



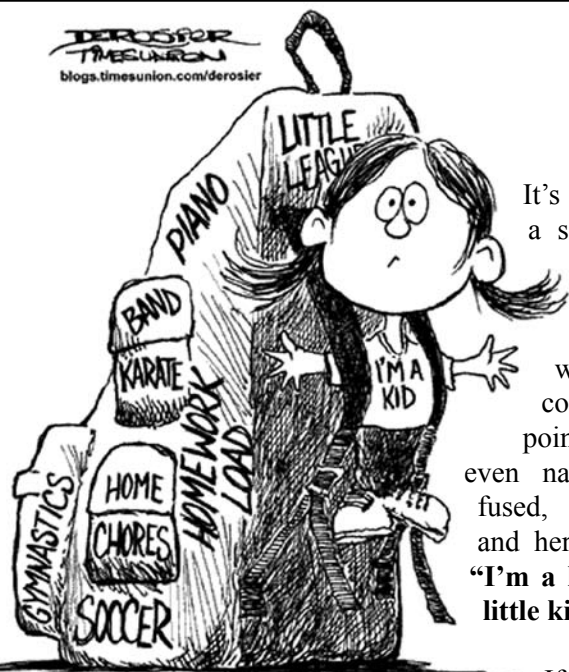
Sowers & Seeds

Published by the WELS Commissions on Youth Discipleship & Parish Schools to assist those in early childhood ministry.

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Free the Children

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



It's a funny picture in a scary sort of way. A child (let's call her Penny) weighed down with activities and commitments to the point where she can't even navigate. Her confused, confounded look and her t-shirt say it all: "I'm a kid!"...I'm just a little kid!

If you are responsible for young children (yours or others) maybe it's time that you pondered Penny's predicament and encouraged others, like Penny's parents/guardians, to do the same. Consider the following quotes:

A child is nothing like a racing car. . . . Souping up babies doesn't work that way. The child is what she is. There is a certain irreducible if elusive core. Pushing, pulling, stretching, and shrinking will not really change it. There may be spectacular interim results. The baby may say the alphabet before she walks, master two-times or even ten-times table at three. In the long run, however, this forced precocity tends to be irrelevant. . . . Whatever gains there are become unimportant. The losses can be irrevocable.

Stella Chess (20th century), U.S. psychiatrist, and Jane Whitbread (20th century), U.S. writer. *Daughters*, ch. 2 (1978).

[Children] need time to stare at a wall, daydream over a picture book, make mud pies, kick a ball around, whistle a tune or play the kazoo—to do the things today's adults had time to do when they were growing up. Leslie Dreyfous (20th century), U.S. author. AP article appearing in *The New Bedford (MA) Standard-Times* (February 9, 1992).

Children who are pushed into adult experience do not become precociously mature. On the contrary, they cling to childhood longer, perhaps all their lives. Peter Neubauer (20th century), U.S. psychoanalyst. As quoted in *Children Without Childhood*, by Marie Winn, 1981, ch. 13.

It's a hurried world out there. But kids still need time just to be kids. They need time to enjoy their immaturity. David Bjorklund (20th century), U.S. child development expert. As quoted by Leslie Dreyfous, AP article in *The New Bedford (MA) Standard-Times* (February 9, 1992).

Experts have been studying the growing stress and disappearing downtime of modern children for quite a while. And the negative trends extend across class and region. Why are we pushing our children so far, so fast? The combination of split-up homes, double shifts, shrinking vacations, fear of boredom, need to stay competitive, wanting our cake and eating it too, all conspire to clog adult and kid schedules. And there is no let up in sight. Even summer has become more crazy than lazy and hazy. There is math camp, weight camp, leadership camp, band camp, sports camp, computer camp, church camp, etc., etc., as though summer (and the

Continued on page 2 . . .



