* (Marshall, 2017). Central to his discussion is why Protestants have fixed 1517 as **the** Luther year, why the posting of the *Ninety-five Theses* has become the zero minute of the Reformation's launch, and what the action of its posting meant both then and later on.

For most Lutherans it must seem only natural that the posting is **the** iconic image of the Reformation's inception, but Marshall is very careful to show that it has only become so, and to a great extent was a creation of later centuries, not the sixteenth. Before then it competed with other moments of perhaps greater historical significance in the formation of Lutheranism and Protestantism's emergence from Catholicism; for example, 1520 with the publication of Luther's *Freedom of a Christian* (among other landmark statements of Lutheran doctrine and dissent) and Luther's burning of the bull of his own excommunication, 1521 with Luther's appearance at the Diet of Worms that ended with his "Here I Stand" declaration, 1522 with the publication of the New Testament in Luther's German translation, and even 1530 with the publication of the *Augsburg Confession*.

What is for Marshall even more curious is that the posting

of the *Ninety-five Theses* probably did not take place in the way that nearly all moderns think it happened, if they have absorbed the iconography of the event in art or on the screen such as that reprinted. Since 1961 a growing number of historians have expressed reasonable doubts that Luther indeed nailed the document to the door of Wittenberg's Castle Church. Marshall recounts the issues and evidence surrounding the posting in chapters one and two and comes to the following conclusions: First, the main act of Luther's publication was the mailing of the *Ninety-five Theses* along with a tract on indulgences to Germany's primate Albrecht, the Archbishop of Mainz sometime after October 31. Second, when he did not get a timely response he circulated the document among colleagues in order to hold an academic debate against the abuses of indulgence selling, the reason that Luther ostensibly wrote the *Ninety-five Theses* in the first place. If there had been a public posting in Wittenberg, it therefore took place not in October, but in November. The hoped-for debate, however, never took place. Third, Luther lost control of the text of the *Ninety-five Theses* as they were copied, printed and reprinted multiple times in late 1517 and early 1518 through the agency of both those who considered Luther a friend or a foe. Fourth, Luther's theses do not constitute an anti-Catholic manifesto, but expressed a pastor's distress about the excesses of indulgence preaching and selling—excesses that other Catholic officials had previously voiced. Fifth, Luther never reminisced around the table or wrote about ever tacking up the *Ninety-five Theses*. The first and best evidence of the posting of the document came from Philip Melanchthon who wrote in *Life of Luther* (1546) simply that Luther “publically attached these [theses] to the church attached to Wittenberg Castle, on the day before the feast of All Saints, 1517.” It is also Melanchthon who first gave the posting its privilege of place as “the beginning of the declaration of Christian teaching,” and “the start of the amendment of doctrine.” “Remember, therefore, this day, and at the same time think of these same things!” (Melanchthon, P. 1522, as cited in Marshall, 2017, p. 63, 70)

Marshall is not dismissive of what Melanchthon wrote about the October revolution of 1517, because Melanchthon was not an irresponsible man or careless scholar. On the other hand, Melanchthon was not an eyewitness, and his interests in the event were not primarily historical. Therefore, the posting of the *Ninety-five Theses* is as Marshall's title advertises an “invention”: “[I]t can, categorically, be stated that the *Thesenanschlag* [German for the “Theses Posting” and, sorry to say, Marshall's preferred term for the traditional hammer-driven-nails-affixing-paper-to-wooden-door perception of the event] is a myth. That is not the same as to say it is a lie or a deception, and even less to imply that it is something peripheral or unimportant.” Rather, this myth like all myths are “powerful and meaningful narratives, which give shape to deeply engrained

values, beliefs, and ideals. They are, quite simply, ‘the stories which a group, a society, or a culture lives by’” (Marshall, 2017, p. 13-14).

