



## Iowa District West Iowa District East Early Childhood Conference

*"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*  
Ephesians 2:10

Join us Friday, August 7 at the Iowa District West and East Early Childhood Conference as we come together under the theme of "Masterpiece in the Making." Each of us is God's handiwork that grows, changes, and adapts through all that life brings us whether it be at home or in our Early Childhood Centers. So, too, our students and colleagues are "Masterpieces" created in Christ Jesus.

We encourage you to reserve the date on your personal and staff calendars. This Conference is the primary connecting event for Iowa District West and East early childhood ministries. In addition to staff participation, we encourage you to invite pastors, board members, and others associated with your Early Childhood Center.

What an incredible year 2020 has been! Who could have imagined the world turned up-side-down with the COVID-19 pandemic? Each of us has been affected by uncertainties and unknowns, grief and loss. Yet, what IS known is that God is still at work in each of us. His promises are sure. He will never leave us or forsake us. He loves and cares for each of you, His "Masterpiece in the Making." In the same way, He cares and loves for His little Masterpieces that have been entrusted to your care.

This is an exciting time because you and your colleagues can join together to hear and celebrate each unique work of the Master. How will you meet the needs of your little ones in 2020 and beyond? The planning team has worked diligently to find speakers who will assist you in your Masterpiece-making ministry. Together we will learn and strategize best practices on how to accomplish the good work we have been designed and gifted to do.

The registration deadline is July 15. Please respect this deadline so that we might provide appropriate materials.

In the days ahead, be assured that the Master Creator has you in His mighty arms and He knows what you need, what you don't need, and what you will need in order to be His "Masterpiece in the Making." Enjoy your summer! We look forward to seeing you at the Conference on Friday, August 7, 2020.

Gayla Grotjan, Retired Education Professor, Urbandale  
Kylee Henderson, Faith's Flock Preschool, Adel  
Diane Hensley, Shepherd's Flock Early Learning Center, West Des Moines  
Kara Markla, Redeemer, Ventura  
Jessica Paulin, Beautiful Beginnings, Polk City  
Heidi Rains, Little Lambs Preschool, Des Moines  
JoLynn Yeutsy, Tiny Treasurers Preschool, Urbandale

Rhonda Mohr, Iowa District West Assistant to the President for Education, Youth and Family Life  
Jan Doellinger, Iowa District East Assistant to the President - Schools

## CELEBRATE!

### Experience Jesus...

- ◆ Through partnerships between educators, aides, boards, pastors
- ◆ Through professional presenters
- ◆ Through resources for early childhood education
- ◆ Through those who love and support children

...because each child is created and redeemed by God!



Iowa District West, LCMS

515-576-7666

[www.idwlcms.org](http://www.idwlcms.org)

## SCHEDULE

- 8:00 am Registration / Refreshments
- 8:25 Welcome / District Celebrations / Opening Devotions
- 8:45 Keynote – “A Living Gallery”
- 9:45 Break & Transition
- 10:00 Sectional 1
- 11:05 Sectional 2
- 12:05 pm Lunch / Exhibits
- 12:05 pm Directors Lunch & Learn
- 1:00 Keynote – “Sorting the Pieces”
- 2:05 Sectional 3
- 3:05 Closing / Exhibits / Networking

*Exhibits will include:*

*Jewelry*

*LCEF*

*Lutheran Special Ed Ministries*

*Micro Shield*

*Stamping Heart Helpers*

*Usborne Books*



*“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

*Ephesians 2:10*

## Preschool & Early Childhood Conference

at Shepherd of the Valley  
Lutheran Church  
3900 Ashworth Road  
West Des Moines

**Friday, August 7, 2020**

**IOWA DISTRICT WEST &  
IOWA DISTRICT EAST, LCMS**

# CONFERENCE DETAILS

## CONFERENCE KEYNOTE

**Gretchen Huesmann** and her pastor-husband have been married for 29 years and have served the Lord in Washington, Idaho, Wisconsin, and now in Pensacola, Florida. Connecting people to Jesus and His Word is Gretchen's greatest passion through women's Bible studies, events, or in the classroom with the littlest learners.



Gretchen received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education from Concordia University in 1988. Since then she has held teaching positions in both parochial and public settings in five states.

Gretchen and her husband have raised 4 terrific children. When she is not writing or blogging, she can be found gardening, reading, walking, and resting on the beach.

