



SEPTEMBER 2020

SCHOOL MINISTRY

# Mailing



THE  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Missouri Synod

School Ministry



# Alight

FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS



## For Such a Time As This ... Sent to Serve

*“...even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (MATT. 20:28).*

**C**herished customs of back-to-school activities and first day of school traditions for families look different this year. Opening chapels, classroom visits and opportunities to connect with students, teachers and the families of classmates are now designed to keep all safe and healthy in the school community while the pandemic remains with us. Social distancing, attention to safe hygiene habits and a multitude of practices determined by state and local agencies to diminish the spread of COVID-19 all impact the reopening of schools this year. On these opening days, not all students will be entering school buildings. Many will continue with the requirement of remote learning and others will experience a combination of onsite and virtual classes.

For such a time as this — September with daily temperature checks and monitoring the health of every teacher, parent and student all while grieving for our nation fraught with racial strife, political division and natural disasters. We mourn for our nation while COVID-19 continues to spike, causing a fragile economic system. What is the solution? We look to Scripture. When we are weary and long for healing, we come together under the banner of the Gospel to work in our schools and

communities to understand and model what it means to be one in the Gospel. We have a God who loves us. His commandment to us is to love our neighbor. How do we do this? We look to Jesus Christ.

“Sent to Serve” is the national theme for LCMS schools for 2020–2021. Amid a nontraditional opening of schools during extraordinary times, our mission remains unchanged, *“even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (MATT. 20:28)*. Teachers across the nation are

returning to classrooms and/or remote learning to serve all children; children whose faith is nourished in the home, children from diverse backgrounds, children of all ages and abilities, and children who are hearing about their Savior for the first time. Rejoicing in the Good News that Jesus was sent to serve, Lutheran school students, teachers and others are blessed by the ministry of the school and are in turn “sent to serve” in His name. They are sent to share the Gospel message and to serve as a ministry of their churches and as a mission to the community, knowing that they bring a message of hope to all they serve. Never

have we faced such uncertainty with the opening of the schools and yet we have a wonderful opportunity this year knowing that we continue to serve just as Jesus came to serve each of us. With Christ and the beautiful Gospel promises of hope and healing, this is a year to experience comfort and joy in serving in extraordinary and uncertain times.





# Computer File



## Supporting Remote Learning

**A**t the end of the last school year, which seems like years ago but was only in May, I had started developing a list of topics to cover for the upcoming year's *Computer File* articles. They centered around developing and implementing one new classroom technology skill each month and thinking about the skills that will be needed in the future.

However, as the concept of remote learning has now come to the forefront, a different focus was needed for the coming year. Thus, the *Computer File* articles for the 2020–21 school year will look at the following topics:

- > **September**  
Supporting Remote Learning
- > **October**  
Building Relationships Through Technology
- > **November**  
Supporting the Technology (and the Parents)
- > **December**  
Keeping Boundaries
- > **January**  
Individualized Instruction
- > **February**  
Surviving the “Doldrums”
- > **March**  
Developing Technology for Remote Learning
- > **April**  
Wrapping Up the Year, Remotely
- > **May**  
What Do We Do Next?





**REMOTE LEARNING:** a model of education that gives learners who cannot be physically present for in-person instruction access to a face-to-face learning experience.

Because not everyone is in the same place when it comes to remote learning, and every school is different, each article will attempt to address the topic in a way that is beneficial to any situation.

A good place to start a new topic is with an agreed-upon definition. For our purposes, remote learning is a model of education that gives learners who cannot be physically present for in-person instruction access to a face-to-face learning experience. Please note that this is different from online education, which takes place completely online and is not connected to a physical educational location or class schedule.

When I first started exploring topics for this year's theme, I asked the LuthEd Facebook group to identify what they thought were the pressing issues. This was extremely helpful, so I'd like to challenge you to do something similar.

When each month's article is published, I encourage you to read through it, find something pertinent to you and your situation, and post about it on social media to start a discussion with your peers. As educators, we well know that learning only takes place after we have internalized a topic, had our thoughts and ideas challenged and been forced to defend them. Thus, it is essential that we ourselves do the same.

I look forward to seeing the thoughts, ideas and discussions that come out of this year's *Computer File* articles. Remote learning will continue to have an impact now and in the future, so it is essential that we think about how best we can use it to serve students.



# Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



## Why Inclusion?

**Think for a minute about the what the word inclusion means to you as it relates to students with disabilities or students who are perceived to be “different.”** Does inclusion mean that students with disabilities are physically present in our schools and classrooms, or is there more to it than that? Did any of your thoughts on inclusion come back to the Bible and Jesus’ ministry? This year’s “Fearfully and Wonderfully Made” series will focus on ways to make your classroom and schools more inclusive. We will begin with a discussion about what inclusion truly means and why it is so important in our Lutheran schools.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 stipulates that students with disabilities should be educated to the maximum extent possible with their peers without disabilities. If you think of this perspective, inclusion can be more about the place where a student’s education occurs. I would argue that there is much more to inclusion than students being physically present in schools and classrooms as this perspective suggests.

Part of true inclusion involves creating the sense of belonging in a classroom. There is sometimes the perception among teachers and students that a student with a disability is “Mrs. X’s” student or one of the “special education students.” This creates the idea that certain students do not belong in a classroom the same way as other students. All students have unique strengths and challenges, and they should all be thought of as equal members of the classroom and school community. Students who leave a classroom for specialized support or instruction are just as much a part of that classroom as the other students.