Clearly Marshall is not a vandal in that he is seeking to strike hammer blows of his own on the sacred objects of others, but to give the commemoration of the Reformation some context—to show readers how Protestants and Catholics, Lutherans and the Reformed, Germans and Anglo-Americans, among others, have over time understood the value and significance of the Reformation. In fact, the majority of the book is a study of what the Reformation meant in the context of the times from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, using quite a variety of contemporary memorabilia, media, and religious and secular writing produced around the centennials and half-centennials of the *Ninety-five Thesis*, and Luther’s birth and death. In this respect, the title of the book is misleading. Only the first two chapters are specifically about 1517.

Marshall’s survey of how the Reformation has been commemorated shows that contemporary events powerfully shaped what participants understood its value to be. On the eve of Germany’s Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648), the 1617 Jubilee of the Reformation was an opportunity to shore up Protestant solidarity and morale in the face of growing imperial and Catholic militancy against them. In the next century, those in Enlightenment circles saw the Reformation as “a crucial milestone in a progressive human history of emancipation” that on the one hand emphasized “how a corrupt and oppressive Church exploited popular ‘superstition,’” and on the other “Luther’s Reformation was the harbinger of economic progress, reason, toleration in religion, emancipation from irrational beliefs, and the ability of each person to ‘think for themselves’” (Marshall, 2017, p. 110).

The nineteenth-century celebrations grew and became more elaborate as more participants joined—including for the first time, American Lutherans. In Germany, Luther reached the pinnacle of his hero status, the *Thesenanschlag* achieved iconic status, and Wittenberg became a must-see tourist destination enhanced by the 1858 installation of bronze doors to the Castle Church emblazoned with the *Ninety-five Theses*. The twentieth century with its two world wars, the rise and destruction of the Nazi Empire, the rise and implosion of the German Democratic Republic, and the growing specialization of historical and theological disciplines fragmented views, heightened anxieties and criticisms about Luther and the Reformation. Indeed, Marshall’s final chapter becomes, as the title denotes, a catalog of controversies.

Marshall’s book is helpful in that it will remind thoughtful readers that the process of learning is often tied to unlearning, the difficulty of which should not be taken lightly. In the case of the hammering Luther, the unlearning of the imagery should not be gut-wrenching, rather an appreciation that history,

as dramatic as it is, is likely never as picturesque as the devices of the artist, the poet, the filmmaker, the preacher, and even some historians. Moreover, Marshall affirms the posting has been a powerful image of justice and reform, and one that has helped Lutherans reclaim its legacy from those seeking to debase or coopt it. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see this book being of interest to a general audience, especially those who are interested in the life and times of Luther or seeking a clear-cut estimate of the Reformation's historical effect. For those interested interested in other recent works on Luther, the work of Andrew Pettegree or Scott H. Hendrix may be a better fit. The bibliography below lists the details. **LEJ**

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Restoring the Soul of the University

Restoring the Soul of the University: Unifying Christian Higher Education in a Fragmented Age

by Paul L. Glanzer, Nathan F. Alleman and Todd C. Ream, 2017. Downers Grove, IL, Intervarsity Press.

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For decades, Glanzer, Alleman, Ream and others have examined multiple facets of Christian higher education, delving into such aspects as the quest for purpose and a meaningful life; the pursuit of Christian and moral identity; and the contemporary meaning of faith and scholarship. A previous study in which Glanzer was involved found basic Christian identity of the institution as one of the most influential reasons why many students chose to attend that university (Davignon, Glanzer, & Rine, 2013).

In *Restoring the Soul of the University* (2017), the authors have synthesized past and present research into this straightforward approach to the historical perspective, with a focus on current challenges of Christian higher education. By posing one question, “Can the soul of the university be saved?” the authors’ aim is to explore what it means for the soul of the university to be saved in terms of sustainability for the future. The university’s soul not only relates to its central identity in regard to its ultimate moral ideals and the most fundamental identity—the story of Jesus Christ, but also connects to the pursuit of academic coherence and excellence without idolatry.

