



Partners

Partners is published quarterly by the WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship to assist those in Sunday school ministry.

Everybody Wants to Be a Winner!

by Dr. Joel A. Nelson, Administrator – WELS Youth Discipleship

Now is the time of year when basketball gets into full swing. It won't be long before March Madness, that time of year when high school and college basketball seasons come to a close with the loud and enthusiastic cheering of faithful and sometimes fanatical fans. Teams and cheerleading squads all over the country will ramp up their intensity and spirit.

In the annals of cheerleading, you will find two cheers that are classics. Every cheerleading squad does them, because every sports team wants them. One is the tried and true, energy charged V-I-C-T-O-R-Y. In my high school it was the class competition cheer. The cheerleaders would yell out, "Freshman what's your battle cry?" and the freshman would scream "V-I-C-T-O-R-Y." The sophomores were next, and so on.

The other classic cheer is the spirit-lifting, motivational S-U-C-C-E-S-S. In my high school this cheer was done with a certain rhythm and action: S-u-C-c-E-s-S (clap, stomp) SUCCESS!

Victory and success. They go together. And what team is ever considered successful if they are not also victorious, if they are not winning? Our world worships winners. I mean, when was the last time you heard a cheerleading squad yell out "Gimme an L! Gimme an O! Gimme an S! Gimme an E! What's that spell? L-O-S-E." What cheerleading squad would last if their trademark cheer was "Try your best, and that will be OK. If you should lose, we'll love you anyway!"? Cheers like

that are downright un-American. We all know that ex-pro basketball coach Bill Musselmen was right. He posted this quote over his team's locker room door: "Defeat is worse than death. Because you have to live with defeat." And our culture advocates that message big time. In sports, business, politics, medicine, entertainment, the military, you name it. . . winning is everything. But what about Jesus?

Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

Matthew 8:20

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9

They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of a hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff.

Luke 4:29

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

John 6:66

By the standards of his day, Jesus was not much of a success, was he? By the standards of the world today,

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Jesus and all of his followers should be walking around with their fingers making an “L” on their foreheads . . . LOSERS! Why is it, however, that we don’t walk around with an “L” on our foreheads? Because Jesus was not a loser. We know what Jesus did and we know the horrible things that were done to him were part of God’s amazing and winning game plan to rescue all mankind from sin, death, and hell. We know that Jesus was successful. His perfect life, his sacrificial death, and his glorious resurrection won the ultimate victory for all of us.

Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory. Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:54-57

Because of Jesus we are winners! But do we live and act this way? Not enough. Our sometimes poor attitude toward parents and students, our lack of preparation and enthusiasm in our lessons, our disinterest in communicating and cooperating are not the fallout of Jesus’ failure. They are the result of Jesus’ followers and fans not comprehending and celebrating his victory enough, and that’s a March Madness that needs to stop now.

We are winners. Jesus has won the victory. Heaven is ours. The victory parade marches on. Let’s join it with more passion and let’s show our students and their families what it means to us to be hooked up with THE winner. And you know what, they will listen and they will follow. You know why? Because everybody wants to be a winner!

Now Is a Good Time to Evaluate

As the Sunday school year draws to a close, it’s a good time for the Sunday school staff to consider how the year went. As a staff why not do some end of the year evaluation around the following questions? Or consider developing your own. You could discuss them in a group setting or have each teacher answer the questions first, turn them in to the Sunday school superintendent/coordinator for tabulation, and discuss the findings as a group. How you do it is far less important than doing it. Take it seriously, and view it as a positive, proactive way to dialog about important Sunday school ministry issues.

Directions: Answer the questions honestly and openly. Your input will help to make our Sunday school ministry and team stronger and better. Do not include your name.

- 1) What is your overall feeling about how the 2006-07 Sunday school year went?
- 2) What is your overall feeling about how things went in your classroom?
- 3) What things did you see improve this year in our Sunday school?
- 4) What things do you feel still need improvement?
- 5) What things do you feel improved with your own teaching?
- 6) What things do you feel still need improvement?
- 7) What do you feel about the curriculum we are using (student books, teachers guides, etc.)?
- 8) What would you like to see happen to make our staff meetings better?
- 9) How can we improve our visibility in the congregation?
- 10) How can we improve our outreach to the community?
- 11) What is your reaction to the budget allocated for Sunday school ministry?
- 12) What might we do to better partner with Sunday school parents and families?
- 13) What things could be offered/made available to help our teachers grow in their skills?
- 14) What could we do to strengthen the partnership our Sunday school has with congregation leaders?
- 15) What could we do to strengthen the partnership our Sunday school has with the Lutheran elementary school (If you have one)?
- 16) What timely teaching topics would you like to see covered at staff meetings or via teacher in-service times?
- 17) What other concerns might you have that you’d like to share?