**Sectional topics** will focus on sensory, movement, family relations, early reading strategies, and more! Application for **5 professional in-service hours** will be submitted.

### Conference Facility

**Shepherd's Flock Early Learning Center and Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church**

**3900 Ashworth Road  
West Des Moines**



### Lodging

Numerous hotels are in the area for attendees who want to come early.



## Registration

**Preschool & Early Childhood  
Conference**  
August 7, 2020

ALL participants must register using the following website:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ECworkshop2020>

Complete the information below and mail one check to the District office.

Name and location of preschool/congregation

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Participants (Please Print)

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**Registration fee:** \$30 per person  
(includes lunch)

Make check payable to **Iowa District West**

**Registration deadline:** Wednesday, July 15

**Mail to:** Sue Light  
Iowa District West, LCMS  
409 Kenyon Road, Suite B  
Fort Dodge, IA 50501



## IOWA DISTRICTS WEST AND EAST Early Childhood Conference 2020

Early Childhood Ministry Partners,

You will find in the following pages our sectionals and their explanations. The Committee has worked to provide you with a variety of choices that will meet various needs as early childhood educators. Please have the sectional descriptions handy when you register online as the registration will only have the titles and not the descriptions.

A word of encouragement:

Not only are the children we minister to a “masterpiece in the making” as God molds and shapes them; but we, as directors and teachers, continue to be molded and shaped as we grow in our profession and our personal life. When we gather at our Early Childhood Conference, we will be “encouraged” reminding each of us that God is at work on all of His masterpieces.

As we plan our conferences, please know that because we are Lutheran preschools the conference will have aspects that focus very intentionally on the mission of Lutheran preschools and early childhood ministries.

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Gretchen Huesmann**

### **Keynote 1: A Living Gallery**

Do we view our students and ourselves as God’s masterpieces? What clouds our vision and threatens our self-worth? In this session we will wonder at the work of the Master, celebrate each unique design and explore His intended purpose.

### **Keynote 2: Sorting the Pieces**

What does it mean to educate the whole child in 2020 and beyond? We’ll examine the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive components of today’s children. We’ll shed the light of God’s Word on each piece and share practical strategies for meeting these changing needs.



## **SECTIONAL 1—10 a.m.**

### **Music and Movement in the Classroom—Julie DenHerder**

Come and have fun with us while we learn engaging songs that you can use to practice counting, speech development, and large motor skills. Pick up a list of valuable resources and join in the fun!

### **Connecting Children with Nature—Heidi Anderson**

Young children are naturally curious about their surroundings. It's our job to help them have positive experiences with the natural world. Polk County Conservation Naturalist, Heidi Anderson, will discuss why taking kids outside for unstructured playtime in nature is so important. Take home some ideas for simple activities you can do outdoors with your students.

### **Speech and Language Skills of Children Birth through Elementary—Patricia Shelton**

Information for normal age development levels for speech and language skills at ages birth to elementary ages. Information on how to refer children for speech screenings. "Give me the words" for talking points to parents. Areas of skill in articulation, fluency, grammar, and language skills that are appropriate and inappropriate will be discussed. Ideas for enhancing good communication skills. Handouts provided for developmental norms.

### **The Pastor Piece—Rev. Bob Riggert**

The pastor's presence in the early childhood ministry brings blessings to children, staff, families, and the mission and ministry of the congregation. This sectional will explore some of the connections and blessings of the pastor's presence. Discussion will also include in what areas the pastor piece may not fit.

### **Lutheran Special Ed Services—Kara Bratton**

Early identification and intervention for autism spectrum disorders is critically important. It is often difficult for educators to know how to help these students when they see signs of this in their early childhood classrooms and how to talk to parents when they see signs of this. This session will discuss these topics, as well as give share information about the specific sensory challenges often associated with autism spectrum disorders, but may be a difficulty for other children as well.

### **My Plate and Healthy Snacks—Jennifer Blaser**

Are you looking to make meals and snacks a little healthier? Picky eaters can make that a challenge. Dietitian Jenn will share some tricks and tips for following MyPlate and getting your preschoolers to eat more fruits and veggies.

### **Restoration of a Masterpiece: How to Bring New Life to a Broken Spirit—Toni Larson**

We know the Master's artistry is eternal; then why do we feel so broken? An exploration of the effects of the recent pandemic on our own mental health and of those we serve. What is normal, what is of concern, and how can we restore our ability to function as God would have us function?

