



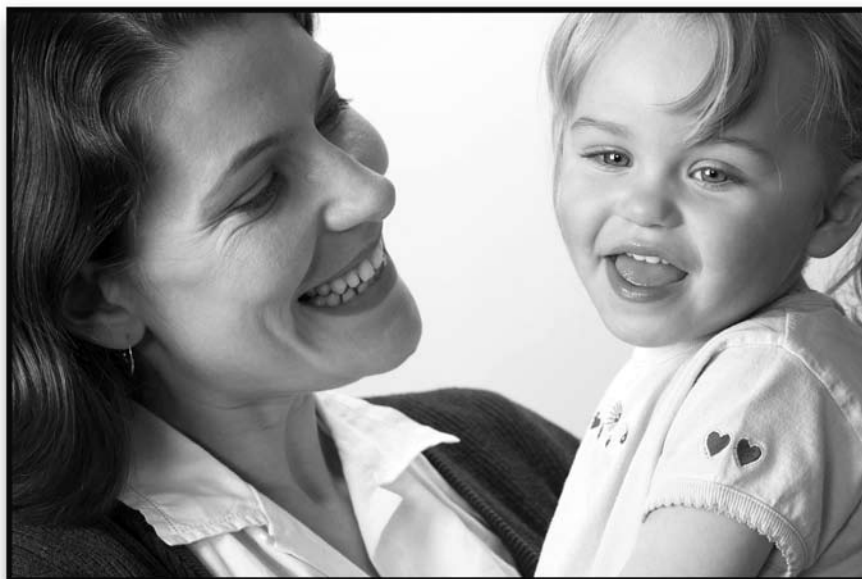
Sowers & Seeds

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

The Secret to Success

by Beth Marquardt, School of Early Learning (S.O.E.L.) Director – St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Muskego, WI

How do you measure success? The world’s definition of success may be measured by any number of materialistic standards. To some, success may be measured by the size of a bank account, the make and model of an automobile, or the size and acreage of their current dwelling. To others, success may lie in a prestigious position or social status.



God’s definition of success, however, is quite different. It is not measured by any of these materialistic standards. Success in God’s eyes comes from being faithful to him and his Word. In Joshua 1:7-8, God tells us to be faithful to his Word, to “meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”

How do you measure success in your early childhood ministry? In the past few years, many congregations have established early childhood centers as outreach ministries. Reaching out to the community through these centers is an

excellent way to share Jesus with people that might not otherwise have the opportunity to learn about Him. But how do we measure success in these programs? Is it measured through the relationships that are being built and the Word of God that is going out to these families, or is it measured by the number of children in the program and the new members that are being

taken in? Both are very important results that we want our programs to have, but which results truly make our program a success? Is it what is going out or what is coming in?

Besides the obvious physical needs of our early childhood programs (space, materials, supplies, etc.), we need spiritually faithful workers who lead and guide the little ones entrusted to their care in the light of God’s Word. Helping these children to know Jesus is the most important task that we have. As we teach and guide these precious little ones each day, God’s Word is at work in their hearts and

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minds and the return may or may not be seen by us. It would be wonderful if we made such an impression on these children and their families that they would like to be a part of our spiritual family, but what we have been called to do is be faithful, knowing that the Lord promises his Word will not return to him without results.

Congregations can help to fulfill these important tasks by getting involved in their early childhood ministries. Get to know the children and families that are part of your program. Invite these families to worship and congregational events. Follow up and make connections at and after such events. By doing all these things, we are building relationships that God can use to bring people closer to him.

What kind of results can we then expect? Will our program grow? Will we bring new members into our church? We may, in his time and according to his will. We may never see visible results from all our efforts, but we know if we have been faithful in proclaiming his Word, the Lord will take care of the return.

Yes, we must be concerned with numbers, budgets, enrollments, and church membership, but that is not a measure of our success. Success is measured by what is going out to our little ones and their families, not what is coming in. If God’s Word is going out, faithfully being proclaimed by his people, then we must let God return in his time and in his way the successes that are only his to grant.

St. Paul’s S.O.E.L. currently has 57 children enrolled, ages birth-4 years, with 60 families on the waiting list.

Wiggles and Waiting

by Jessica Stege – Wisconsin Lutheran College
education student and ECM intern

Imagine seeing this activity used in the classroom: “Ok, let’s pretend we were just out in the rain! We tripped and fell into a puddle and got soaked! Now usually when I get wet, I dry off with a towel, but I don’t have towels here at school. So I guess we are just going to have to shake off all of the water! First, let’s get the water off of our hands. Shake them really fast and jittery...” Some may wonder, “What use could this activity have in my classroom?” Sure, there is an element of fun, but what is the purpose?

The aforementioned activity is one of many transitions that Bradley Smith suggests in his book *101 Learning and Transition Activities* (2006).* Transition opportunities occur countless times during the day. In many cases they are necessary in order to help students move from one activity to another quickly and safely throughout the daily routine and especially when they lose focus in a lesson. Not only do transitions help you and your children move smoothly through the daily schedule, but they also help to accomplish objectives that meet the needs of the whole child with whom you are already working with in your classroom. To aid in this, Smith includes the approximate length of time of each activity, the general developmental age level for which it works best, and the curricular area connection.

What follows are seven types of transitions suggested by Bradley Smith (2006):

Large Motor and Small Motor Skills activities allow students to move and burn off energy and at the same time develop their hand/eye coordination and dexterity. Throughout the day, no doubt there will be times when a child needs more movement, especially younger children with shorter attending skills. Activities such as the one mentioned in the opening paragraph can be used to enhance motor skills and help restless students use their energy and then refocus.

Singing with or without actions are other activities that prove to be useful as a transition and curricular connection. Additionally it is important to expose children to music, even if it means simply playing it in the background while they are working or playing. A variety of



music including classical music, classic rock, big band, jazz, and blues can encourage the children's imagination. Adding actions to the songs or simply allowing the children to dance and express themselves through the music will make it a motor activity as well. Singing a song to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It" using the words "put your finger on the wall" helps children to recognize a body part and walk in a line quietly down the hall, making your transition effective and engaging.

Quiet down or crowd control activities are intended to help children settle down prior to moving to what follows on the schedule. These activities include opportunities to burn off extra energy before quieting down. This could be as simple as a series of hand claps that the teacher uses to gain attention and children use to clap in response to show that they have heard and are ready to give their attention. An activity such as "Everybody Point" allows children to point and move, but requires them to communicate only with their hands and not their mouths.

Recognition and Memory activities help to expand children's knowledge and recognize concepts or objects around them, and are designed to reinforce children's memory skills as well. For example, having the children line up by color or the type of clothing they are wearing will help them to use their recognition skills and pay increased attention to the details about the other children around them.

Repetition activities allow the children to repeat and add to information that they hear from others in the group. This enhances their memory skills and also allows them to be creative. It is an easy category to create activities for and may even help the teacher to improve their memory as well! One such activity could ask the students to sit in a circle and recall what they ate for dinner the night before. Each student has to repeat what the student

before them ate as well as add an item that they ate. This encourages creativity on the part of the children to think of a food they ate truthfully, or simply one they would maybe like to eat.

Character sketch and role-play activities encourage children to watch or be drawn into the interaction of a specific role. The activities involve pretending so it allows children to use their imaginations based on a character or role. The teacher can be involved by pretending to be a doctor or dentist, for example, allowing the children to play the role of the patient. Roles can also be switched after the students have had a model.

Imagination activities require the most creativity, but initiate a world for the children where anything is possible. It is important to think outside the box and just be crazy with the children. These activities can be done anywhere and anytime that creative minds are turning! Some examples are perfect for car rides or transitioning to another area of the school building. Imagining, for example, that you are an animal and making that noise and walking like them down the hall, or creating a story in the car involving being on a train and traveling to visit a friend, are just a few of the infinite number of scenarios that could fit this type of activity.

These seven types of transitions are only a few of the multitude that can be used daily in your classroom. Be creative! Use books, ideas from other teachers, and your own ideas. Most importantly, show your enthusiasm along with the children. Young children are imitators—they will catch your energy and move smoothly with you into the new activity and/or reengage in the lesson you are already teaching. So go ahead, shake those hands fast and jittery and get all that rain off before you move on to your next activity!

Smith, B & Smith, A. (2006). 101 Learning Transitions and Activities. Clifton Park, NY: Thomson Delmar Learning.

"Faith Stepping Stones" Training and Outreach

*by Rev. Jonathan M. Semro, Pastor – Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Houston, TX
and Mrs. Cathy Bang, Director – The Genesis Academy, Houston, TX*

"It's been a wonderful experience that I think you should have extended for more hours." This comment was made by a participant at the inaugural "Faith Stepping Stones" event facilitated by Prince of Peace Lutheran Church and its preschool, The Genesis Academy, in Houston, TX. Five families, all with children enrolled at The Genesis Academy, participated in the event. Participants gathered for the five hour Saturday event to learn about the physical, emo-

tional, and spiritual development of their preschool-aged children. "Faith Stepping Stones" is a seminar developed by Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services (WLCFS) and Faith Inkubators. WLCFS has modified the materials for use in WELS congregations. The presentations include PowerPoint slides, quiz contests, hands on activities, discussion time, skits and learning from God's Word.

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One of 31,316

by *Dr. Sharon Burow – Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, WI*

From November 6-10, 2007, 31,316 educators devoted to early childhood learning from all over the globe gathered in Chicago, IL, to attend the world's largest early childhood conference, sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Whether a professor, veteran or novice educator, there was a plethora of opportunities to learn, share, and experience the latest information, products and services in the field of early childhood education. More than 758 sessions and 1000+ exhibits provided many ways to explore diverse topics and themes, reflect on the latest research and practice, and consider time-tested and emerging strategies and products for care and education of young children and their families. What follows is a review of what I learned from the sessions I attended.

The impact of trauma on brain development, attachment, learning, and behavior—how can we help children? Secure attachment forms the foundation for trust, causal thinking, conscience development, and the ability to delay gratification. When young children are abused/neglected, abandoned, or experience other traumas, they face significant developmental delays. The session reviewed relevant research and offered practical tools for helping these vulnerable children.

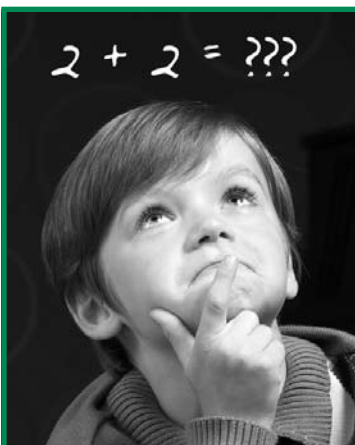
Inclusion made easy: Selecting and adapting materials for the classroom. The sectional tables were covered with many typical classroom resources such as books, puzzles, musical instruments, blocks, puppets, and manipulative aids. The materials were equipped with magnets, large knobbed handles, and wooden tabs to support those with physical challenges. The emphasis was to ensure that all children were utilizing the same materials, but with a slight alteration. It is apparent that such adaptations also serve normally developing children and

avoid singling out and reducing/eliminating the stigma often associated with differing abilities.

How assessment and standards support states' learning goals for young children. Recognizing the importance of kindergarten and early primary learning, states have begun to publish early learning standards and fund programs. However, it is unclear whether states are ensuring that children in those schools are actually acquiring the knowledge and skills defined by state standards and the validity of assessment tools. Four nationally recognized experts in assessment focused on major issues associated with measuring young children's learning in light of developmentally appropriate practices.

A highlight was attending the United States branch of the Organization Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire, (OMEP) meeting. This international, non-governmental organization is concerned with all aspects of early childhood education and care throughout the world. Founded in 1948 to benefit children under the age of 8 years, the OMEP is active in more than 60 countries. Though the intent of the OMEP membership meeting was to develop a list of goals to increase regional and international activity emanating from the USA branch, eleven countries were represented and provided a challenging, invigorating, and reflective conversation.

As an early childhood director/educator, it is so important for you to continue your personal and professional growth. Attending conferences like those sponsored by NAEYC, will help you address everyday challenges as well as keep you abreast of new trends and developments in early childhood education. It will also give you opportunities to let your light shine and advocate for Christian early childhood education as you network and connect with others in the field.



From the Mouths of Babes

A four year old learning some rudimentary math, challenged his teacher about two plus two equaling four.