“Free the Children” . . . continued from page 1

rest of the year) were about perfecting ourselves, when in fact the opposite may be true. And what’s the fallout of the hurried and harried life? Look at this list of “outcomes of childhood stress” compiled from several sources on the subject:

- Teen suicide and homicide rates have tripled from twenty years ago
- Childhood obesity is up 50%
- U.S. teen pregnancy rates are the highest for any Western society
- SAT scores are plummeting
- 15-20% of children flunk kindergarten
- Millions of children are medicated to be more “manageable”
- Creativity in children is diminished
- Chronic, psychosomatic complaints on the rise: headache, stomach ache, chest pain, hyperactivity, sadness, lethargy, lack of motivation
- Inability to say “no” to more impossible demands
- Foundational values, beliefs, morality, and faith are not taught from parents
- Children feel incompetent and lack self-worth
- Trouble sleeping
- Loss of appetite
- Procrastination
- Acting up
- Growing resentment that overflows in middle school and high school years
- Increased irritability and moodiness
- Higher incidence of anxiety or panic attacks
- Allergic reactions: eczema and asthma
- Hopelessness and depression
- Compulsive exercise
- Addictions: alcohol, drugs, eating disorders

As early childhood ministers who care deeply about your children and their families, you are positioned in a spot where you can lovingly raise the issue of childhood stress and its fallout with the parents and families you serve. You can also lead these parents and families to ponder what God’s Word says on the subject and help them to see how perfect peace rests with Jesus.

“My times are in your hands.” Psalm 31:15

“Seek the Lord while he may be found.” Isaiah 55:6

“It is time to seek the Lord.” Hosea 10:12b

“What I mean brothers, is that the time is short . . . for this world in its present form is passing away.”

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

“Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.” Psalm 62:8

“For anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.” Hebrews 4:10

“Ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.” Jeremiah 6:16

“Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28

Your encouragement and the Holy Spirit working through God’s Word, may help your parents and families to make needed changes as they better understand that “BUSY” frequently means Being Under Satan’s Yoke.

The Pastor Factor

What follows are excerpts from “The Pastor’s Involvement in Early Childhood Ministry” by Pastor Brent Merten, Mountain Valley Lutheran Church - Eagle, CO. The full article can be found in the WELS Parish Schools newsletter, Eduternity - Winter 2007.

[In] our Early Childhood Ministry . . . [almost] 90% of our students are from non-member families, and about half of these are unchurched . . . We have had many baptisms, several adult confirmations, and countless opportunities to share God’s law and gospel as a direct result of our preschool . . . I am convinced that the pastor’s involvement with the congregation’s ECM plays a vital role in its outreach efforts. Here are some specific areas where I try to be involved in our preschool which seem to have a positive impact on outreach:

Meeting and greeting parents. I try to be there when parents drop off and pick up their kids, at least a few times each week. Making the connection between the ECM and the church is absolutely vital to outreach. And the more parents see the pastor, the more likely they are to make that connection between the preschool they drop their kids off at and the church in which it is located.

Interacting with the children. Whether its reading a Bible story, giving a tour of the church, or just “high-fiving” the

Continued on page 3 . . .

Jump, Jive, & Wail

Music, Movement, & Brain Development

by Jennifer Vogel - Wisconsin Lutheran College Student in Early Childhood Education

“I don’t sing well.” “I can’t even carry a tune!” “My body doesn’t move that way anymore. . .” Excuses fill our vocabulary as to why we eliminate music and movement from our curriculum. However, one must ask, is a classroom void of music and movement in the best interest of the student?

When music and movement finds a home in the classroom, the students are the ones who reap the benefit. Through integrating physical activity one is training and strengthening the brain. Physical sensations cause neurons to create connections with other neurons and the more frequently these occur, the faster they will communicate and process incoming information. Thus, linking movement to learning greatly aids the brain in connecting information and the retention rate accelerates. In fact, many cognitive, behavioral, and academic issues are not insufficiencies in knowledge, but rather can be understood as sensory-motor production difficulties. Specifically, cross-lateral activities (crossing the mid-line of the body) stimulate and connect the right and left hemisphere and in turn train the brain to quickly respond to stimuli. This process warms up a multitude of areas in the brain and in turn enhances learning. Movement, a natural



means of experiencing surroundings, heightens sensory-motor production and benefits the learner.