Doing something similar with your Sunday school parents would also be a very positive, proactive step toward improvement and increased partnership.

Family Friendly Sunday School

by Dr. Joel A. Nelson, Administrator – WELS Youth Discipleship

One thing that really attracts families to congregational ministries is the “family friendliness factor.” When you think about your Sunday school ministry, is it family friendly? Over the next couple issues, we’ll share family friendly characteristics that you can consider as you strive to improve your Sunday school ministry.

- In a family friendly Sunday school, teachers and parents intentionally agree to become **partners** in the Christian education of the students. Parents and teachers know that partners work with each other on a job that is too big to do alone. Partners agree that one partner doesn’t give up when he/she thinks the other one is not doing enough. They continue working together until they have reached the goal.
- In a family friendly Sunday school, all decisions are made with the child’s best interest at heart. **Decisions** in a family friendly Sunday school do not benefit either parents or teachers at the expense of the other. They are always made to give each child the best Christian education possible, and so strengthen the bonds of the family.
- In a family friendly Sunday school, parents and teachers visibly **work together** on projects, programs, curricula and making things better for children. Teachers eagerly want to know what parents think and parents eagerly assist with projects that a teacher could not get done alone. Family friendly Sunday schools have committees made up of both parents and teachers where neither entity tries to wield power over the other.
- In a family friendly Sunday school, children are happy knowing that their parents and their teachers share **common Christian education standards and values**. Neither parents nor teachers talk negatively about the Sunday school in front of children. Teachers praise parents in front of the children for the strong support and help parents give the Sunday school.

- In a family friendly Sunday school, the **pastor and superintendent lead and model** family friendliness. The pastor and superintendent know the names of all or most of the children and their parents and are very visible in the Sunday school during the Sunday school time. The pastor and superintendent talk to children in the classrooms, in the hallways, when they are entering the building or getting into their parents’ car. Sometimes you might even see the pastor and superintendent teaching a lesson, leading a sing-a-long, helping with a craft, or serving refreshments.
- In a family friendly Sunday school, the Sunday school faculty **constantly communicates** with the home. Regular notes or a newsletter from the pastor, superintendent, and/or staff tell of upcoming events, share news items about children and their families, invite all parents to church services and to member information classes, list the next week’s Bible lessons, and share important details about other ministry activities in the congregation. Sunday school teachers communicate deliberately and specifically with the home through personal notes, post cards, emails, phone calls, and home visits. Teachers in a family friendly Sunday school don’t wait to share information. They keep parents informed early and regularly with affirming and corrective messages.

In the next issue, seven more characteristics will be given.

The above is adapted from “The Family Ministry of Lutheran Schools” 1998, by the Department of School Ministry for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.



Only At Sunday School!

TEACHER: Now, Sam, tell me, do you say prayers before eating?
SAM: No sir, I don’t have to, my Mom is a good cook.

KINDERGARTEN TEACHER TO CLASS: Why does the dirt of sin get on you so quickly?
JENNY: Well, we’re a lot closer to the ground than you are.

In the car one day, Christopher’s dad told him that Jesus is always with him. “He’s right beside you,” the father said. Christopher replied, “Oh no! He’s unbuckled!”



Presenting the Gospel Message with Kids in Mind

by Jeremy Bakken, Administrative Assistant – WELS Youth Discipleship

Looking for a new way to apply the Scriptural principles learned in Sunday school to your students' daily lives? Look no further than *Kids Connection* – a video news magazine and corresponding Web site (www.kidsconnection.tv) – intended to

illustrate through example and examination of Christian lives, the purpose, excitement, and joy of a living faith in Jesus Christ. This video production is similar to the more familiar and popular *WELS Connection*, but designed for a target grade-school aged audience. Features include:



Teen Hosts – your Sunday school kids will hear about God's people living

Christian lives from two WELS high school aged hosts. Their energy will engage your students' minds; their witness will impress your students' hearts.

Stories – A multitude of topics are covered, from World Missions to backyard fundraisers to student projects and activities to...well... wherever, whatever, and whenever WELS members are putting their faith into practice. And as much as we can, we feature young Christians serving as great peer examples of Christian living.

Tony Schultz Devotions – Every episode has a short devotion by Rev. Tony Schultz, pastor at St. Luke's Lutheran Church (WELS) in Watertown, WI. His analogies may be inventive, amusing, educational, intriguing, or inspiring, but they always have the Gospel truth at the very heart and center.

