



Partners

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

Giving Away the Treasure

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

Do you think there will be times this Sunday school year when you will be really prepared but things don't go the way you expected? Do you think there will be Sundays when you're done with class, the room is a mess, you are exhausted, and you wonder if it made any difference? Do you think this Sunday school year you will ever ask yourself, "Is this worth my time, effort, and the sacrifice to my family?" Sure you will, but here's something to help get you through.

In Matthew 13:52, Jesus says, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old." Paul E. Kretzmann in his *Popular Commentary of the Bible* (Concordia Publishing) expresses the following about this passage:

"Every Christian teacher, taught of God in the mysteries of the Gospel of Christ, because he is a pupil of the kingdom of heaven and a disciple of Jesus, is able to freely distribute from the treasure entrusted to him. He will be able to use old, familiar facts, types, and doctrines to illustrate the truths of the Kingdom. He will present the old Gospel in a new dress, applying it to the conditions of the times in which he is working, throwing the spotlight of a new understanding, of a more thorough interpretation on passages which may have become familiar by constant repetition. As he himself grows in knowledge, so he aids his hearers to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, their Savior" (pg. 77).

Dear Sunday school teacher, this year you will have the privilege of sharing treasures new and old from God's Word. When you teach your Bible lessons and share your own faith, you will lead your students into the heavenly storeroom. You will throw a bright spotlight on the gold of God's promises fulfilled, the silver of salvation won, the rubies of Christ's righteousness on our sin, the diamonds of divine grace from a loving Father, and the pearls of eternal peace and happiness in heaven.

When you feel down or troubled about how things went in your classroom; when you wonder about the worth of it all, remember that through you, the Holy Spirit is giving your students more treasures from the great storeroom of God's grace in Jesus. How can you feel down about that?

God's richest blessings on your ministry this year!



Take Family-Friendly Sunday School Inventory

Third in this Partners series on Family-Friendly Sunday Schools. Adapted from “The Family Ministry of Lutheran Schools” 1998, by the Department of School Ministry for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

How “Family-Friendly” is your Sunday school? Put a check mark in front of each “Family-Friendly” characteristic that applies to your Sunday school ministry. When done, tally the marks and see if improvement could be made. Obviously, the more marks you have, the more “Family-Friendly” your Sunday school is. It might be a good idea to compare the marks of your individual staff members and discuss any differences of opinion.

- | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers visit the homes of all children in their classrooms. | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents are encouraged to become volunteers in Sunday school programs. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> There is a special orientation session for children new to the Sunday school and their families. | <input type="checkbox"/> The Sunday school sponsors several family activities, such as a fun fair, game night, field trip, or a soup supper each year. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Sunday school offers Christian parent education courses/Bible classes to help parents become better. | <input type="checkbox"/> The Pastor/Superintendent/Coordinator/Teachers lead special prayers for members of families who are experiencing a joy or crisis in their lives. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parents are welcome to visit the classrooms of their children at any time during the Sunday school year. | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents are invited to serve on committees whose discussions/decisions will affect the Sunday school ministry. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Pastor/Superintendent/Coordinator knows the family name of all the children in the Sunday school. | <input type="checkbox"/> The Sunday school provides child care for teachers' meetings, parents' committee meetings, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Pastor/Superintendent/Coordinator greets children and families as they arrive. | <input type="checkbox"/> The Sunday school has clearly stated policies that are communicated to parents on a regular basis. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers contact the homes when positive things take place. | <input type="checkbox"/> The Pastor/Superintendent/Coordinator/Teachers return phone calls to families in an expedient manner. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers contact the homes when negative things take place. | <input type="checkbox"/> The Sunday school makes all decisions with the child's interests at heart. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers contact the homes when students are missing from class. | <input type="checkbox"/> If student materials need to be purchased, the Sunday school has special financial support programs for families needing help. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> There are active family support groups. | <input type="checkbox"/> The Sunday school staff is aware of and refers families to congregational resources when families are experiencing various crises in their lives. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Grandparents' Day is held annually. | <input type="checkbox"/> The Sunday school is sensitive yet precise when teaching Biblical truths about marriage and the family. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Sunday school sends communications about the calendar, upcoming events, lessons for the month, etc. to each home. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled at least once each year. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's work is on display in the classroom and hallways. | |

