

“Holding Hands—Touching Hearts” Early Childhood Conference 2018



Holding Hands – Touching Hearts

“Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.”
Romans 12:10

Jesus holds our hand and touches our heart. As we love the children God brings to our preschools and centers, we are used by Jesus to touch the hearts of children and many families. When we gather at our Iowa District West Early Childhood Conference we “hold hands” as directors, teachers, assistants, and District leaders reminding each other that we are partners in ministry and we are not alone.

While all sectionals are shared with a ministry to and with children and families, several aspects of the conference focus very intentionally on the mission of Lutheran preschools and early childhood ministries.

Keynote 1: “Lead, Love, and Listen” — Dr. Rebecca Schmidt

It’s never too soon to get to the heart of the matter. Now is the time to nurture and encourage your ministry team. The seven essential components of Kouzes and Posner’s “Encouraging the Heart” provide an effective strategy for creating a loving culture in the groups you lead.



Keynote 2: “When Holding Hands Gets Messy” — Audrey Duensing-Werner



Every day we wipe away fragile tears and hug tender hearts; we clean up boogers and boo boos and hold on tight to little hands no matter how messy and sticky they are. We passionately love Jesus and His little ones; but we’re tired, frayed, challenged, frenetic, and we often forget that we have a Savior who is wiping away our fragile tears and hugging our tender hearts; cleaning up our boo boos and holding our sticky, messy, hands as He lift us up with his mighty right hand. (Isaiah 41)

SECTIONAL 1—10 a.m.

Cooking as an Interest Area – Sadie Gunther

Explore cooking as an interest area! This sectional presentation will include hands on ideas and tips for creating open-ended cooking opportunities for preschool aged children (ages 3-5). We will explore how to set up the area to offer independent experimentation, as well as discuss thoughtful teacher interactions that will allow children to think critically about their cooking choices. In this session, teachers will be given opportunities to explore and experiment with cooking as an interest area as well as be given resources to support implementing a cooking area into their classroom!

How to Work with Your Pastor – Pastor Todd Bunge

How to stroke your pastor's ego so that he'll get involved in childcare ministry? Just kidding. Do you have a pastor in your ministry who is afraid to get involved or seems to have other priorities? How do you approach this subject with your pastor? How can you, as a childcare director, learn to encourage your pastor to become more involved in your ministry? I hope to give you answers to these questions, and I also have some chapel ideas to share.

Lessons Learned from/with My Grandson – Janet Drake

After retirement, I so looked forward to becoming a grandmother for the first time. To our surprise my grandson, Davis, was born with Down Syndrome. Since that day, Davis has taught me so many lessons and we have learned so much together and I love being his Gram! I had learned about child development in my college days but not a lot was taught about developmental delays, sensory processing disorder, primitive or retained reflexes or how movement can help to improve the connection between the right and left brain. Come and learn some simple exercises you can use which would be beneficial to all students in your classroom. I believe the information presented might be of use to you in your professional lives as you teach children and that some of my lessons learned in life with Davis may be useful in your lives as Christ followers.

In the Beginning was the Word: The Miracle of Language and Literacy – Rebecca Janni

Rebecca Janni will share what she has learned about the power of early language and literacy acquisition through her work as a writer, educator, and mother of four. She will focus on what she has observed as each of her children have learned to read and developed as readers, highlighting the roles of wordless picture books, American Sign Language, read-alouds, audiobooks, and graphic novels. Through it all, she will show how reading stories is one way we can love each other and take delight in honoring each other.

Helping Hands to Guide Behaviors – Belinda Hughes and Sandy Nelson

Join Belinda and Sandy and learn some tips on how to be the helping hands that guide behavior in the classroom. We will be addressing developmental needs in the classroom, how teacher behavior impacts student behavior and intentional planning for social integration of all students.

Joys, Junk, and Jesus – Audrey Duensing-Warner

Every day we have the JOY and honor of sharing JESUS with little hearts. What a great calling! But, with that calling comes JUNK...every child that walks through our doors comes connected to some sort of JUNK...and sometimes that junk is in the form of family. Well, lets be honest, most times that junk is family system stuff. We know that primary faith formation is taught in the home, but how do we connect families to JESUS that are messy and...well, junky? Let's talk about the JOYS, JUNK, and JESUS of being an Early Childhood Educator and how we can pour into the hearts of families.

SECTIONAL 2—11:05 a.m.