Web site content – Episodes include mention of any special corresponding content that is or will be available through the companion Web site, www.kidsconnection.tv. The Web site also offers links to fun games, trivia, and information, more about the hosts and Pastor Tony Schultz, a Q&A section to ask questions and get Bible-based answers, discussion boards to exchange ideas, and the opportunity for kids to submit their own work to be published on the Web site. Additionally, users can view previous Tony Schultz messages and get video sneak peeks at the topics for up-coming episodes!

Closing comments – The hosts tap the students' interest by briefly describing the topics in the next episode. And they always encourage kids to "Stay Connected to Jesus!"

Kids Connection began in 1995 and has enjoyed a strong ministry for close to a dozen years. However, many don't know about this valuable resource. Only 24% of WELS 1,263 congregations subscribe. Why not consider using this effective ministry tool in your Sunday school? It provides a unique approach to strengthening young faiths and a monthly teaching change of pace for yourself and your students. If you want to know more about the *Kids Connection* ministry, or information on subscription, visit www.kidsconnection.tv or contact cyd@sab.wels.net. We hope you will be able to use this tool to help your Sunday school students *stay connected to Jesus!*

Become a Better Teacher in Your Pajamas!

Improving your skills and insights as a teacher of God's Word should be your ongoing desire. Sunday school teachers should also be life-long learners, but obtaining additional training is not always easy. It takes precious time and sometimes money. What's a Sunday school teacher to do?

Here's one answer. From the comforts of your own home and maybe even in your favorite pajamas, you can take several Sunday school staff mini-courses now available at WELS.net University (WNU). Go to www.wels.net/jump/wnusstraining and login or create an account. For new accounts, you will be prompted to complete your account profile and "enroll". Do not let that scare you off, however. It is simply how the online environment works for these mini-courses. You are under no obligation to complete a course if enrolled, or to take any additional courses. And no one checks up on you. You are totally on your own once "inside."

After enrollment, simply work your way through each mini-course, reading the content, doing the exercises, and following the related links. Course evaluations and forums to discuss each topic are also a part of the WNU experience.



Survival Kit for Your Kids

Adapted from *ChildrensMinistry.com* - 2006

Consider filling a zippered plastic bag with one each of the following items: a rubber band, a tissue, a button, a toothpick, a bandage, a Hershey's Kisses® chocolate candy, a gold thread, an eraser, a Life Saver® candy, and a mint. Include a rolled up copy of the "Survival Kit" (below) and present it to your students.

SURVIVAL KIT FOR JESUS' KIDS

This kit is for you! Use it whenever you need a boost or some encouragement. Love, Jesus!



- The rubber band is to thank you for all those times you give loving hugs to others—and to remind you that I'm hugging you back each time you love someone else.
- The tissue is to help you dry your own tears—and so you can see the tears of others more clearly. Remember that I weep along with you.
- The button is to remind you to "button your lip" when you would like to say something you shouldn't to someone who bugs you or is mean to you. It is always better to remain silent rather than speak sinfully.
- The toothpick is to help you "pick out" the excellent qualities you see in others and to help you remember you have some wonderful, God-given qualities, too.
- The bandage is to remind you to pray about the hurts of others—and your own, too. Remember that I was wounded for you.

- The Hershey's Kisses® candy is because I know you like chocolate, and I like seeing you enjoy life!
- The gold thread is to help us "tie our hearts together" because my friendship with you is golden!
- The eraser is to remind you that everyone makes mistakes sometimes. Be ready to forgive others, just as I have forgiven you.
- The Life Savers® candy means you can be a "lifesaver" to someone else, and because I want you to think of me as your lifesaver whenever you need to cry out for help. Remember that I'm always listening.
- The mint is to remind you that you are worth a "mint" to me!

Good Questions, Great Results!

What have you told your students about your faith in Jesus and his faithfulness to you? How might hearing you express your hope help them more confidently apply Jesus' promises to their own lives? The words and actions of Christian teachers encourage students to live lives filled with true wisdom – the wisdom of Jesus Christ.

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Three Terrific Teacher Tips



Prevent caps of glue and paste bottles from sticking by greasing the screw threads with cold cream or oil.

Use light colored vinyl scraps as the "canvass" for crayon drawings. Remove crayon marks with a wet cloth and reuse the pieces. Check with floor covering stores or new home owners for scraps.

Need an extra bulletin board? Line a large picture frame with black material by stretching and then stapling or gluing the fabric onto the back of the frame.

If you'd like to have one of your ideas considered for publishing in Partners, send it to us via email: cyd@sab.wels.net or by surface mail: WELS-CYD, 2929 N. Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398.

Please contact us with any questions or for further information.

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