Like movement, music enhances the learning experience, particularly memory. Studies have shown that 90% of a child’s brain is utilized when actively participating in music. Cognitively, we further our students’ development by incorporating elements of music through singing into everyday class time. Neural pathways are connected during these music periods. Emergent literacy skills, such as pattern, rhythm, and sequencing, also develop as a result of the influence in music in the classroom.

All in all, educating children through music and movement supports our young students developmentally and cognitively. It is when we put our pride to the side and look to the betterment of the students that we realize what a mighty combination music and movement play in the learning process for these young ones. For more information, and an excellent reference to begin implementing music in your classroom, look to Carole Peterson. With four CDs and several Parent Choice Awards, “Miss Carole” offers a variety of developmentally appropriate songs, styles, and movements. Details can be found on her website: www.macaronisoup.com.

“The Pastor Factor” . . . continued from page 2

kids as you pass through the preschool, it’s important that the children are familiar and comfortable with the pastor.

Offering Bible studies. We offer a variety of Bible studies for the preschool parents, including a mini-Bible Information Class (BIC), which covers some of the basics of Christian doctrine (and leads into a full-blown BIC for those who wish to continue), as well as Bible classes which go through the Christ-Light® Bible stories the children are learning.

Phone contacts. Since our church is small and does not have a full-time secretary, I answer the phone about 90% of the time. Opening a preschool greatly added to my “receptionist” duties, but there’s a definite plus-side to

this. In many cases, I am the first point of contact with our preschool. This makes it easier for me to make early, frequent, and direct contact with unchurched preschool families.

Making these deliberate contacts with the children and families of our preschool often leads to more contacts where I can share God’s law and gospel . . . Of course, connecting the families of Early Childhood Ministries with Jesus is far more important than connecting them with the pastor. But I’m convinced that the more the pastor is involved in the ECM, the more opportunities there will be to connect these families with their Savior.



Try These with Your Children

These ideas (reprinted with permission) came from Children's Ministry Magazine (May/June 2006). Consider subscribing to this great resource printed by GROUP Inc (www.grouppublishing.org). Though not WELS, it has some wonderful ideas and articles.

The "Jesus Pokey"

This new twist on an old favorite will let preschoolers wiggle and encourage them to follow Jesus. Sing and do the motions to the tune of "Hokey Pokey."

The first four lines are the same as the actual song, then sing

You want to follow Jesus,
He will turn your life around.
That's what it's all about!

Use arms, legs and whole body for more verses.

Wiggle and Praise

Introduce babies to praise and worship by having designated worship time in your nursery. Have nursery caregivers sit in a circle on the floor with babies. Place little ones who are able to sit in front of a volunteer. Place a blanket on the floor for smaller infants and lay them on the backs facing a volunteer. Play age-appropriate CDs and have volunteers sing to the babies as they move their arms, hands, and legs to the beat of the music. Smile at the babies as you sing to them. Give each baby a hug when you're finished and tell them, "Jesus loves you!" For music resources to use with babies and toddlers, go to "Web Extras" at www.cmmag.com

Baby Baskets

Give new parents a gift from your nursery by assembling baskets for newborns. Request items from various ministry groups at your church, such as baby quilts from women's or crafting groups, small photo albums from seniors, baby wash from hospitality, or rattles from your worship team. Include a card signed by your nursery staff, a customized diaper bag tag with your ministry's name, and a brochure with information about your nursery. Attach Scripture verses to each of the items, such as the following:

- **Quilt** – "All praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the source of every mercy and the God who comforts us" (2 Cor. 1:3)
- **Photo Album** – "You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book" (Psalm 139:16)
- **Baby Wash** – "Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10)
- **Rattles** – "You thrill me, Lord with all you have done for me! I sing for joy because of what you have done" (Psalm 92:4)

Deliver the baskets to babies and their parents when they arrive home from the hospital. Keep extra baskets on hand to give away as needed.

