



Partners

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

Shaping a Better Sunday School Culture

by Joel A. Nelson, WELS Youth Discipleship Administrator

Every organization has a culture—the norms, values, and beliefs that underlie all the thinking, feeling, and acting that takes place within the organization. Dr. Kent Peterson, professor of education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and an expert on organizational culture has said, “The organization’s culture influences how people think, feel, and act. It is a key determinant of staff focus, commitment, motivation, and productivity” (Keynote address-WELS Leadership Conference, June 26, 2002).

The six elements of an organization’s culture are noted below. Some Sunday school specific “thought questions” (in italics) follow each culture element.

- **The norms, values, and beliefs present**

At the very core, what does your Sunday school stand for and how do/don’t you show it? What is its mission? How do those serving in the Sunday school ministry feel and behave relative to this mission?

- **Symbols and artifacts that communicate meaning**

What textual, visual, and conceptual items and ideas does your Sunday school employ to help others see who you are, what you want to be, and what you stand for?

- **Stories past and present about the organization**

What is said about your Sunday school in the congregation, the community, and among the families and students served by it? What is your

reputation? What do you want people to think and say about your Sunday school ministry? What reputation do you want to have?

- **The relational networks that exist**

How do your Sunday school staff members, pastor, church leaders, parents, students, congregation members, and Lutheran elementary school staff (if you have an LES) get along and work together? How can you accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative?

- **Heroes and heroines past and present within the organization**

Who are/have been the people in your Sunday school ministry that really serve/have served as models and mentors—that help to define what your Sunday school ministry is all about? How can the rest of you learn from their example? How can you use these people and their spirit to improve what is offered?

- **Rituals, traditions, and ceremonies evident**

What things does your Sunday school ministry do, both positive and negative, year after year, that have a major impact on the ministry’s effectiveness? How can you accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative? What new, Christ-focused rituals, traditions, and ceremonies could be started to breathe new life and purpose into your Sunday school ministry?

(Continued on next page)

Survey Says...

Several Sunday school staffs that used *The Word of Life Comes to Life* teacher training resource last spring were sent a survey to evaluate their experience with the resource. What follows are the results.

1) In the first lesson, you were asked to answer this question: "What are you expecting?" After the completion of this course, which phrase below best describes your opinion? Put an X in the appropriate space.

- (57%) The course exceeded my expectations.
- (43%) The course was what I expected.
- (0%) The course did not meet my expectations.

2) In the first lesson, you were also asked to answer this question: "What are you hoping to learn?" After the completion of this course, which phrase below best describes your opinion? Put an X in the appropriate space.

- (71%) I learned much more than I thought I would.
- (29%) I learned what I thought I would.
- (0%) I did not find the course that helpful.

3) For each phrase below, mark with an X in the appropriate space, the number that best expresses your opinion. Use the following rating scale: 4 = excellent, 3 = good, 2 = fair, 1 = poor.

	4	3	2	1
• Technical quality of the video segments	50%	43%	7%	0%
• Technical quality of the written materials	64%	36%	0%	0%
• Content quality of the video segments	36%	64%	0%	0%
• Content quality of the written materials	50%	50%	0%	0%
• The degree to which the course helped me to better understand the differences in how children learn	57%	36%	7%	0%
• The degree to which the course helped me to better understand environmental factors that impact learning	36%	64%	0%	0%
• The degree to which the course will help me become a better teacher of God's Word	50%	50%	0%	0%
• The degree to which the video segments modeled approaches that I can use in my classroom	43%	43%	14%	0%
• The degree to which the written/reinforcement materials modeled approaches that I can use in my classroom	50 %	36%	14%	0%
• The degree to which this course will help me to teach <i>Christ-Light</i> ® in better ways	43%	50%	7%	0%
• My overall rating of my experience with this course	50%	50%	0%	0%

"Shaping..." continued from page 1

As you and your ministry partners begin the 2003-04 year, let me encourage that you take some time to evaluate your Sunday school's culture. Using the bulleted phrases above, and the italicized questions, discuss the culture that exists and the culture that you really desire. Do so with a humble, open, and cooperative spirit and let the prayer of

2 Thessalonians 1:11 be in your hearts:

With this in mind, we constantly pray...that our God may count [us] worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of [ours] and every act prompted by [our] faith.

Jesus keep you, and have a wonderful Sunday school year!

Youth Discipleship Website Has a New Look!

Have you visited the Commission on Youth Discipleship (CYD) website recently? It has been reorganized to make it easier to find what you need relative to youth ministry in general and Sunday school in particular. Go to <www.wels.net> (the WELS website). Click on the "Ministry" heading, then on "Youth Discipleship." After a flash introduction with moving pictures, words, and music, you'll see the CYD home



page in the new WELS web format. This look and format will become even better in the weeks ahead.