Instead of following the traditional university’s oneness of community, vision, and purpose, the multiversity (Kerr, 2001) was one made up of many independent departments, each of which focused independently on research and a personal agenda, and all of which were held together only by the bond of the overarching name of the university. In other words, the modern multiversity had little or no connection to the a oneness of community, let alone a purpose and vision.

This must-read history is applicable for all constituencies who represent a university, including the communities of the

undergraduate and graduate schools. The book focuses on the variety of audiences of Christians in the multiversity and those seeking to nurture and build coherent Christian universities.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part looks at historical trends that led to the multiversity and the fragmentation of the university's soul, specifically through the displacement of theology within the university and ending with the emergence of the American multiversity. Within this American history of the university lies the authors' argument of how the university had at one time a single soul that gave it coherent unity, which "pertained to the overall vision of knowledge and its relationship to God" (Glanzer, Alleman & Ream, 2017, p. 28).

The second part examines the sources of and reasons for the fragmentation of the professors, curriculum, students, administrators, and athletics. Within this section, Glanzer, Alleman, and Ream see a fractured professor as one who views teaching in his institution as secondary to specialized scientific research. The fragmented multiversity occurs when different colleges of the multiversity function as silos with their own unique identities, narratives, and purposes. They also see a fractured curriculum occurring when curriculum is driven by student choice, not by coherence from professionals. The fragmented student body occurs when, due to size, staff are hired to take care of additional service and co-curricular tasks that faculty would not or could not perform. The fragmentation of the administrations results when an increased administrative class can no longer relate directly to individual faculty and students. Finally, the fragmented athletic arena becomes separated from the significant academic and moral forms of accountability and practice.

The third part describes a university with soul through a distinctly Christian perspective and offers suggestions as to how the Christian university can embrace different communities, create an academic greenhouse community that "nurtures what it means for students to grow as image bearers of God" (Glanzer, Alleman, & Ream, 2017, p. 222), and ultimately save the university's soul. The authors' perspective argues that restoring the soul of the university means incorporating more theology, while reimagining the academic vocation, the academic disciplines, the co-curricular offerings, and academic leadership. While the authors assert that most Christian higher education campuses have been fragmented to a point of compromising and losing part of their core identity, the authors extend hope by offering new paradigms on how to envision, create, and structure Christian universities and the academic vocation of a university with a soul.

The undercurrent of academic conversations is currently peppered with implications of unrest and disagreement. Some derisive comments come

from students, faculty and administrators, alumni, and others, but all speak to a deep longing for what the university should be. The authors resonate this central concept: we are made by God in God's image and we must first know God if we are to truly know who we are and what the knowledge of the world is.

Personally, I began reflecting on my academic institution, secretly evaluating where it stood. Its life has ebbed and flowed in the past two decades in response to the time and culture. This book assured me that my Christian university was on the right future path toward individual freedom and institutional freedom and a more coherent approach to wisdom and learning. **LEJ**

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Learning Places for Children

It is always good to reflect on what will impact children's learning the most and bring about maximum benefits for all involved: the children and teachers alike. One of the major factors affecting learning is the classroom environment, in which children construct their knowledge in the social context of their peers and teachers.

When thinking about the classroom space, what comes to mind first is its physical aspect. Whether inspired by Reggio or Montessori, intentionally set-up environment is at the heart of developmentally appropriate practice (Copple & Bredekamp, 1997). The teacher's philosophy and beliefs about how children learn will be reflected in how the classroom environment is organized. If the teacher values children's autonomy and believes they learn best through active engagement with materials, the environment he or she prepares will be open-ended and well-organized. The environment should allow for free exploration to engage each child's interests. Loris Malaguzzi stated that the environment has a "potential for sparking all kinds of social, affective, and cognitive learning. All of this contributes to a sense of well-being and security in children" (as cited in Edwards & Gandini, 2018, p. 339).

The classroom environment is more than just physical space and materials. It encompasses the feelings, emotions, and dispositions of everyone that enters it. A positive emotional environment is created as a result of the caring relationships fostered by the teachers. Relationships are at the heart of early learning and when there is an emotional connection and respect for one another, teachers and students both develop a sense of community and belonging.