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Christ-centered; Child-friendly; FAMILY-CONNECTING – Pastor Bob Riggert

Early childhood ministry expands from connecting the child to Christ to connecting the whole family to Christ. Family ministry through the early childhood center involves cooperation and communication between the center staff, the board, and the pastor. This sectional will share practical ideas on how to meet the challenges of family ministry and the joys of connecting families to Christ and His church.

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Ramps and Pathways – Gina Wells

Interactive training based on the book *Ramps and Pathways: A Constructivist Approach to Physics with Young Children* by Rheta DeVries. Participants will explore the components of the ramps and pathways, identify the constructivist characteristics of ramps and pathways, and connect the activities to the Early Learning Standards.

Movement and Mindfulness for Preschoolers – Maria Mattiace

Teachers will learn how both movement and mindfulness have a positive impact on a child's brain and how they can use "brain breaks" and mindfulness activities in their classroom to increase student learning. Teachers will get the opportunity to be participants in the activities they will be learning to use with their students.

SECTIONAL 3—2:05 p.m.

Let's Talk Communicating Effectively with Parents – Dr. Rebecca Schmidt

Building a solid foundation for parent teacher/conferences is essential in effective communication with families. Explore strategies that strengthen a communication partnership and address difficult conversations with confidence when asked, “Do you have a minute?”

Dyslexia Basics for the Early Childhood Classroom – Amy Dahlke

Learn the definition of dyslexia, early indicators and signs of dyslexia, how God designed the dyslexic brain, and classroom applications for working with dyslexics.

Can We Go Outside? Exploring the Importance of Integrating Nature into Preschool Curriculum – Heather Hucka

Today's preschool educators are faced with very different challenges than their predecessors. Alarming numbers of youth are living with anxiety, aggression, perpetual illness, and learning disabilities. Staggering amounts of research link many of our children's struggles with lack of outdoor play and exploration. A child's preschool years are some of the most important developmentally. Learn skills and gain confidence in using the nature right outside your door to foster stronger, smarter, healthier youth. Can we go outside? YES WE CAN!

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Utilizing Facebook to Touch Hearts with Your Story – Chelsea Adams

Are you looking to increase your Facebook presence, engage your church and preschool communities, and share your story with a larger audience? In this sectional, you will learn easy and practical ways to touch hearts via Facebook - the social media platform that boasts over 1.32 billion active users each day. We will dig into why you should use Facebook, the basics of a Facebook page for your church and/or preschool, best practices for making posts, utilizing Facebook for marketing, tips and tricks to make managing a Facebook page easy, and much more!

Presenter Info

Dr. Rebecca Schmidt serves as Associate Director of Schools for the LCMS. Her educational background is in elementary education and educational leadership and supervision. Her experience includes serving as a teacher, early childhood director, and principal at schools in Michigan, Arkansas, and Missouri.

Audrey Duensing-Werner serves as Director of Family Life at Redeemer, Austin, Texas. Audrey is an Iowa native, graduate of Simpson College with a Bachelors of Music Education and Vocal Performance. She also has her certification as a Director of Christian Education from Concordia, St. Paul. She has served at congregations in Michigan, Minnesota, Kansas, and Missouri. She has an immense love for serving children and their families. She has spoken at multiple conferences and written youth and children's ministry material for Concordia Publishing House and the LCMS Children and Family Ministry Department.

Sadie Gunther is a trainer and consultant for CCR&R. As an Iowa State graduate in Early Childhood Education and a well-rounded professional in the early childhood field, I have had the chance to take on many diverse roles that range from teaching in an early childhood classroom, assistant director of a child care center, a child development specialist, an adjunct instructor, and a child care consultant. I continue to strive to have a rewarding career where I can provide resources that align with my enthusiasm for quality care and meaningful learning for all children, families, and educators. I consider myself a life-long learner and am passionate about continued professional development and learning opportunities in the ever-changing world of early childhood education.

Janet Drake Combining her degrees in Psychology, Elementary Education, and Nursing along with a Master's Degree in Adult Education, Janet has had the opportunity to work in a variety of settings. This includes working in 4-H and youth Programming, subbing at preschool and elementary schools, working in coronary care and cardiac rehab at the hospital and as an administrator at Des Moines Area Community College. She has also volunteered in a children's grief program and at Royal Family Kids Camp which is a week-long camp for children in the foster care system and is totally staffed by volunteers. She believes children are a gift from God and to be treasured, nurtured, guided toward God, and that they can teach us much along the way!