For a quick update on what the CYD has been doing, click on **Youth Discipleship Highlights**. To share ideas about Sunday school and teen ministry, log on to the **SST** or **YTHINK** discussion boards. To learn more about CYD, click on **About Youth Discipleship**. For a complete listing of all the resources CYD has to offer, click on **Consultation and Resources**. To learn about various training opportunities, click on **National, District, and Local Training**. For fun activities for children and teens, click on **Just for Youth**. To link to a host of helpful websites, click on **Vital Links**.

After you look around on the website, email us your reactions: what was good, bad, ugly, etc. Your feedback will help us to make the site an even better resource for you.

A Golden Celebration of Grace for a Ministry Partner

2004 will mark the 50th anniversary of Lutheran Girl Pioneers (LGP) and plans are underway to celebrate this special occasion in conjunction with its biennial convention. The date is set for April 23 and 24, 2004 at the Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton, WI.

LGP is looking forward to having leaders and girls participate in a weekend of fellowship and celebration of the many blessings that have allowed LGP to flourish and remain "Loyal to Christ" for 50 years. Several workshops and activities for the girls and leaders will be available to choose from.

April 23 and 24 will also be memorable as it will be the first time Lutheran Girl Pioneers and Lutheran Pioneers [for boys] will be holding concurrent conventions at the same location. It is hoped that the joint efforts will provide convention goers with more opportunities for networking and shared interests in our mission to guide our youth to realize the joy of a Christ-centered life.

For more information, contact Judy Hansen, National Lutheran Girl Pioneers Counselor (lgp@charterinternet.net).

40 Assets That Help Youth Develop Well

Why do some youth grow up with ease, while others struggle? Why do some youth get involved in dangerous activities, while others spend their time contributing to society? Why do some youth "beat the odds" in difficult situations, while others get trapped?

Many factors influence why some young people have successes in life and why others have a harder time. Economic circumstances, genetics, trauma, and many other factors play a role. But these factors—which seem difficult, if not impossible, to change—aren't all that matters. *Search Institute*, (www.search-institute.org) a nonprofit, independent research organization based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, has identified 40 concrete, positive experiences and qualities—developmental assets—that have a tremendous influence on young people's lives and choices. Research shows that the 40 developmental assets help young people make wise decisions, choose positive paths, and grow up competent, caring, and responsible.

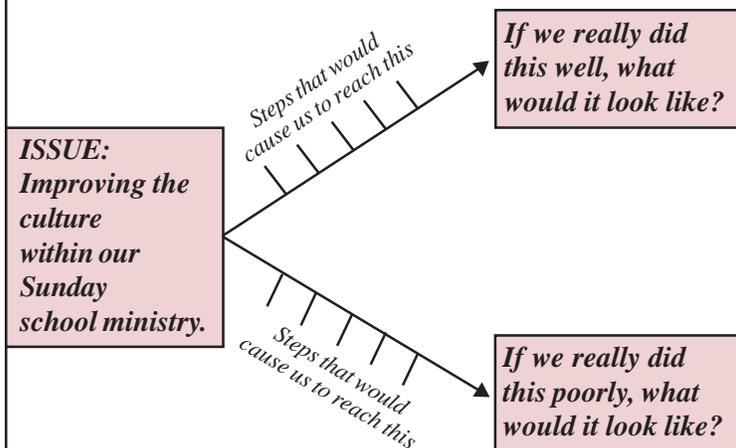
The bad news is that the vast majority of young people in the United States—regardless of race or ethnicity, age, gender, cultural background, religion, or income level—experience too few of the assets. Indeed, on average, young people report experiencing just 18 of the 40 assets. The good news is that everyone from all walks of life can help build assets. You don't have to be a parent, a teacher, a youth worker, or a counselor (though these people certainly have important roles in asset building). You can be a child, teenager, single adult, parent, grandparent—anyone can build assets.

This *Search Institute* web site (www.search-institute.org) is filled with research and other information about the developmental assets and how individuals, organizations, congregations, and communities can—and are—working to ensure that all children and youth experience more of these assets. What's even more exciting, is that *Search* has developed a new asset-building resource specifically for Lutherans called, *Grounding Asset Building in Lutheran Faith*. This new resource was developed with the active participation of several WELS congregations and called workers and is to be available soon on the *Search* website. In the meantime, you may obtain it from Randi Griner at *Search* (randig@search-institute.org).