If we focus our energy on creating intentional environments where children can experiment with materials and construct their own understanding of the world, we will reinforce our belief in children as caring individuals. Children do come ready to learn, but the question is -are teachers prepared to guide and support children's natural curiosities to explore the world through the classroom environment? **LEJ**

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Empowering Community Partners

It is imperative that those responsible for teaching children to read have a deep understanding of a theoretical framework supporting this process, along with the content knowledge, and instructional strategies that sustain this development in young children. In fact, studies have highlighted consequences for students placed in classrooms of teachers who lack critical content knowledge (Lane, Hudson, Leite, Kosanovich, Strout, Fenty, & Wright, 2008; Swerling & Zibulsky, 2013). One investigation found that first-grade students placed in classrooms with teachers who knew more about the importance of reading fluency, the skills that contribute to fluent reading, and instructional methods for improving fluency, finished the year with greater fluency than students placed in classrooms with teachers who were less knowledgeable (Lane et al., 2008).

Theoretical frameworks such as Chall's Stages of Reading Development (1983) provide a structure for teachers, and the context for understanding how readers move through various stages as they learn to read and begin to use reading as a tool for learning. Approximately 20 years ago, the United States made a commitment to provide support in various capacities to ensure that all children learn to read. This commitment resulted in the influential reports of Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1988), the National Reading Panel (2000) report and the No Child Left Behind Act (2002). The report of the NRP is especially important for those responsible for teaching children to read, as it defined five areas critical for effective reading instruction with a clear deadline (third grade) established through later legislation (No Child Left Behind, 2000). Conclusions drawn from Chall's Stages of Reading Development (1983) support third grade as a developmentally appropriate time to expect children to have mastered the skills necessary to read. Theoretically speaking, this is a time when children make the shift from learning to read to reading to learn.

Given the importance of having adequate disciplinary knowledge, the Center for Literacy at Concordia University Chicago along with faculty from the Department of Literacy

and Early Childhood Education, came together to support local Lutheran school teachers who were seeking to deepen this knowledge.

In keeping with findings of investigations attempting to increase disciplinary knowledge among teachers, our team provided research-rich professional development opportunities, supported by highly knowledgeable mentors (McCutchen, Green, Abbott, & Sanders, 2009; Brady, Gillis, Smith, Lavalette, Bronstein, Lowe, North, Russo, & Wilder, 2009; Martinussen, Ferrari, Aitken, & Willow, 2015). Chall's (1983) model was used to provide a theoretical framework of how individuals learn to read. A total of five sessions were offered, dedicated to each of the essential elements of effective reading instruction (i.e. phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) as suggested by the NRP. Opportunities to explore instructional strategies aligned to each element were also provided. Participants experienced visits to their classrooms by a literacy coach to support the implementation of newly-learned strategies.

As a former teacher who once felt overwhelmed with the task of teaching young children to read, it is with great pride I share our efforts in support practicing teachers. The Center for Literacy, along with faculty from the Department of Literacy and Early Childhood Education, continues to empower our community partners through various programming. We look forward to future endeavors with our Lutheran school partners. **LEJ**

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A World of Different Learners

In this column on “Teaching Diverse Learners,” I ask the reader to problematize the concept of difference. As practitioners, we rightfully spend a bulk of our time focused on meeting the needs of our students through the implementation of appropriate strategies, and as theorists we aim to understand what works and what does not, and why it works or doesn’t. But here, instead, I invite you to pause for a moment to adopt the philosopher’s gaze as Keohane (1976) describes it: While the theorist is watching the “game” to analyze it, the philosopher’s gaze is elsewhere, looking past, underneath and away from the game to understand where and how it fits into some greater whole. Let’s take our eyes off of the “game” of teaching “the different learner” for a moment, and consider difference, the categories and hierarchies it produces, and the power relations that ensue.