Rebecca Janni learned early on that biking is the best way to get around the neighborhood and reading is the best way to get around the world. She is the author of *Jammy Dance* and the *Every Cowgirl* series. She received her BA in English and French from Iowa State University and her MAT in English from Boston University. She enjoys teaching English Literacies and Literature for Children and Adolescents at Grand View University. Rebecca loves to visit schools and libraries! She has shared her workshops and programs with the youngest preschoolers all the way up to grandparents – and with students of all ages in between. All of her writing and teaching gigs take a back seat to motherhood! She lives in Johnston, Iowa with her husband, four children, and their dog. She loves to read and bike with her family, but not at the same time.

Belinda Hughes is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) with a Masters of Arts Degree in Special Education from Ball State University. For six years she was a faculty member of the Special Education Department at Ball State University teaching graduate courses in the area of autism and applied behavior analysis. Belinda is also the founder of Interlock, the East Central Indiana Autism Support Group. Currently, Belinda is the Founder and President of Behavior Associates of Indiana. She provides teacher trainings for local school districts, church and emergency response organizations in the Central Indiana area.

Sandy Nelson has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Early Childhood Education and has been the Preschool Director of Little Friends of Living Faith in Clive, Iowa for 15 years. Sandy has been a trainer for Child Care Resource and Referral and currently offers family trainings for Love and Logic®. For the past three years, Belinda and Sandy have collaborated to provide an inclusive preschool setting for students at Little Friends that require support to be successful in a classroom.

Pastor Bob Riggert has served as a Lutheran school teacher and principal, a parish pastor, and the YES (Youth-Education-Stewardship) Iowa District West Executive Assistant from 1997 through 2012. Bob has transitioned to say "yes" to his family: wife, Diane; four children, and thirteen grandchildren. Bob has authored the LCMS School Ministry Chapel Talks and the "School Shepherd" resource for pastors in school and early childhood ministry settings.

Chelsea Adams graduated from Concordia University, Nebraska and is currently called to serve as kindergarten teacher at Mount Olive Lutheran School in Des Moines. In addition to her role as teacher, Chelsea is responsible for school marketing and is a part of the admission team. As a daily Facebook user herself, it was natural to turn to Facebook to market and promote the school. Chelsea is constantly learning and growing in her management of the combined church/school Facebook page and hopes to share some of the tips and tricks she's learned along the way to make the task of managing a Facebook page as simple as possible.

Amy Dahlke has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education with a Reading Endorsement. She also received a Master's of Science in Education. She has teaching experience with upper elementary and preschool. She is a Decoding Dyslexia Iowa board member and teaches graduate-level professional development on dyslexia.

Gina Wells is a trainer and consultant for CCR&R. Gina received her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education with a minor in Early Childhood from Truman State University, then attended Viterbo University to earn her Masters. Gina currently works for Child Care Resource and Referral as a Child Care Consultant for seven counties in Southwest Iowa.

Heather Hucka is a Naturalist from Story County having earned a B.S degree in Animal Ecology with an emphasis in Interpretation of Natural Resources. Over 13 years education experience in the field. I am an educator that teaches both in a classroom setting and in the outdoors to a diverse audience base. I have spent my career mastering the skills of facilitating connections with the nature, fostering wonder and understanding of outdoor spaces, and encouraging the wise use and care of our natural communities.

Maria Mattiace is a school counselor from Saydel. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Central College in Pella, Iowa. After teaching in the classroom for six years she earned a Master's degree from Iowa State University in School Counseling. She spent 13 years as an elementary school counselor and the past 4 years as a secondary counselor. In 2012, Maria was certified as a personal trainer by the National Academy of Sports Medicine. Currently, she teaches group-fitness classes and yoga to all age levels.

Pastor Todd Bunge received a Bachelor of Science in Mass Communication from the University of South Dakota in 1994; a Master of Divinity, NT Exegesis, from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne in 2002; and completed 2012 International Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism, and Human Rights, Strasbourg, France. Before coming to Beautiful Savior (Polk City) in 2016, Pastor Bunge was the sole pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Hawarden, Iowa, for 14 years. He has been married to his wife, Tam, since 1997. The couple has three sons: Nathanael (18), Jakob (16), and Mikhel (13).