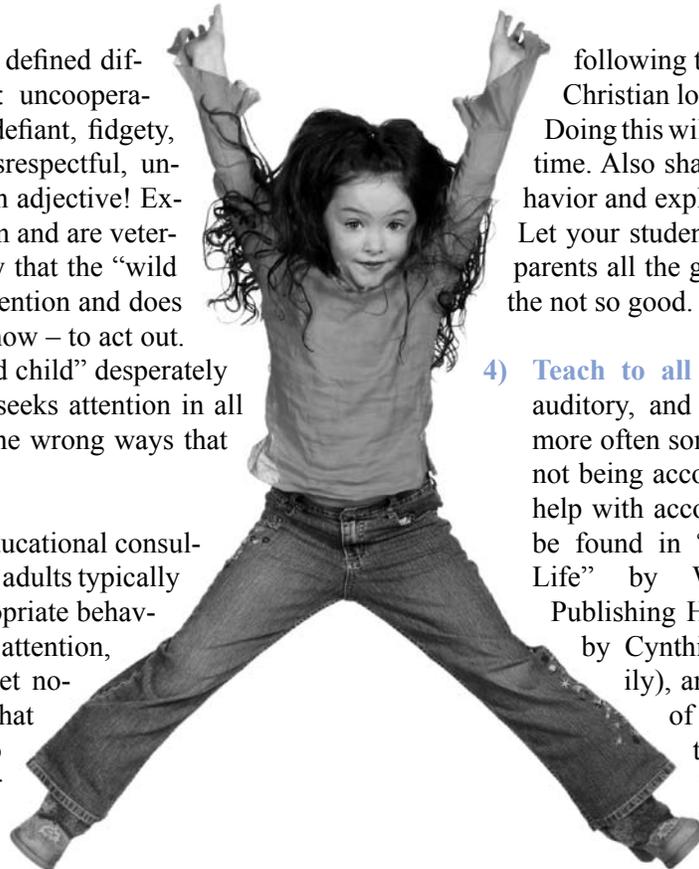
What Can You Do About the “Wild Child”?

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

The proverbial “wild child” is defined differently by different teachers: uncooperative, disruptive, loud, sinful, defiant, fidgety, inattentive, sinful, violent, disrespectful, unpleasant, sinful...add your own adjective! Experts who have studied children and are veterans at ministering to them, say that the “wild child” is really just seeking attention and does it the only way he/she knows how – to act out. These same experts say a “wild child” desperately wants unconditional love but seeks attention in all the wrong ways because it’s the wrong ways that get “rewarded.”

Glenn Latham, a family and educational consultant, did research revealing that adults typically ignore 95% of children’s appropriate behaviors. Because all children seek attention, they will do the things that get noticed. Latham’s data suggests that Sunday school teachers who ignore all the good things their students do and put more focus on the bad, can expect to have more than their share of the “wild child.” So what can Sunday school teachers do?

- 1) Understand that behavior is contagious.** Both good and bad behaviors spread, and the bad behaviors have Satan and a lot of little Old Adam’s on their side. Do all you can to develop a classroom culture that motivates students with the gospel, is liberal with praise, and openly shares the love of Jesus and the teacher with its students. Never forget that your behavior is probably the most contagious of all.
- 2) Learn to be flexible.** Be well prepared with your lessons and activities (good preparation reduces the potential for wildness to break out), but also be ready to adapt in case something happens that might hijack your class. Flexibility can help you seize the incredible, teachable moments that always appear when a “wild child” acts up.
- 3) Set and discuss upfront, clear behavior rules and expectations,** letting all your students know that



following them will be great ways to show Christian love for God, you, and each other. Doing this will also help everyone have a great time. Also share the consequences for misbehavior and explain why it will not be tolerated. Let your students know that you will tell their parents all the good things you see and also all the not so good.