So, the first question to ponder is: “Whom is the different learner different from?” Graham and Slee’s (2006) analysis of the discourse on inclusion in education returns again and again to this very question. They examine how seeking to include particular students means first having to recognize them as different and needing to be included. “Different to what? What we do not question (but should) are the assumptions that enable us to think in terms of exceptionalities” (p. 5). In other words, who occupies the privileged space of the normative, unexceptional learner? How do we constitute the normative learner in our theories and our practices? And finally, what are the power effects of having “the different learner” rather than a world full of all different learners, where difference is itself normative?

In Bernadette Baker’s (2002) “The Hunt for Disability: The New Eugenics and the Normalization of School Children,” she explores how the eugenics movement haunts the categories and logic of education as the hierarchical classifications based on a discourse of normalcy continue to discipline our gaze. Baker considers the labels that were once used to refer to the “problem populations” and argues, “These were not just new words—they were ways of enforcing others into the subjectivities assumed associated with the words” (p. 672). She nudges us to

question today's "new words" (p. 676), while acknowledging the pragmatic, and even caring impulse that inspires this production of categories.

There is...no agreement in the disability studies field on whether educational labeling and service-provision models in any form are unilaterally 'good' or 'bad.' Rather, the questions and criticisms raised revolve around deeper epistemological and ontological issues that preexist debates about services for all children. The questions raised take the complexity of things as their starting point. They assume that pain, suffering, and creativity are real, that privilege is palpable, and that 'experiences' and so-called 'conditions' or 'deficiencies' are constituted through current social relations and institutional structures and are not objectively 'existing in' persons. (Baker, 2002, p. 688)

This is my invitation to you: Join me in taking this moment to step back from the numerous decisions we must make when teaching, and consider the complexities that arise when we practice in the name of difference itself. "Why are norms taken for granted as objective? What restricted image of 'the ideal citizen' do norms for development embody? How might this devalue those excluded from such images?" (Baker, 2002, p. 688). And,

What power relations inhere in the production of categories such as normal and abnormal? Are these relations worthy of perpetuation? And finally, whether intended or not, is labeling a way of morphing 'disability' into the assumptions of an ableist normativity, with all its racial-cultural overtones, rather than questioning certain privileged ontologies and epistemologies to begin with? (p. 689)

That is, why do we privilege certain ways of thinking and being over others?

Baker next turns the questions onto herself. Let's do the same: How are these privileged ways of thinking and being embodied in our own teaching? Are our efforts to create spaces for different learners to be included—a move that relies upon identifying the different learners to be included—also a way of re-invoking the very hierarchies and categories that create the privileges tied to norms? I am sympathetic to Baker's claim that we seem not able to avoid engaging in the effects of power/knowledge because we work in social institutions that have historically enforced practices of surveillance and classification, and because, as thinkers, we are products of those institutions. She ponders if her attempts to "rethink and reshape" (p. 695-696) schools and practices merely reinscribe another privileged norm, and if so, then what? She shows us her answer: she keeps on questioning.

And so I have asked you to walk with me into this cul-de-sac of questioning and more questioning because I believe it is necessary to recognize that this is

where we live and teach. It may not be entirely satisfying, but it is the work we are called to: We must be at once in the “game” teaching, watching “the game” to understand and invent as theorists, and looking past and beyond “the game” to question our most basic assumptions over and over again, and all of it in service to our students and our profession. There are no easy shortcuts and there is nowhere else to go.

