

IMPACT

Working Together to Make a Difference for Children

The LESA Vision

Supporting Schools, Enhancing Lutheran Education

When Principal David Robinson moved his family to St. Louis five years ago to lead Word of Life Lutheran School in south St. Louis, he gained immediate access to a network of experienced Lutheran administrators and educators. That's because Word of Life is a member of the St. Louis-based Lutheran Elementary School Association (LESA), a consortium of more than 40 Lutheran elementary schools, high



From left to right: Deb Schmich, Melissa Maxfield, Sue Nahmensen

schools and related agencies that share a common goal: To empower children to become competent, caring Christian citizens through education in Lutheran schools.

"Having that administrative network and support so close is such a blessing," said Robinson. "LESA helps to bring us all together for a common purpose of leading our schools in ministering to children."

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School Counseling Improvements Put "Kids First"

New funding helps schools add, expand counseling services



Students at 25 LESA-member schools now have more access to high-quality counseling services, thanks to the generosity of Lutheran Foundation and St. Louis County voters.

This fall, LESA distributed a \$50,000 grant from the Lu-

theran Foundation to enhance counseling services at nine LESA-member schools in Missouri and Illinois. "We know that God heals and uses other people to help us through that healing process," said Diana Cuddeback, a school counselor for Good Shepherd-Collinsville, which used the funds to create a character education program for students, parents and teachers.

In 2008, St. Louis County voters passed a ¼ cent sales tax to create "Keeping Kids First," a community service fund that provides mental health and substance abuse services to children in St. Louis County.

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You Can Help LESA receives most of its funding from annual membership dues and the generous support of the Lutheran Foundation. But each year, we face the challenge of doing more with less as we work to serve children and their communities through Lutheran education. You can help LESA through your monetary donations, volunteer services and attendance at our great special events. To join our mission, call us at 314-268-1520 or...

Visit our web site: lesastl.org for more information

LESA Curriculum Update: Technology Time



Each summer, a committee of LESA educators meets to review and update a different area of the LESA curriculum. This year, they'll focus on a tool that affects every other aspect of LESA's curriculum: technology.

"As faith-based schools, it's important that we nurture our children toward a kind, Christian, loving use of technology," said Deb Schmich, LESA's Director of EAD/SS. "Our goal this summer is to give teachers a set of guidelines to help them accomplish that."

Rob Jacklin, Instructional Technology Coordinator at St. John-Ellisville, and Mike Kratzer, Director of Media and Technology at Lutheran North, will lead the committee.

DID YOU KNOW...

29% of baptisms and **36%** of new memberships in LESA congregations in 2009 occurred as a direct result of school ministry?

LESA Donors Making a Difference in Lutheran Education

Colonial Williamsburg is a long way from St. Louis, but thanks to LESA donors Bob and Lori Duesenberg, LESA students and teachers are regular visitors.

Six years ago, the Duesenbergs set up an endowment grant to give LESA elementary schools access to the Colonial Williamsburg Electronic Field Trip Series, an interactive web-based program that provides a "virtual" view into the events and activities that led to the American Revolution. "The field trip series appealed to us as a way to bring our founding history into Lutheran classrooms," said Lori. The grant also allows two teachers to attend the Colonial Williamsburg Teacher Institute, a week-long program that shows teachers how to get students excited about American history. Nine LESA teachers have attended so far and two more will participate this summer.

"We feel it is important for young people to know and understand our beginnings and its architects, what they and the citizenry endured and forged to bring our country into being," said Lori. "In them, the nation was richly blessed, and this must not be forgotten."

LESA is deeply grateful to the Duesenbergs and welcomes partnerships with others who wish to make a difference in Lutheran schools. To learn about the opportunities available, contact Deb Schmich, LESA's Director of EAD/SS, at 314-268-1522.

LESA Learning Support Teachers Strive to Create and Become "Lifelong Learners"

LESA teachers discovered new ways to bring out the best in their students and themselves during a recent in-service on "Differentiated Learning," an instructional approach that encourages teachers to adapt lessons to fit the individual learning styles of their students.



During the opening session Dr. Virginia Altrogge, a professor at Webster University, discussed the theory behind "Differentiated Learning" and discussed how LESA teachers can use it in their classrooms. Later, they learned how to apply it to their own development through the use of Professional Learning

Networks (PLN), interactive, "just-in-time" professional development tools that combine online and "offline" resources to increase student and teacher success. Kevin Creutz, Assistant Principal at Zion-St. Charles, says a typical teacher PLN might include academic journals, educational web sites and social networking tools, like Twitter.

"When I think of my PLN, one of the first words that come to mind is sharing," said Creutz, also an in-service presenter, "There's so much more as educators that we can learn and share together."

This year, LESA will offer \$300 grants to schools to help them organize their own in-service events. "The goal is to help principals address their schools' individual needs. We want our students to become lifelong learners," said Deb Schmich, LESA's Director of EAD/SS, "The best way to achieve that is to help our teachers follow that path as well."

A Beacon of Hope for Families Facing Hard Times

"It is very humbling to find yourself in need. I cannot begin to express my gratitude and you will never understand what a blessing you are to me and my family."