- 4) Teach to all the learning styles** – visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. A “wild child” is more often someone who’s learning styles are not being accommodated. Easy to understand help with accommodating learning styles can be found in “The Word of Life Comes to Life” by WELS CYD (Northwestern Publishing House), “The Way They Learn” by Cynthia Tobias (Focus on the Family), and “Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything at Church: And How to Fix It” by Thom and Joani Schultz (Group, Inc.).
- 5) Enlist and train extra in-class help.** Have other adults or teens ready to step in when needed, redirecting the “wild child” behavior, and allowing the rest of the class to keep moving ahead.
- 6) Provide the “wild child” attention outside of class** by sending cards or e-mails, visiting his/her home, listening, attending non-church activities, calling on the phone, praying together, etc. This can go a long way in communicating that you really do care for the “wild child”, and not just because you are “supposed” to as a Sunday school teacher.
- 7) Partner with parents.** They know their “wild child” better than you do. Seek their advice for how to handle the situations that present themselves in class. Do this in a manner that genuinely communicates how much you love their child and appreciate their being in your Sunday school class. Of course, partnering with parents is made easier if you have shared some positive feedback about their child earlier.

Learn more strategies for dealing with disruptive students in, “When Wild Kids Show Up: How to Avoid a Showdown” by Stephanie Martin, *Children’s Ministry Magazine*, January/February 2005.

Putting People with Passion to Work for Your Sunday School

Need people to help with your Sunday school ministry? Start tapping those church members or parents around you who have a special interest or passion. Getting them involved in Sunday school in their area of interest/passion can create win-win. They will feel their gifts are being used for ministry, and you will see Sunday school improve.

Camera-Toting Dad – You know that father who always has his digital camera or camcorder out at his kid’s activities? Ask him if he’d like to take pictures of Sunday school classes, students, teachers, and/or activities for use on bulletin boards, publicity materials, PowerPoint presentations, etc.

Divine Designers – You know those women who love to decorate their homes? Ask them to be on a team to spruce up your Sunday school classrooms, large meeting area, or entry way with signs, props, banners, seasonal decorations, etc.

Happy Hals – You know those folks who always have a smile on their face and are eager to shake your hand? Ask them to be your Sunday school greeters, welcoming children and parents to Sunday school and making them feel really special.

Computer Whiz – You know the teen whose mom is always complaining about him playing with his techie toys? Ask him to provide tech support for classroom lessons, group presentations, Sunday school programs, or worship services.

Filers, not Pilers – You know those people who love to shop, organize, coordinate, and arrange? Ask them to be the behind-the-scenes supply-gathering team for your Sunday school staff.

These are only a few of the talented people God has put all around you in your congregation. Look for them, invite them, use them, and watch them and your Sunday school ministry flourish.

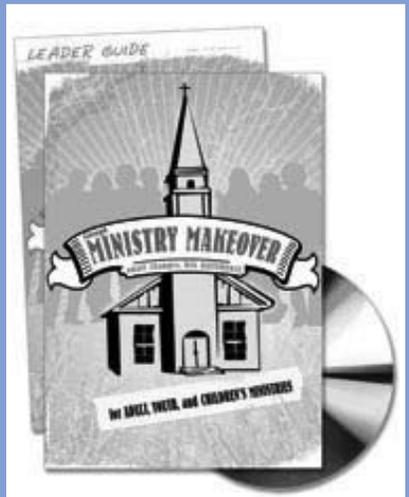
Resource Recommendations

**Group’s Ministry
Makeover: Small
Changes, Big Difference**

Item Number: 646847111396
www.group.com

Price: \$29.99

No actors and no scripts, just a real-life Sunday school teacher, youth leader, and pastor working to make a difference in their church and improve the way they teach. Step inside and see first-hand how small changes make a big difference in the way people connect with their message, each other, and with God. See the very compelling and inspiring “before” and “after” record of these three classes and their teachers. You’ll never teach the same again!



Only At Sunday School!



During a time of financial strain in his congregation, the pastor took a little extra time to emphasize the importance of everyone giving their tithes and offerings. He challenged the people to give enthusiastically because the Bible says, “God loves a cheerful giver.”