Finally, let’s consider one last challenge from Baker (2002) in our inquiry on difference. Before enacting policies and practices for the different learner, we might challenge ourselves to conduct the following thought experiment: “What would happen if before inflicting [policies and practices] on others thought [to be different,] less human, less valuable, less educable, less everything that matters within a school, the whole range of effects of educational policies regarding disability had to hit home through everyone’s sense of self as an outlawed ontology?” (p. 697). In other words, what if we were all subject to those policies and practices recognizing the difference in each of us? As Graham and Slee (2006) call for, perhaps we start our work by (re)thinking the relationship of “unexceptional” and “exceptional” learners as just different learners, not in chiaroscuro, but as different together. **LEJ**

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Engagement and Choice

Editor's Note: LEJ's long-term General Editor, Peter Pohlhammer, is about to make a courageous and meaningful career change. In Spring 2019 Peter will enter Congress Park School in LaGrange Park,, not as a parent, not as a grandparent, but as a student teacher. In fall 2019, Peter will join the ranks of teachers planning to make a difference in the lives of children. Over the past several years, Peter has readied himself for this dramatic career change by taking CUC courses in the Master of Arts in Teaching program to become an elementary-school teacher. Over those same years he has thought much about his own philosophy of teaching and learning. The following Words for Thought come out of those many thoughts. As a parent, grandparent, and budding teacher, Peter's words hold wisdom that each of us can consider.

I am looking at education as a returning-adult student, one who is soon to make an intentional career change. The philosophy of education course challenged me to look at education from a variety of perspectives, some familiar, some new. My classmates and I made presentations on Socratic Idealism, Rousseau's Realism, and Dewey's Pragmatism. Boiled down to essentials, each of these philosophies sought to produce the most well-rounded citizens; participants in society, culture and government. Certainly, Socrates and Rousseau put the society ahead of the individual with their ideas on education. They were more concerned about what the individual could contribute to the community than what they might take from it. Dewey seemed less concerned about the individual's contributions than whether the individual could live a fulfilling life in their particular corner of the community. Each of these philosophies offers something of value to any discussion of education, but none of them envisioned the wonderfully vast and complex web of social, cultural, and governmental structures in which 21st-century educators in the United States find themselves enmeshed.

What is education? It seems to me that any discussion of a philosophy of education should start with a description or definition of education. So what is it? A referral to the Merriam-Webster app on my phone gives the following definitions:

1. The act or process of teaching someone especially in a school, college, or university;
2. The knowledge, skill, and understanding that you get from attending a school, college, or university;

3. A field of study that deals with the methods and problems of teaching.

These definitions all seem to describe the learning or study that happens in the formal setting of a school. But, what of a less formal style of education? We've all heard of the School Of Hard Knocks. But in a less flippant vein, we have all received a less formal, but equally valuable education from family, friends, and various members of the neighborhoods we called home as children, and the ones we live in now. I believe that an education, formal or informal, prepares us for life. Our less formal education from the School Of Life instructs us more in basic survival, while our formal education gives us the tools to live a fulfilled life beyond mere survival, or it should at any rate.

So let's look at the formal side of education briefly. What should a formal education do for us? I believe that a formal education should start with some basic "how-to's." We start by learning to read, then to write. Next we learn the use of numbers. To the processes of reading, writing and computing we add the process of gathering and remembering data. We learn new vocabulary, and details of the history of our culture and country. We learn basic geography, our place in the world and relationship to it. As our store of data increases we begin to learn some rules and guidelines for storing, organizing, and using it; that is we begin to learn grammar, mathematical functions, logic, alphabetical order, etc. Part and parcel to the whole process of reading, writing, and data collection is, or should be, the exercise of creativity, spontaneity, individual expression and originality of thought. In the long run, education is less about building a storehouse of knowledge than it is about learning how to learn. Our education never stops, but at some point in life each person must become their own guide through the process. He and she must know how to seek out people—whether live or in the form of books, TV, computer, etc.—from whom they might learn the things that they require for continued fulfillment.