God created each of us in His image and for His purposes. As He does not value any individual more than another, it is likewise our directive to “love your neighbor as yourself” (MARK 12:31 NIV). This includes everyone, not only students who learn or act a certain way. True inclusion occurs when we demonstrate this love to all students in our school and value them as equal members. Jesus modeled this inclusion during His ministry. He not only physically included those with disabilities who were frequently excluded from society, but He lived in community with them and created a true sense of belonging for them. In Luke 14:13–14, He preached, “But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (NIV). As Christians, inclusion that creates this sense of belonging and love comes directly from the Bible and Jesus’ preaching.

Another important component of inclusion is friendship. A student cannot feel that he or she belongs in a



classroom or school without friendships. Unfortunately, this may not come automatically or easily for some students with disabilities. There are many times when other students do not understand or accept an individual that they can tell is “different.” Yes, it does take work to facilitate this understanding, build social skills, and help friendships develop, but it is a blessing to all students when this element of inclusion takes place.

Recently, a principal shared his experience with me. His school had gone through a process over the last few years to not only provide special education services, but also to focus on building an inclusive community for students with disabilities. He expressed to me what a positive experience it has been for all students, and that the students without disabilities have become more loving, understanding and compassionate as a result of their efforts. At one point during the school year, a teacher made the comment to him that she could see a difference between students in her class, which did not currently have any students with disabilities, and students in other classes. She went on to say that she wished her class was more diverse so that her students could develop the same level of care and compassion that she was seeing elsewhere in the school. This does not happen automatically or overnight, but it is a blessing for everyone in the school community when it occurs.

Inclusion is more than students being physically included in our schools and classrooms. It involves creating a sense of belonging and equality, which includes friendship, for students with disabilities. The importance of this type of inclusion comes directly from the Bible and Jesus’ model of loving others. There are a number of strategies that Lutheran schools can incorporate to help make inclusion successful, and the rest of this year’s “Fearfully and Wonderfully Made” series will discuss helpful ideas related to this.



For more ideas about helping students transition and with other difficulties faced at the beginning of the school year, reach out to us at Lutheran Special Education Ministries for assistance. Email us at [lsem@luthsped.org](mailto:lsem@luthsped.org) or visit our website at [luthsped.org](http://luthsped.org)

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# Professionally Speaking



**SCRIPTURE:** Matt. 20:28 “Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

## Honor and Respect

**T**his year’s LCMS School Ministry theme, “Sent to Serve,” is fundamental for those who work in the church. Service and vocation are central to responding to the call to faith in Christ, especially as it pertains to the Office of the Holy Ministry.

However, the notion of service can become trite. So much has been written on servant leadership and humility in leadership that any new blog can fall on deaf ears — or blind eyes.

That being said ... challenge accepted!

This year, the *Professionally Speaking* newsletter will offer a variety of topics that support, challenge and encourage administrators of Lutheran schools under the theme, “Sent to Serve.” This month’s topic is “Honor and Respect.”

Honor and respect are terms that are often misunderstood. Both find their struggles in society’s lack of understanding of God and His principles for showing love to Him and to one another.

Love God? Most of the loving we do is of the self rather than the selfless love that Luther describes in his meanings of the commandments.

Then, as if love isn’t hard enough, there is honor, which includes love but also adds deference, humility and modesty. Respect demonstrates all these things through actions and words.

In the meaning of the Fourth Commandment, “Honor your father and your mother,” in the Small Catechism, Luther says we should “fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities.”



In the Large Catechism, Luther says we should honor parents due to a “majesty within them” and give them the very highest level of respect. He even goes on to say we should treat parents as God’s representatives, to “respect, obey, love and serve them” even if they are “lowly, poor, feeble and eccentric.”

Parents are the “most precious treasure on earth.” There is no greater work than to honor parents, and there is no other commandment containing a promise (ex. 20:12). In a time when parents, police and civil authorities of all kinds are frequently ridiculed, reviled and physically harmed, Luther’s definition comes in stark contrast to the current day’s civil unrest and the weakness of the family structure and function.

Praise God that He has “fitted you to perform a task so precious and pleasing to Him.”

What does the Fourth Commandment mean for Lutheran schools and its administrators? How is honor taught in a Lutheran school? If we teach the faith in its fullness, Lutheran schools naturally teach honor and respect. But in our highly accountable age, and with an extreme need to explain what we do and how we do it, consider the following-

### In classrooms

- › **Teach responsibility.** There's no need to go to the extent of Deut. 21:18–21, but chores in the classroom teach that we all have a part in the community and that those simple roles are important. Responsibility helps one look beyond self to the needs of the greater good. Assigning children responsibilities and encouraging parents to do so as well will help children grow into productive, contributing members of society.
- › **Encourage good listening.** Listening starts with humility and kindness. Jesus submitted to his earthly parents even when they didn't know and

understand everything that he did (LUKE 2:21FF). Prov. 1:5–7 declares that the wise listen to sound advice. One way to do this is to give opportunities for interviewing seniors and have them be an integral part of the school community.

- › **Pray and forgive.** None of us is perfect. In a sin-sick world, parenting can bring on feelings of failure. Praying is a huge part of learning and practicing honor. Prayers of thanksgiving and prayers of forgiveness are key.

### As an entire school

- › **Demonstrate that family is first.** In Joshua 2:1–13, Rahab negotiated a deal that spared not only her life, but the life of her parents. She wasn't content until her parents had been protected. It's quite a model to follow. Do the policies and procedures of the school demonstrate a family-first desire? We fail if we put "school" and its authority above the authority of the home.



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