Violent Video Games and Youth Aggression

From MediaWise, the newsletter of The National Institute on Media and the Family. (www.mediafamily.org)

Results from a 2002 study of over 600 children, presented at the Conference of the Society for Research in Child Development, revealed that children who play violent video games:

- See the world as a more aggressive place
- Get into arguments with authority figures more often
- Are more likely to be involved in physical fights, and
- Do poorer in school.

Exposure to video game violence was a significant predictor of physical fights, even when students' gender, hostility level, and amount of video game play were taken into account. Children who are not naturally hostile were almost 10 times more likely to have been involved in physical fighting if they played a lot of violent video games than if they did not play violent games. In fact, the least hostile children who played a lot of video games were more likely to be involved in fights than the most hostile children who did not play violent video games.

**Bottom line:
Violent
content
does
make a
difference!**





Kids Connection

Presenting the Gospel Message with Kids in Mind

Produced by WELS-CYD with Emmy Award Winning Steve Boettcher Productions

Looking for a new way to reinforce Jesus to the children in your Early Childhood Ministry? 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 popular and more familiar WELS Connection, but designed for its target youthful audience. Features include:

Teen Hosts – Your children 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 like to focus on young Christians serving as great examples of Christian living for those their age or younger.

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. And they are extremely tangible for young children.

Web site content – The companion Web site, www.kidsconnection.tv, offers a multitude of content and applications to compliment the video. More suited for the older children in your ECM, kidsconnection.tv offers content that is safe for them in a familiar environment. Links, games, trivia, fun facts, sneak peeks and previous Tony Schultz devotions are just some of the things they, as well as you teachers, will find there.

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!”

Continued on back page . . .



The 7 Building Blocks

From The National Institute on Media and the Family (www.mediafamily.org)

The seven building blocks for academic success refer to traits and habits that contribute to success in the classroom. The extent to which these building blocks are in place, the more successful in school a child is likely to be. The development of these building blocks, of course, takes place before a child ever sets foot in the classroom. A child’s media diet has an impact on every one of these seven building blocks. A moderate diet of good media can have a positive influence; a heavy diet of entertainment media can have a negative one.

The seven building blocks are...

- Imagination
- Curiosity
- Ability to focus attention in the absence of emotional stimulation
- Ability to maintain attention in the absence of emotional stimulation
- Persistence
- Language skills
- Inner speech/impulse control

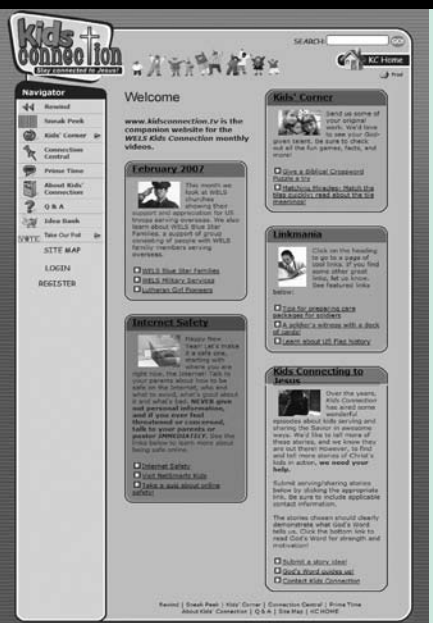


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Sowers & Seeds

"Kids Connection" . . . continued from page 5



Kids Connection began in 1995 and has enjoyed a very positive reputation for over ten years. However, many don't know about this valuable resource, and current subscriptions only cover about 35% of the production costs. Although it may be a little advanced for your youngest ECM participants, it can be a valuable tool in establishing attention to the Gospel, offering a visually and auditorially stimulating approach. It also provides a teaching change of pace for yourself and your children.

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 ECM children stay connected to Jesus!

All Scripture quotations are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, New International Version © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. **Sowers & Seeds** is published four times a year by the WELS Commissions on Youth Discipleship & Parish Schools. Comments about this **Sowers & Seeds** and ideas for future issues can be directed to Dr. Joel A. Nelson, Administrator WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship.

WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship
2929 North Mayfair Road
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53222-4398



Phone: 414-256-3274
E-mail: cyd@sab.wels.net
Web site: www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship