



Sowers & Seeds

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

The Data Begs a Question

by Dr. Joel Nelson, Administrator — WELS Youth Discipleship

According to data submitted by WELS congregations, from 2006-2007* WELS has lost 1,118 children (birth-grade 8). In the last five years the losses total 5,181 children. The data also shows that enrollments in WELS Early Childhood Ministries (ECM) have increased 2.3% from 2006. Actually, ECM enrollments have increased every year for the last decade. Of the 9,567 children currently enrolled in WELSEC, 6,081 (64%) are not WELS. This data begs a question: If ECM enrollments are growing and 2/3 of the enrollees are not WELS, why aren't more of these children/families joining WELS?

While there are many dynamics at work in the above data, and we can run into all kinds of dangerous territory when we try to quantify the work of the Holy Spirit, the question is one that has to be pondered: Why aren't more of these children/families joining WELS?



And to make it even more relevant and personal, "Why aren't the non-WELS children in your ECM joining your church?"

As summer approaches and staff and board time is dedicated to evaluating the past year and planning for the next, reflect on those questions and brainstorm potential causes. ECM ministry in WELS is being blessed by God, and the Word shared with ECM children and families—WELS or not—is living and active. But what can you start to bridge more of these families into your congregation? What can you stop that may be turning them away? What new approaches tried? What additional instruction given? What relationships more lovingly nurtured? Answering these questions is the exciting challenge we all have as we try to bring everyone within our area of influence closer to Christ. Have a great summer!

*2008 WELS data is not available yet.

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Sing the Scriptures!

31 Bible Passage-Based Songs for Elementary Classrooms and Choirs

by WELS teacher, author, musician, and composer, Linda Moeller

Reproducible Choir Parts and Accompaniment CD Included

About the Songs:

I have always been intrigued with the idea of using God's gift of music as a memory aid. When I was asked in 1979 to write songs for a new kindergarten religion curriculum to be published by Northwestern Publishing House, it seemed natural to set Bible passages to music. Through the years I've added to the collection, and now we've gathered them together in a single volume. Some are short enough to be learned after a Bible lesson to help with a Memory Gem; some have several verses and are long enough to use in church. I pray you find them a blessing as you and your students study the Scriptures!

How to Order:

Send check or money order for \$29.95 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling for a total of \$32.95 (WI residents include sales tax for a total of \$34.60) to Linda Moeller, 919 Richards Ave, Watertown WI 53094.

Questions?

You can reach Linda at . . .
Email: moeller2@charter.net
Phone: 920-261-0327

Family Involvement: Essential for a Child's Development

by Professor Cheryl Loomis — Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN

Teaching is about relationships. A relationship builds quite naturally with the children entrusted to our care. We see them on a daily basis and soon learn the individual nuances of what makes each personality unique. These same personalities arrive with an array of family background experiences. This diversity of experience is what many teachers find challenging in trying to build a relationship with a child's family.

Continuity is a necessary component for healthy child development. Children need to experience predictable routines in order to feel security. Once safe and secure, learning takes place. That continuity becomes more difficult to achieve once more adults are involved. Children today live in a diverse world and their households reflect this. This diversity can make the challenge of communicating effectively difficult for the teacher. Language barriers and family structures can present specific problems. Some feel the family setting is so different from their own that they don't know how to begin a relationship. Others cite a lack of formal training in working with families. Some are hesitant due to feelings of frustration and discouragement when previous attempts failed. Some teachers mention being overwhelmed by the problems families face. Christian teachers have the solution for these

problems. You are the person who provides a Christian example on a daily basis. Be genuine. Share stories about a child's success and frustrations. What an opportunity we have to help children and families build their relationships with people on earth but also with Christ.



Good teachers are skillful in the art of communication – communicating well not only with the children in their care but the families who bring them. Building authentic connections involves communication skill, both talking and listening. Teachers need to know themselves

and be able to articulate their beliefs. Of greater importance is being a good listener. Educators also need to be open and welcome the parent point of view. Respect and trust are built as people take time to listen to one another's joys and concerns about a child.

Involving families takes many forms. Most of these are in communication – newsletters, informal notes, e-mails, and phone calls keep families aware of daily happenings. Look for ways to involve families in your early childhood ministry. These opportunities can be as diverse as the families you serve. That involvement increases a child's success in learning.

Here's Alph-!

by Lynn Groth —
VBS Curriculum Developer,
Northwestern Publishing House



No, it's not a TV alien. It's half of the alphabet! This issue of *Sowers and Seeds* offers ideas early childhood teachers may use to expose their young students to the letters of the alphabet and their sounds. Notice the choice of the word *expose*. Not every preschooler can be expected to recognize each letter and parrot its sound or sounds. But exposing youngsters to letters and sounds and reviewing them in interactive ways can help prepare them to commit them to memory when the time is right. And joining the learning of letters with other learning can enhance what a child remembers. For example, teaching or reviewing the letter V on Valentine's day and having the children feel the velvet or velour vest a puppet is wearing as he delivers valentines can help etch images and sounds in the memory.

