

Floor Committee #13: Congregational Services C (Lutheran Schools)

Subject: Lutheran Schools

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 29-41

Report No. 01

WELS has seen record growth in the last biennium in its early childhood, elementary, and high school ministries. We thank the Lord for placing these souls in our care and giving us the opportunity to help them better know their Savior. It is our strong encouragement to all congregations and federations with schools to examine all the opportunities the Lord has given them and have a harvest strategy to connect those families with the gospel. We praise him for allowing us to serve in these opportunities to faithfully share the means of grace.

The growth in our WELS schools has been a tremendous blessing, but it has also led to some challenges in filling classrooms with the necessary teachers. The first challenge is that Martin Luther College is experiencing a strong decline in enrollment. We are thankful that 220 inactive teachers have returned to the classroom and that 211 secular education degree teachers have been given provisional calls to teach in our schools with the intent that they will enroll in the synod certification program. But this has still not given us enough teachers.

The second challenge is that the number of teachers that have graduated from MLC has not kept up with the number of teachers who are leaving, either by retirement, death, or resignation. A task force has been formed to examine these and other challenges in our attempts to maintain a healthy educational program for our children. This task force has been examining the number of teacher resignations we have seen over the years. They have also reported some of the things that have been implemented to reduce this number. A program to assign new MLC graduates with a mentor in their area to encourage and strengthen the young teacher's ministry has been successful. Exit interviews with teachers who have resigned have been conducted to see why the resignation took place and to see if there was any way that this could have been prevented.

Congregational Services is also developing a program to help congregations strengthen the relationship between congregation and school to ensure a healthy relationship between the two. We applaud the work of the task force as they strive to encourage young people to consider the teaching ministry and as they strive to retain the teachers we have and, when necessary, to strive to regain those who have left the teaching ministry. We want to thank them for their service and we will continue to pray that this task force will be guided by the Lord's wisdom to make changes that will help grow the number of teachers for our WELS schools. We also want to pray that the hearts and minds of our current students would consider a career in the full-time called ministry.

A task force has been formed to help guide our synod and schools on the topic of Identity, Gender, and Sexuality. This task force along with visiting teams being formed will work with our synod and its schools to help navigate this extremely sensitive topic/culture that surrounds us.

We want to extend our thanks for those serving on this task force working through difficult situations.

Congregational Services along with Lutheran Schools are working on a Leaders Reflection Program to help congregations and schools foster a stronger church and school culture. Making sure the church and school are on the same page is pivotal to a successful ministry culture. Please feel free to reach out to synod offices to see if a team may be able to work with your ministry in building cohesive church and school goals and objectives.

The Conference of Presidents has called Ms. Melanie Giddings to be the curriculum coordinator of the Commission on Lutheran Schools. She is a synodically-trained teacher with curriculum and instruction expertise and commitment. Melanie will serve as the person coordinating the efforts in the development of a framework and unifying curriculum to meet the varied needs of WELS schools and the students they serve to advance the gospel ministry. Thank you, Melanie, and may the Lord be with you on this new call for WELS.

We want to thank all those who are serving on task forces mentioned above and pray that the Lord of the church will bless their efforts and grant them wisdom to help make the changes necessary to grow the holy Christian church, while using our WELS schools to assist in this growth process.

Ephesians 3:20: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

Teacher Dave Gartner, chairman
Teacher Stephen Kamps, secretary