## **SECTIONAL 2—11:05 a.m.**

### **The Family Piece—Rev. Bob Riggert**

“School families” and “Church family” — are they two distinct families? Do they recognize one another? Do they compliment one another? This sectional explores the “family” dynamics and explores connecting points so that the family of God might grow together in Christ.

### **Anxiety in Early Childhood Settings—Kara Bratton**

Anxiety in children is unfortunately becoming more common and is affecting many students in their daily lives at home and at school. It is important for early childhood educators to be aware of the signs of anxiety and have some strategies they can implement as teachers and also recommend to parents for the home setting. This session will address these issues from an educational perspective.

### **The Making of a Friend: Embedding Friendship Opportunities Throughout the Day—Kristi Vasey**

Social skills are the foundation upon which many important life skills are built. Have you ever wondered why some children seem to make friends effortlessly, while others consistently struggle? We will explore the components of a friendship and how to teach specific skills that lead to positive peer interactions.

### **Created New—DeAnn McCue**

Join DeAnn McCue as we look at God’s Word and His reminder that we are His masterpiece, created in Jesus! We’ll spend time creating something new from reclaimed objects, glass, paint, wood, and resin. We’ll start in the Word, our foundation, then we’ll create.

### **Teaching Problem-Solving Skills in the Preschool Classroom—Gretchen Huesmann**

Are you looking for solutions to social conflicts in the classroom? Our best approach includes equipping the children themselves with problem-solving skills. In this session, we’ll share visuals, practical tools, and teaching strategies that can equip our students for social success.

### **Helping Children Learn out of the Classroom—Heidi Rains**

Join Heidi as she shares her experience using Zoom to help continue the education of a child during the COVID-19 pandemic. She will share some of her ideas and techniques that she used for distance learning while children were at home.

## **SECTIONAL 3—2:05 p.m.**

### **Run, Fight, Hide—Chris Silver**

Learn how to be informed, make a plan, run, hide and fight as the last resort for an active shooter. Officer Silver will walk us through the process and what to do after an active shooter has been in your building.

### **Prayerful Pause—DeAnn McCue**

Join DeAnn as we take a moment to pause for prayer. We'll look at God's Word and what He says about prayer, and we'll create a stone bead bracelet and prayer journal together. We'll be reminded of how much God loves us and cares for us, and how we need to spend time with Him in His Word. Our bracelet will remind us to pray often—in the pause. Our prayer journal will be a space to record our prayer requests and answers.

### **The Making of a Calm Classroom: Giving Directions and Ongoing Positive Feedback—Kristi Vasey**

Research has shown that children have a hard time following teacher directions. While this might be due to the child's characteristics, it could also be because of the way the directions were given. We will explore strategies that can be used to increase the likelihood that children will follow teacher directions. We will also examine ways to ensure more time is being spent using positive, descriptive language and less time correcting inappropriate behavior.

## Presenter Info

**Heidi Anderson** is a Naturalist with Polk County Conservation. Over the last 23 years, she has educated thousands of people about our natural resources through educational programming, radio, television, newspaper articles, and social media. Heidi graduated from Iowa State University with a Fisheries and Wildlife Biology degree. Heidi and her family live on an acreage near Madrid, Iowa where they raise chickens, ducks, rabbits, goats, and pigs.

**Jennifer Blaser**, RD, LD, received her Bachelor of Science degree in dietetics from Iowa State University in 2010 where she also completed her dietetic internship. She also received her Bachelor of Science degree in Nutritional Science from Iowa State University. She is a member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Iowa Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Prior to working at Hy-Vee, Jenn worked in food service management and for three years at a hospital in Waterloo, Iowa, and also in a long term care facility. Jenn also has clinical experience from her work on an acute rehab and surgical unit in the hospital. Jenn's passion is creating nutritious, healthy meals that taste great too! She looks forward to helping customers set goals and meet them one grocery store visit at a time! Her special interests include recreating recipes, wellness, weight management, food allergies, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes.

**Kara Bratton** is the Special Education Director for Lutheran Special Education Ministry (LSEM). She supervises LSEM's 70+ special education teachers and programs across the country, and provide professional development and consultative support for schools and teachers assisting students with learning needs. After spending 11 years as a special education teacher for LSEM, Kara moved into her current role as an administrator. She attended Valparaiso University and earned an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education, and also has graduate degrees in Special Education from Indiana Wesleyan University and Gifted and Talented Instruction from Ball State University. Her Master's degree from Indiana Wesleyan is in the area of Curriculum and Instruction, and she will be graduating with her PhD in Special Education from Concordia University Chicago in August 2020.