The following suggestions for the letters A-M have been provided by Susan Saatkamp, St. Jacobi-Greenfield, WI; Deb Kolbow, Peace-Hartford, WI; Peggy Janke, Christ-Big Bend, WI, and Lynn Groth-NPH-Milwaukee. You'll have to wait until the next issue to meet the other half of the alphabet!

There are a few suggestions for spiritual learning with letters. But teachers who provided ideas said they only add spiritual learning where it flows naturally. An example: At Christmas time review the letter J and show it in the name Jesus. Glue a candy cane to paper as a J and write the rest of the letters for the children. Students can add a Jesus sticker or picture of Jesus from a Christmas card. Another idea is to make a "Jesus Bag." Fill a cloth bag with Bible story books, figures, artwork, and recordings that each child can take home for a week and share with family members.

Here's "Alph"—the letters A to M. Before doing food activities, check for allergies.

A

1. The teacher provides apple slices. The children use plastic knives to cut small chunks. The teacher microwaves the chunks to make applesauce.
2. Children can dip apple halves into red, green, or yellow paint to make apple prints.
3. If you also teach the long A sound, have the children wear aprons (preferably with pockets) as they hunt for acorns hidden in the classroom. You could use real acorns or paper ones. Make separate tops and bottoms (two puzzle pieces) for the paper acorns, putting A on the top and a on

the bottom. Give each child a top. Scatter the bottoms in the classroom, and have each child find the one that matches the top piece.

B

1. Bounce blue balls and bat blue balloons.
2. Form two teams. One team hides blue bears. The other team members carry baskets and look for the hidden bears. Each time a child finds a blue bear, he or she puts it in a basket, rings a bell, and then keeps looking. Switch roles.

C

1. Catch raw carrots in cups. Cook some carrots. Compare cooked carrots and raw carrots. Make a graph to show who likes cooked, raw, or both.
2. Count candy corn into cups.
3. Place candy corn on a written C.

D

1. Use an eyedropper to drop a dozen drops into the sections of an egg carton.
2. Dip doughnuts in icing and decorate them. Devour. Delicious!

E

1. Enter and exit a tunnel holding an elephant.
2. Have a relay race in which children take turns carrying plastic eggs between their elbows.
3. If you teach long E sound, paint Easter eggs on an easel.

F

1. Finger fun: Form F and fish and flowers in foam (shaving foam sprayed on a table).
2. If you are teaching about God saving Noah and his family from the flood, teach the following words and actions:
Faithful family floats in flood.
Faithful (*press hands against heart*)
Family (*show eight fingers*)
Floats (*bob hands up and down*)
In flood (*make hands "rain"*)

Continued on page 4



"Here's Alph-!" . . . continued from page 3

G

1. God is great and glorious! For each child, print GOD on a white craft foam cloud. Have the children trace the letters with gold glitter glue.
2. If you are teaching about David and Goliath, give each child a few papers with a large G to color. Then attach the papers to a wall to form a stick man more than nine feet tall. Label him Goliath. Do the same activity for David to review D, but make the stick man about five and a half feet tall.
3. String green beads on a gold pipe cleaner.
4. Draw a gumball machine with a large G inside. Have the children cover the G with gumballs (colorful circular stickers).
5. Place golf tees in a sheet of Styrofoam in the shape of G, and have the children place gumballs on the tees.

H

1. Use a stethoscope to hear your heart.
2. Have a "half heart hunt." Make many 6" poster board hearts. Cut each into two puzzle pieces, making each puzzle unique. Put H on each left half and h on each right. Give each child the H side. Display the other

sides, and have the children match the broken hearts. This is fun to do on Valentine's Day.

3. Play H games: spin and roll a hula hoop; do the hokey pokey, especially with hands, hearts, hips, and heads; play Hungry, Hungry Hippos or hopscotch.
4. Find ten familiar items, seven of which begin with H. Have the children "test" each item by saying it out loud. ("Coat" would not work because we would have to say "hoat.") Place only the items beginning with H inside a hula hoop lying on the floor.
5. Attach various kinds of handles to a board for the children to move and turn.

I

1. Make igloos. Place an apple half (dome made by cutting from the stem to the blossom) on a paper plate, and cover it with a thin coat of white frosting. Press small marshmallows on the frosting.
2. Pin a paper that says "It" to a child's shirt, and play a game which needs someone to be "It."
3. If you teach the long I sound, put ice cubes in a pan. Use a permanent marker to write a letter I on a piece of aluminum foil. The kids put on mittens and place the ice cubes on the foil to make a letter I.