A Simple Format for Evaluation and Improvement of Your Sunday School's Culture

The simple model below can be used for any issue. The issue under consideration is placed in the left box. Two directions or outcomes (one positive, one negative) are identified when the questions in the right boxes are answered. The ribs on the arrow lines, represent the things that would contribute to achieving the positive or negative outcome.

Begin by selecting an issue and placing it in the left box. Next, answer the two outcome questions in the right boxes, as they relate to the issue. After you come up with an answer that describes what things would look like under each outcome scenario, go back and fill in the ribs with the things that contribute to the positive and negative outcomes. Once the contributors for each outcome have been identified, discuss what specific things you would do to minimize the bad, maximize the good, and reach the positive outcome.

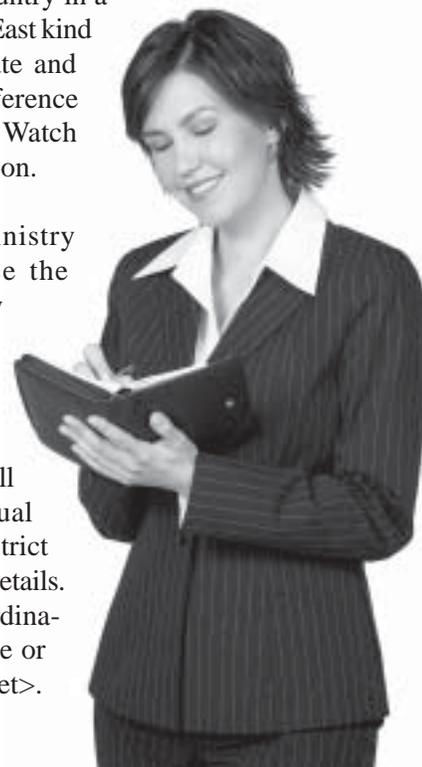


National Youth Ministry Conference Coming

Plan ahead! Beginning in the fall of 2004, the WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship (CYD) will sponsor a National Youth Ministry Conference for WELS members who are engaged in ministry to youth from birth through the final year of high school. The conference will feature speakers, workshops, presentations, panel discussions, youth ministry resources, and plenty of opportunity to network with others involved in ministry to youth and families.

The National Youth Ministry Conference will be held every other year, in the even numbered years, and will rotate its location around the country in a Midwest, West, Midwest, East kind of rotation. The exact date and location for the 2004 conference has not been determined. Watch for more details coming soon.

The National Youth Ministry Conference will replace the annual National Sunday School Conference and the annual National Youth Counselors' Workshop. Sunday school and youth ministry workshops will still be sponsored by individual districts. Contact your district CYD Coordinator for any details. For a list of District Coordinators visit the CYD website or contact <cyd@sab.wels.net>.



Only At Sunday School!



A little girl dressed in her Sunday best, was running as fast as she could, trying not to be late for Sunday school. As she ran she prayed, "Dear Lord, please don't let me be late! Dear Lord, please don't let me be late!" As she was running and praying, she tripped on a curb and fell, getting her clothes dirty and tearing her dress. She got up, brushed herself off, and started running again. As she ran she once again began to pray, "Dear Lord, please don't let me be late...But please don't shove me either!"

Sunday School Primary Grade Teacher: And what did you do over the summer?
Student: I had to go to the dentist because I had loose morals.

"Jesus lives in our hearts," said the Sunday school teacher, pointing to her chest.
"My heart is where I sit down," said five year old Lindsay.
"Whatever makes you say that?" asked the teacher.
"Well," Lindsay replied, "everytime I do something good, my grandma pats me there and says, 'Bless your little heart.'"

Shepherding the Sunday School: Southeastern Wisconsin's Fall Workshop

On Saturday, September 13, 2003, the Southeastern Wisconsin District CYD Committee is presenting a conference to provide encouragement and training for Sunday school teachers and superintendents. The conference (8:45 a.m. to 2:50 p.m.) is being held at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, 330 N. Glenview Avenue in Milwaukee. Presentations to choose from are:

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- ***You Will Shine Like Stars: Keynote Address***
Prof. Rich Gurgel (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary)
 - ***The Word of Life Comes to Life***
Linda Kasten (St. Paul's - Muskego, WI)
 - ***Partnering with Parents in Sunday School Education***
Lisa Stellick (Hope - West Chicago, IL and CYD Committee Member)
 - ***Teaching Sex in Sunday School***
Pastor Rolfe Westendorf (Siloah - Milwaukee, WI)
 - ***The Dynamics of Dynamic Sunday School Staff Meetings***
Tom Banaszak (Morning Star - Jackson, WI and CYD SEW Coordinator)
 - ***Sharing and Swapping: A Teacher Roundtable Discussion***
Tom Banaszak - Moderator
 - ***Reaching the Hard to Teach: Meeting the Ministry Challenge***
Kim Warning (Risen Savior - Milwaukee, WI and Milwaukee Urban Inclusion Consortium Director)
 - ***Music for the "Not So Musical" Teacher***
(presenter to be determined)
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To get more information or to register, contact Tom Banaszak (262-677-9357) or <staffminister@morningstarwels.com>. \$15.00/person includes lunch. Registration deadline: August 25.