My philosophy of education can be summed up in one word: engagement. It sounds simple, but let's dig into it a little. In that one condition I think we find the common ground for several of the 20th-century educational psychologists discussed in my recent classes. Political writings aside, the contributions of these psychologists and educators are so important that one cannot ignore them. Vygotsky developed the idea of the Zone of Proximal Development, that area of proximity between a teacher and student where learning happens. Safe space is required in the ZPD. The space must be safe both physically and emotionally. Once an emotional connection is established between the teacher and student, the stage is set for the student's growth and development. Dewey advocated for attention to a child's place in his or her family, and the family's place in society. His philosophy called for close observation of the

student as well as a curriculum-and-teaching approach that would take into account a child's cultural surroundings and information learned from those observations. Montessori described small class sizes, right-sized furniture and implements, simple responsibilities designed for children, and a teacher's ability to communicate one-to-one with a child. All of these describe the very essence of engagement between student and teacher, a certain requirement if education is to happen. The basic concept of the zone of proximal development requires engagement. To make the kind of observations required by the philosophies of Dewey and Montessori, teachers must engage with their students. The student's development can't happen without it.

Engagement of this sort doesn't just happen. A number of conditions are required for full engagement to take root and blossom. First and foremost, as mentioned previously, engagement requires a safe space. It goes without saying that the student must feel physically safe, but more important is the student's emotional safety. How many times have we kept thoughts or ideas to ourselves because we didn't feel emotionally safe in voicing them, that we might be ridiculed, or made to feel foolish? In the Zone of Proximal Development, an emotional connection is of primary importance. That connection cannot be established unless and until a child feels emotionally safe. Teachers must be able to show that they genuinely care for each student. They must find something to like in each student, not necessarily an easy thing to do. Engagement requires the teacher's ability to make keen observations of student preferences, behaviors, and abilities. They must be able to observe and determine different students' styles of learning.

Hand in hand with observation is the ability to respond appropriately and proportionally to a student's needs and actions. A teacher must be able to take care of a student's physical needs as far as the educational system will allow them. Physical needs can impair the learning process. Hunger, cold, loss, family disruptions, and a student's sense of a lack of safety are all things that can put stress on any teacher/student connection. To the extent that they can, teachers need to relieve the stress caused by things of this nature, or engagement will fail, and development and learning will cease. Finally, encouragement is important for maintaining a connection and a sense of engagement. Students come into the system with varying degrees of confidence and self esteem. Well-placed encouragement will strengthen the bond of engagement and develop a student's ability to work through problems, find answers to difficult questions, and build their sense of individuality.

The second part of my philosophy is the idea that there are no mistakes, only choices. "What are you talking about?" I hear you ask. "Of course there are mistakes." Let me explain. Among my leisure pursuits is that of knitting.

Yes, knitting. I've been a knitter since I was ten years old and begged my mother to teach me. It was one of those activities in which we engaged one-on-one. I stuck with it and eventually became a master knitter. I've taught others to knit, and in the course of those instructional settings I heard numerous exclamations of disappointment over "mistakes." Over the course of time I came to realize that a dropped, looped, split, or doubled stitch, may constitute a "mistake" in one instance, but can be a beautiful pattern in another. I began to encourage my knitting students to think in terms of making choices rather than mistakes. When they created something that would have normally been a mistake, I had them think about choices they could make in that moment. They could leave it alone or choose to change it, not correct it, but change it. In this way we were no longer thinking in the negative, but we were still mindful of the consequences of each possible choice. Maybe the student would change the affected stitches to the regular pattern they were working, maybe they would leave them alone and they would become part of the finished piece. Or, maybe they would choose to change the stitch pattern to incorporate more of the new stitches. In any case the decision, whatever it was, would come from a place of positive thought, not negative reaction.

What does this have to do with education? Everything. Some of the most important discoveries in history came from so-called mistakes. Goodyear vulcanized his first rubber accidentally when he left a laboratory oven on overnight unintentionally, with a rubber sample inside it. Ivory[®] soap happened when a Procter and Gamble employee let a batch of soap over-mix while he went to lunch. The air mixed into the liquid, causing the soap to float after molding and hardening. Procter and Gamble could have scrapped the formula and process and fired the employee for the mistake, but they made a choice to market the product and eventually made millions. "Mistake" and "failure" are negative words that can cause the students who commit them to lose faith in themselves. When they make enough of them they can give up on themselves. The negative emotions they generate can erode that sense of engagement that a teacher has worked so hard to create. When a student has turned in three paragraphs of material that do not show their writing skills to best advantage, their teacher can talk about mistakes in the work or they can talk about other choices the student might have made. If we can rid ourselves of the concept of mistakes or perfection, correct or incorrect, we can begin to build confidence in our students and help them see their worth. It becomes easier for us to guide our students through challenges of learning that may be language-based, cognitive, sight-based, physically difficult, or stem from any number of causes. I firmly believe that choosing not to use the negative language of mistakes and errors helps to build that sense of engaged connection that is so vital to the classroom.