The boy pointed out, "Two raindrops plus two raindrops makes a puddle."

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After a tough morning at preschool, three year old Nikky sat down to a bowl of alphabet soup her mother prepared for lunch. Nikky looked at the steaming bowl before her with its floating letters and muttered, "Can't you let a kid forget about school for a minute?"



What Works for You?

NB: This Sowers & Seeds feature exists for the purpose of allowing WELS early childhood directors/educators to share with each other in the hopes of advancing the greater good. Publication in Sowers & Seeds does not represent WELS CYD or CPS endorsement of what's presented.

Faculty Orientation Manual

Patti Fellers, Administrator of Lambs of Grace Child Development Center – Charlotte, NC – has developed an orientation manual for her faculty. Each time a new teacher is hired or called, Patti and the new teacher complete the orientation manual together in the first 10 weeks. The process meets state requirements and also includes the additional quality pieces followed at Lambs of Grace. Patti has been considering copyrighting the materials because many people in her area are very interested in it. If you'd like more information about how you could obtain the orientation manual, call Patti (704-365-3870) or email: lambs@grace-charlotte.org.

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What have you done in your early childhood ministry that really works and from which others could benefit? Send us your story, idea, practice, or policy and we'll share it with others.

"Sowers & Seeds" Going Electronic

by Jeremy Bakken, Administrative Assistant
– WELS Youth Discipleship

At its October 2007 meeting, the WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship voted to discontinue print production and surface mailing of *Sowers & Seeds*. The increasing costs of conducting all CYD ministry and the reality of decreasing Synod budgetary dollars for CYD required some cutting back. As a result, CYD will no longer mail printed copies of *Sowers & Seeds* to its subscribers. This change will take effect after the Summer 2008 print edition of the newsletter is mailed out.

Production and mailing of CYD's three newsletters (*Sowers & Seeds*, *Partners*, and *REACH!*) to over 50,000 subscribers annually costs CYD over \$32,000. Because no subscription fees are charged, the money was taken directly out of CYD's yearly operating budget. As CYD's allocation from the synod budget has decreased over the years while costs continue to rise, adjustments to CYD ministry must be made. One such adjustment is taking the newsletters online.

The Commission felt better stewardship would be practiced if all CYD newsletters were delivered solely online via a Youth Discipleship Web site archive or via e-mail. This would make the production and distribution dollars currently used for the newsletters available for other CYD ministry. The change would also keep pace with how people today are getting more and more of their information on demand via the World Wide Web.

From now on, you can get *Sowers & Seeds* in one of two ways:

1. On the CYD Web site. Go to www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship and click on "Newsletter Archive" on the right-hand side. Browse through the appropriate folders to see the most recent issue. Read it online or print it out for yourself and others.
- 2) Go to www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship and click on "Newsletter E-mail Service" on the right-hand side. Follow the instructions for subscribing to receive e-mail notification each time a new issue is released.

New issues will be available online according to the following schedule: Fall – late August, Winter – late November, Spring – late February, and Summer – late May.

We thank you for your understanding as we make the switch to solely online distribution. We hope you continue to find *Sowers & Seeds* timely, relevant and helpful in your early childhood ministry. Questions and comments can be directed to cyd@sab.wels.net.



Sowers & Seeds

"Faith Stepping Stones" . . . cont. from page 3

In each section you are encouraged to have a "Life Line" visitor who speaks from personal experience or expertise on the topics of physical, emotional or spiritual development. For the physical development section we chose a nurse in our congregation who gave wonderful insight and encouragement into the developmental milestones through which children progress in the preschool years. For the emotional development, we chose a member of our congregation who spoke about the different emotions she has experienced in raising two very different daughters. For the spiritual development section we had an area pastor's wife speak about the importance of prayer in her home.

We enjoyed a day of fellowship and scriptural encouragement as we studied together, ate breakfast and lunch together, and prayed together for God to bless our parenting skills and our children. This event was a wonderful opportunity for 25 volunteers, including members from Prince of Peace, Sunday School children and the staff at The Genesis Academy, to let the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ shine through their words and actions.

To schedule a "Faith Stepping Stones" workshop in your area go to www.wlcs.org and click on "Equipping Families and Teens."

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.

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