While the plates were being passed to gather the offering, little Stevie quickly slipped off his neck tie and placed it into the offering plate as it went by. His shocked mother blurted, “What do you think you’re doing?”

Stevie replied, “Pastor said to put your ties in the collection plate and do it joyfully. I just love that man!”

Great Ideas from Great Teachers

Resource Catalog – Rainbow Publishers

If you are looking for time fillers, bulletin board ideas, worksheets, etc., for your Sunday school classroom, check out the Sunday School Store (www.sundayschoolstore.com). Phone number is (800) 522-5005. Although the materials were not created by WELS, many of the ideas/suggestions can work in your Sunday school classroom.

All About Me

To get to know the children in your Sunday school class, send home a flier for the children to complete with their parents and return the next Sunday. With this information, you'll be able to add a personal touch to your care.

All About Me

I'm so glad you're part of our class this year! Please take a few minutes with your parents to fill in the following information, and then return it next Sunday.

My name is _____.

My address is _____.

My phone number is _____.

My birthday is _____ and I'm _____ years old.

I'm in _____ grade.

I attend _____ school.

My e-mail address is _____.

Parents, with your permission, we'd like to send an occasional e-card to your child. If we have your permission to e-mail your child, please sign here:

_____ Date _____

My favorite color is _____.

My favorite thing to do is _____.

The following people are in my family _____.

_____.

What else would you like me to know about you? _____.

_____.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form and return it to me. My name is _____ and I'm the

teacher for _____ grade at _____ Lutheran Church.

If you need to reach me, my phone number is _____.

My e-mail address is _____.

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

WELS.net University Mini-courses for Sunday School Staffs

142 individuals have already taken some of the awesome Sunday school mini-courses offered at WELS.net University. Go to www.wels.net/sstraining. Log in, go to the lessons' main page, and click on any of 14 lessons that can help make your Sunday school ministry and your teaching better. There is no charge to use these courses, so how can you go wrong?

- 1) Should I Be Teaching Sunday School?
- 2) Teaching Sunday School: A Wonderful Calling
- 3) The Sunday School's Mission: Totally Possible
- 4) Teaching Law and Gospel: A Real Balancing Act
- 5) Law and Gospel: What's the Big Difference?
- 6) Teaching the Way Children Actually Learn
- 7) What Kind of Teacher Are You Anyway?
- 8) Recruiting Staff: I Thought You'd Never Ask!
- 9) The Dynamics of Dynamic Staff Meetings
- 10) Partnering with Parents: From "Us and Them" to "We"
- 11) Developing a Sunday School That Reaches Out
- 12) Shaping a Better Sunday School Culture
- 13) Sunday School Standards: How Do You Measure Up?
- 14) Jesus: Master Teacher

OTHER HELPFUL LINKS

Sunday School Newsletter Archive (Partners)

Sunday School Ministry Resources

Discussion Forums for All Mini-Courses

CHECK OUT/JOIN THE CHAT

Go to www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship, look in the "Consultation and Resources" collection and then the "Sunday School Ministry Resources" folder to find the script from the online chat "Sharing Sunday School Stories and Strategies" held June 12, 2007 and sponsored by the WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship (CYD). Then join the fall chat, **Tuesday, September 11, 8:00 p.m.** Central Time. Topic: "Staff Training and Development: Ideas and Issues."

Partners

Positive Principles to Ponder

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- Children are motivated to learn by learning.
 - Children learn better when they experience.
 - Children learn better in a comfortable environment.
 - Children learn better when they discuss what they are learning.
 - Children believe what they do more than they do what they believe.
 - Children are motivated to learn when the answer is not obvious.
 - Children learn better when the focus is on the concrete.
 - Children learn better when they help to choose what they study.
 - Children learn better when they can translate terms into their own language.
 - Children learn better when they are challenged to be creative.
 - Children learn better in varied settings.
 - Children learn better under the guidance of a Christian mentor.
 - Children learn better from teachers who care about them.
 - Children learn more when their lessons affect their lives.

The above principles and an expansion of them are available in the book, "Teaching the Bible Creatively" by Bill McNabb and Steven Mabry – published by Youth Specialties.

Please contact us with any questions or for further information.

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