Building Blocks Parent

As the economy continues to struggle, more families are turning to LESA's Building Blocks Scholarship Fund for help. This year, a record 1,429 students applied for assistance, the largest number in the fund's history. Sue Nahmensen, LESA's COO, says many families continue to cope with long-term job loss and "under-employment."



"We have one family where the mother lost her job and was still looking for work nearly a year later," said Nahmensen. "The father lost his job as well and although he eventually found something, it's at 25% less pay." After the family received help from Building Blocks, they told Nahmensen, "Our one

true mission was to do whatever it took to keep our son in his [Lutheran] school, no matter what we, as parents, had to do to make that happen. We will be forever grateful to you for choosing to bless us with such an amazing gift."

The good news is that despite the overwhelming demand, 1,172 students received assistance, either through Building Blocks or their individual school. However, due to limited funds, 33% of the families who qualified did not receive the full amount requested. As a result, 49 students ended up having to withdraw from their Lutheran school. "Perhaps, if more funding had been available, we could have kept some of those kids in Lutheran schools," said Nahmensen.

Nahmensen says BBSF families are extremely grateful to the program and the generous donors who support it. In fact, many look forward to the day when they can contribute. As one parent put it, "Since we now know the blessing the scholarship fund has been to our family, we pray we will someday soon be able to give back to help another family experiencing a difficult time."



Building Blocks Scholarship Fund Dinner & Auction

Friday, April 8, 2011
5:00 - 10:00 p.m.

The Royale Orleans
2801 Telegraph Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63125

Tickets - \$50 per person
Tables of 8

Enjoy a night of faith, friends and fun events like the BBSF Glass Sale, "Wine and Dine," an old fashioned Lollipop Pull, and a special drawing for a 47" Vizio LED-LCD full HD TV.

For tickets & information, contact:
Melissa Maxfield
Special Events Coordinator
314-268-1525
mmaxfield@lesastl.org
www.lesastl.org

\$616,603 were awarded in scholarships by BBSF and member schools during the 2010-11 school year.

20% of this year's BBSF recipients had no church affiliation before attending a Lutheran school. Many are learning about Jesus for the first time.

36% of all Building Blocks Scholarship students live at or below the federal poverty level.

Setting the Standard

LESA Schools, Students Ready for Standardized Testing

LESA students are sharpening their pencils in preparation for a spring ritual: standardized testing.

Although Lutheran schools can administer the test of their choice at any time throughout the year, LESA encourages its member schools to test in the spring using the widely-respected Stanford Achievement Test. Thanks to a recent \$20,000 grant from the Lutheran Foundation, most schools will administer Stanford this spring.

"It's important to hold our schools to a high standard of academic success and to accurately communicate to the surrounding community the quality educational experience students receive in LESA schools," said Deb Schmich, LESA's Director of EAD/SS. "Administering the same national standard achievement tool – at the same time each year – allows us to do that."



School Counseling...continued from front page

The money became available for the first time in 2010; since then, 15 LESA schools have used it to add or expand counseling services.

"The response from teachers and principals has been very positive," said Jim Eckrich of Lutheran Family and Children's Services of Missouri, which administers the fund to LESA schools.

"There are so many issues – parents who've lost jobs, divorce, blended families," said Cindy Kraft, Director of Footprints Christian School Counseling, which provides services to seven LESA schools. "It helps kids to be able to process those things outside of school that are impacting their learning."

"We want our students to have the best opportunity to reach their academic, social, emotional, and spiritual potential," said Deb Schmich, LESA's Director of EAD/SS. "Healthy learners are active learners."

The LESA Vision...continued from front page

Formed in 2004, LESA is led by a small, but dedicated staff that includes Sue Nahmensen, LESA's Chief Operations Officer who also directs the Building Blocks Scholarship Fund, Deb Schmich, Director of the Educational Administrators Division and Student Services (EAD/SS) and Administrative Assistant and Special Events Coordinator Melissa Maxfield. Together, they provide a range of services and benefits to member schools, from marketing and public relations support, to instructional guidance in the areas of professional development, curriculum review and student wellness. In addition, LESA's Building Blocks Scholarship Fund provides financial support through need-based scholarships to families who face financial difficulties.

"Our goal is to give schools everything they need to



succeed and grow in the current educational and economic climate," said Schmich. "We also work very hard to promote the unique benefits of a Lutheran education to families of all faiths."

To accomplish that, LESA recently re-designed

its web site, www.lesastl.org, to drive more visitors to member schools. It also advertises the site on popular, online parent communities like FOX 2's www.stlmoms.com and KSDK-TV's www.momslikeme.com.

Another service LESA is able to provide involves the Missouri Gas Aggregation Program. Last year, 14 participating Missouri schools collectively saved \$29,000 on their utility bills. This year, 21 Missouri schools are participating in the program.

Word of Life's Robinson says the services LESA provides are invaluable. "We're definitely not leading alone, [thanks to] the professional support offered through LESA."

Congratulations...

Rachel Bausch, Early Childhood Director at St. John-Elisville, for being named the 2010 Distinguished Lutheran Early Childhood Administrator by the Lutheran Education Association (LEA)...and CCLS-Kirkwood for being one of five national finalists for the first-ever 2010 United Nations NGO Positive Peace Awards.