Learning/education can't happen without an engaged connection. Do you remember times from your own past in which you had to listen to a lecture from a teacher or parent? Were you ever in a class in which the subject was of little interest? Did a fire truck pull up across the street and distract your interest in the talk? Were you in trouble with your mother or father over some infraction of the house rules? Were you really cold and just wanted to find a sweater or jacket?

On the other hand, how did you feel about the time when someone sat down with you by yourself to read a story? Or, bake a batch of cookies? Or, help you disassemble your old beater's engine to make some needed repairs? In which of these scenarios did learning happen? Change any of the factors discussed above and one risks disrupting that sense of engagement in which learning happens. Pass a child through an educational system in which they rarely feel engaged or connected to their teachers and our culture risks turning out students who have not learned how to learn and have little interest in learning beyond what they need to know to survive. They have been cheated out of the chance for learning how to experience that sense of fulfillment for which we all strive. **LEJ**

The Teacher as Missionary

When we think of a missionary we might imagine a person from one country sent to proclaim the Gospel in some far-off land. Or we might think of a pastor who is called to start a new congregation in a place where none exists. So we pray for and support those so called by God to travel and dedicate their lives to finding the lost sheep for whom the Good Shepherd has died and risen.

Yet I would suggest that our Lutheran schools and Concordia University System together form the Church's single greatest missionary force. There was a day when any LCMS school (grade school, high school or higher educational institution) would be populated almost exclusively by Lutheran students from Lutheran homes. They would come as baptized children of God who needed to receive an excellent education and to be nurtured in the faith in which they were baptized and raised.

For most of our schools this is no longer the case. The need for excellence in the classroom has not changed. But the spiritual needs of students have changed. Some students are Lutheran just as the students our schools have always received. But many others come from Christian backgrounds other than Lutheran. Some come from non-Christian homes in which Jesus is never considered. The classroom of a Lutheran school is increasingly complex with a diverse student body that has one thing in common spiritually: they all need Jesus Christ.

If you are a Lutheran educator, you are a missionary. If you are a Christian educator in a Lutheran school at any level, you are a missionary. You do not necessarily travel to foreign soil to seek those who need to hear the Gospel—God brings them to you. They are in your classroom. They are in the families of those God brings to your classroom. My hope and prayer is that we can embrace and rejoice in the opportunity that we as Christian and Lutheran educators have to not only pass on knowledge but, most importantly, to be faithful and energetic missionaries.

I read about and hear the predictions of so many that the Lutheran Church in the western world is shrinking and will continue to shrink. Often, these dire analyses are based

in demographic studies which, taken on their own, do indeed foretell a grim future. Statistics, however, are not the complete story and arguably are not the true story at all. The Cross and Resurrection continue to contradict our human doubts and fears. Nowhere is this truer than in a Lutheran school. God's missionaries are in the classroom. You, the Lutheran Christian educator wherever you are, are the frontline of the mission field. Whether you are teaching three year olds or university third-year dissertation students, your mission field is right in front of you. And God has given you all that you need to be His missionary, for He has given you the Gospel.

Each student and each family member is someone who was uniquely created by God. Even more, each one is so loved by God that he gave His only Son that he or she might have eternal life. When I pray for the mission of the Church I pray for those who serve to establish preaching stations and congregations here and abroad. But I also pray for you. God's love is greater than any human pessimism or defeatism. And that love flows through you to His children. You are a missionary. **LEJ**