**Julie DenHerder** - This past year I have been teaching instrumental music lessons at Berg Middle School in Newton, South Prairie Elementary School at Dallas Center-Grimes, and ADM Middle School and High School in Adel as well as maintaining a private lesson studio of over 45 students who primarily take piano lessons. For nearly 30 years, I have been teaching music in on form or another. A few years ago, I was honored to direct the LWML choir and lead over 400 women in song and 4,000 people in the congregation in song. I currently direct the Military Tribute Concert that pays tribute to veterans, those currently serving, and families of the fallen. The group performs Memorial Day, Veterans Day, during the Christmas season, and at the Iowa State Fair. I grew up in northwest Iowa, living in Lake View and Fonda. I attended Buena Vista College and Iowa State University. I have taught band at Hubbard-Radcliffe High School, West Des Moines Community Schools, Mount Olive Lutheran in Des Moines, and Ames Christian Schools in Ames.

**Gretchen Huesmann** and her pastor-husband have been married for 29 years and have served the Lord in Washington, Idaho, Wisconsin, and now in Pensacola, Florida. Connecting people to Jesus and His Word is Gretchen's greatest passion through women's Bible studies, events, or in the classroom with the littlest learners. Gretchen received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education from Concordia University in 1988. Since then she has held teaching positions in both parochial and public settings in five states. Gretchen and her husband have raised 4 terrific children. When she is not writing or blogging, she can be found gardening, reading, walking, and resting on the beach.

**Toni Larson**, LISW, is a licensed clinical social worker and Director of Counseling for Lutheran Family Service. Toni has 40 years of experience as a counselor working with a variety of client populations with a variety of issues including children, teens, adults, and the elderly.

**DeAnn McCue** has been on staff at Gloria Dei for over 20 years, working in family ministry. She is a graduate of Concordia University with a degree in education and special education. She loves spending time with her family, creating, and serving Jesus.

**Heidi Rains** is the Preschool Director and 4/5 year old teacher at Mount Olive Lutheran Church and School in Des Moines, Iowa. After teaching 10 years at Des Moines Public Schools, Heidi moved into her current role as Preschool Director. Heidi attended Grand View University and earned her degree in Elementary Education, Early Childhood, and Reading. She continued her studies through Concordia Online to earn her Lutheran Teacher Certification.

**Rev. Bob Riggert** served as Iowa District West Executive Assistant for Youth, Education, and Stewardship (YES!) from 1997 through 2012. In that role, he served as the District consultant to Lutheran schools and early childhood ministries. He stays connected to Lutheran school ministries serving as author of School Chapels and National Lutheran Schools Week resources. His best resource for early childhood education was wife Diane who served as an early childhood educator for 15 years as well as a Lutheran school teacher. Together they celebrate their family of four children and thirteen grandchildren. They live in Manning, Iowa.

**Chris Silver** has over 22 years of experience in law enforcement conducting drug task force meth lab investigations and supervising patrol operations. He is currently working in community relations managing the reserve deputy program and Public Safety Cadets. Chris is a graduate of FBI Law Enforcement Instructor Course, FEI-LEEDA Supervisor Leadership Institute, and ALICE Training Institute Active Shooter Instructor Course, NFPA 3000 (PS): Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response: Plan, Respond Recover Program Specialist Certified, Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Active Shooter Preparedness certified. He retired from the Iowa Army National Guard after 24 years of service including tours in Afghanistan. Education includes a Master of Public Administration and B.A.

**Patricia Shelton** is a Speech-Language Pathologist for Heartland AEA 11. She received a Bachelor of Science from Iowa State university and graduated in 1988 with a Masters of Arts in Communication Science from Northeast Missouri State University (Truman University). She has been working as a Speech-language Pathologist in the state of Iowa and has been working for Heartland AEA 11 for the last 29 years.

**Kristi Vesey** has worked in the early childhood field for over 20 years. During that time, she has been a classroom teacher, center Director, and consultant for licensed programs in the area. Kristie has served on the state-wide Early Childhood PBIS leadership team for many years and has coached and trained programs on challenging behavior strategies.