Training Teachers for Ministry: Western Wisconsin's Fall Workshops

(Repeated from the Partners Summer 2003 issue)

Sunday school teachers of the Western Wisconsin District told leaders that there was a need for basic training for teaching Sunday school. One of the challenges of providing assistance is the geographic size of our district. Members of the Sunday school committee of the Western Wisconsin District decided to implement four entry-level workshops for Sunday school teachers in strategic locations across the district. These half-day events begin at 8:30 a.m. end at 11:45 a.m. and will be offered on a rotating basis over the next four years. On Saturday, September 13, 2003, these topics will be offered in the following locations of the Western Wisconsin District:

St. Mark, Eau Claire – Classroom Management Skills

St. John, Sparta – Teaching Memory Work, Singing, and Missions in a Sunday School

Northland Lutheran High School, Mosinee – Assisting Families and Outreach Through Sunday School

Trinity, Watertown – Preparing a Great Sunday School Lesson

Each of the sessions is broken up according to grade level. An additional feature that will be offered in each of this year's workshop is "Training and Encouragement for Sunday School Superintendents."

The workshop fee is \$30. Each church may send as many teachers as they wish. Refreshments and the cost for speakers and materials are included in the registration fee. For more information, contact Jerry Kastens at 920-261-3511 or <trinityminister@charter.net>.

To find out what your district is planning to help Sunday school staff members, contact your CYD District Coordinator (For a list of District Coordinators visit the CYD website or contact <cyd@sab.wels.net>.)

Don't Forget the Past

Past issues of *Partners* can be found on the CYD website under "Consultation and Resources\Sunday School Ministry Resources\Newsletter-PARTNERS Archive." You can also contact cyd@sab.wels.net for copies of back issues.

Please send CYD the names and addresses of your 2003-04 Sunday school staff members, so we can mail *Partners* directly to them. This is our preferred approach and will ensure that the staff members get each issue in a timely manner.



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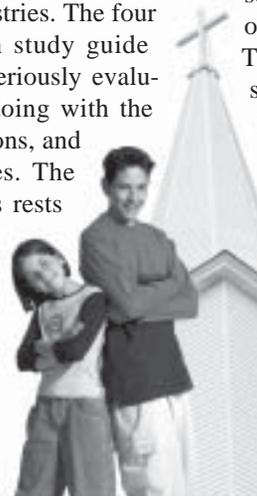
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NPH Christmas Kit 2003: Christmas Around the World

The 2003 children's Christmas service kit features Christmas carols from other lands and cultures. A traditional children's Christmas service full of narration, recitation, and music, Christmas around the World is written by WELS Commission on Worship Administrator Bryan Gerlach and his wife Jackie. The kit includes copy masters for unlimited duplication of the original service and music, a CD recording with two versions of every song and hymn, a "User's Guide" featuring a banner pattern that represents the service theme, and a bulletin sample that coordinates with the service theme. Call: 1-800-662-6022 to order (18N0372, \$49.99).

Children in the Church

This 2003 Youth Discipleship produced video and printed resource is for anyone involved in children's ministry: Sunday school staffs, Lutheran elementary school faculties, VBS staffs, early childhood ministries. The four part video and companion study guide encourage participants to seriously evaluate the ministry they are doing with the children in their congregations, and by extension, their families. The future of our congregations rests with our children, and connecting these children and their families to Jesus, is what ministry is all about. *Children in the Church* is \$19.95 plus shipping and handling. Order from: cyd@sab.wels.net



Chapel Talks for Christian Children 2003-2004

42 adaptable children's sermons and services for Christian Sunday schools—one for every week of the school year. This year's theme is based on familiar songs of God's people in the Bible as they proclaimed the wonderful things God had done for them. Each weekly lesson examines a Bible text through a variety of visual materials, an object lesson, a clear exposition of the Bible truth, and suggestions for application and discussions for daily living. Copy-masters for short worship services, plus complete music accompaniments, are also provided. Call: 1-800-662-6022 to order (06N5003, \$24.99).

Please contact us with any questions or for further information.

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