Continued on page 5



From the Mouths of Babes

Submitted by Elaine Rixe — Salt Lake City, Utah

My preschoolers listened to the story of Creation so intensely today, that it kind of scared me. It was like a miracle happening right before my eyes. This group of 17 kids, who can't, all simultaneously, sit still long enough to say the Pledge of Allegiance or wait in line for a drink of water, managed to sit and listen like they never have before!

I had to assume that the two new kids had never heard the story of Creation, Christmas, or the plan of salvation. I felt it necessary to bring them up to speed. Because the others had heard the story, repeatedly, I thought I would attempt to tell it in a nutshell type way - so the "regulars" would not be bored and the new kids would know. Well, I whispered it and told it like reading a suspense novel and I used my voice to reflect the deceptive serpent and the desire Eve must have felt to question and want what she was told she couldn't have.

My kids eyes were SO big and they all listened so well. It ended up not only being a new kids "catch up" moment, but it was also a "let's review and make certain it is with you" moment. I was able to explain why Adam and Eve had to leave the beautiful garden, the plan of salvation, the reason we celebrate Christmas and that the precious baby grew up and did something very special for us.

We ended with the death and resurrection of Jesus and it was then that little Emma ended the circle time discussion by saying, "My Grandpa died too, but not on a cross...on the floor." It was precious! It was a good day!



Get Some Toddler Power Going

Johannah Rutschow from Peace Lutheran Church in Cottonwood, AZ, runs a toddler group called “Toddler Power Hour.” It’s a one-hour mommy-and-me class that is open to the community. Two sessions are conducted with just under 30 children enrolled, only four of which are Peace members. Two years into the program, seven people (adults and children) have been baptized and three families have become members of the church.

Johannah started an Internet site on Yahoo® to share ideas and curriculum with other toddler groups in WELS. Please feel free to contact her with questions.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/WELSToddlerClass/join>

or send an e-mail to:

WELSToddlerClass-subscribe@yahoo.com

For more information, contact Johannah Rutschow at: johannahmay@juno.com

“Here’s Alph-!” . . . continued from page 4

J

1. Drop jingle bells and jacks from waist level into a jelly or jam jar on the floor.
2. Bake jewel cookies. Use the thumb to press a hole in a ball of sugar cookie dough to make thumbprint cookies. Bake. Fill with a dab of jelly or jam.
3. Make jeweled J jewelry. Have the children make poster board Js and attach them to yarn to make necklaces. Decorate the Js with fake gems and glitter glue.

K

1. Feed Kix® and candy kisses to a kitten or put them into a kangaroo’s pouch for the baby kangaroo to eat.
2. Find various shapes of keys. Trace each on a large sheet of poster board. Have the children place each key on its matching shape.

L

1. Collect yellow and green lollipops and “lick a lemon (lime) lollipop.”
2. Form an L on the left side of a Lite Brite. Have the children take turns making an L next to it.
3. After teaching about Jesus feeding more than 5000 people, try the following action rhyme (explain that a lad is a boy).

Little lad. (*hold hand low to show short person*)

Little lunch. (*cup hands like a small basket*)

Lord looks. (*hold hand above eyes and scan*)

Lord loves. (*press hands against heart*)

Large lunch! (*hold hands out and apart*)

Lots leftover. (*hold arms out, hands together, to form a circle*)

M

1. Fill a box with pairs of mittens. Hang a clothesline in the room. Have the children match the mittens and clip them to the line.
2. Make Mr. Munch. Cover the top of an egg carton with colorful paper. The children will hold the carton at the fold to make the “mouth” move up and down. They can add wiggly eyes, yarn hair, etc. Offer Mr. Munch things to eat, most of which begin with M. Help Mr. Munch know which items do not begin with M, for he will moan but not munch things that begin with any other letter.
3. Tape white paper to the bottom of a shallow box. Dip a marble in paint, drop the marble on the paper, and move the box to do marble painting.
4. Place money or marshmallows on a large M.

Next issue, N-Z

Next Issues Only Online!

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**Sowers
& Seeds**

1st Annual Northern Wisconsin District Commission on Youth Discipleship Early Care and Education Workshop

Saturday, August 9th 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Cost of Workshop: \$25

Hosted by Our Shepherd Childcare and Family Ministry Center

Workshop location: Bethany Lutheran Church, 530 W. Parkway Blvd. Appleton, WI

This workshop is for all teachers, directors, and pastors who currently have or are planning an early childhood ministry program. Workshop sessions will include a "Color R World" presentation with materials available for purchase; information on early childhood accreditation presented by Jeff Inniger, WELS Parish Schools Associate Administrator; touring of a large group center which provides care for 120 early childhood children; and helpful discussions about the many blessings and challenges that go along with our ministries. You are not alone in what you do and this is a great opportunity for us to get together and network as we share ideas.

Registration forms will be available soon at: www.WELSCYD.net/northernwisconsin

For information or questions please contact:

Ann Potter

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(920) 733-3344 or ourshepherd@sbcglobal.net

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