

The 1990's - New Trends In Education

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The 1990's. The 21st century. What will they be like? It is safe to say that life in the 1990's and the 21st century will be different than life in the 80's. Futurists from all walks of life have been gathering evidence, tracking trends, and predicting what the next decade and the beginning of the 21 st century will be like. Today we will focus on three areas. First, what societal trends will become reality in the 90's and beyond. Second, what criticisms of our present educational system are being voiced. And third, what educational trends are suggested as preparing students for life in the next century.

I. Societal trends

A. The Maturation of America

Gray. The color gray will be an "in color" in the future. I'm not talking about the next color to add to your wardrobe. I'm talking about hair color. The baby-boomers of the 40's and 50's are maturing and their hair is turning gray. The proportion of middle-aged Americans (aged 35 to 55) will sharply increase in the 1990's. The median age of the United States population will rise from 30.6 at the beginning of the 1980's to 36.3 by the year 2000 and the proportion of the population over 65 will rise from the current 12% to 17%. It is estimated that 28% of the people ages 55-59 will take early retirement. Predictions claim this "gray generation" will be a more active and more affluent than previous generations.

B. The Mosaic Society

A second societal trend is a continuing growth in minority populations. Our society will increasingly resemble a beautiful mosaic. Immigrants, legal and illegal, will continue to flood into the US. By the year 2000 nearly one in three Americans will be a minority. Hispanics are increasing faster than any other minority group so that during the first decade of the 21st century, they may well become our largest ethnic group, outnumbering even African Americans. A large influx of Filipinos and Chinese from Hong Kong is also expected in the 1990's. Thus, our population in the 1990's will be more diverse than it is now.

C. Economic Restructuring

For quite some time, the United States (US) economy has been experiencing a shift from an industrial manufacturing base to that of a service, information, and hightechnology base. The telephone will increasingly become the gateway to sophisticated communications services. Video, audio, and data transmission will be integrated into a single, fiber-optic telephone system. A more mobile communications environment will develop as portable phones, fax machines, and computers make 24-hour accessibility possible. Digital sketch pads, optical scanners, and voice-recognition systems will gain increasing use as "keyboardless" data-entry devices. In some urban areas, virtually every individual will have contact with computers in their home or workplace by the year 2000. As technological advances speed swiftly ahead, whole industries may be born, grow to maturity, and die in a matter of a decade. It is likely that workers will find it necessary to shift from one job to another as many as four or five times over the course of their lives. Measured in historical terms, the next three decades will bring at least two centuries worth of changes. In a time of change fueled by new technological and scientific discoveries, knowledge itself changes. We live in a world in which the amount of knowledge

increases geometrically, making it impossible for anyone to keep pace with it. The life of our knowledge base is now referred to as a short half-life. The world's store of knowledge has doubled and doubled again during the 20th century. It will double even faster in the 21st century.

D. Globalization

Our world continues to shrink. Advances in communications, microelectronics, and transportation have made it physically easier and more enjoyable for people to travel about the globe. At this moment, instant worldwide communication can bring the deserts of Iraq or the cities of the Soviet Union into our homes. People throughout the world will continue to experience many different cultures through travel, imports, international organizations, and through the media. This fosters a globalization of tastes and ideas no matter where in the world one lives. Global interdependence will be fueled by increasing foreign ownership of US industries and property and by US companies doing business in foreign countries. The Pacific Rim, the European Community, and the US and Canada will likely emerge as regional trading blocs. And now, the emergence of free-market economies in Eastern Europe as well as in the Soviet Union will increase our interdependence with those areas of the world.

Economic rather than military strength will increasingly determine which nations are considered "superpowers." And it is leadership in science and technology that will determine economic leadership. Since the vast majority of engineering doctorate degrees awarded in the US are given to foreign students, the US lead in the technology race is predicted to erode even further.

E. Family and Home Redefined

The trend for people marrying and having children at an older age will continue. The divorce rate after leveling off will decline slightly. Many single-person households, single-parent families, blended families due to divorce and remarriage, as well as two-income families will continue. In 1988, nearly 25 percent of our children were living in single-parent families. That number will continue to increase. In a rapidly changing, often chaotic outside world, the family will grow in importance as a stabilizing force. Yet, at the same time, stresses on the family will increase because of the lack of time spent with children and because of the need for child care during working hours. A crisis in child care is looming on the horizon and is already evident in some parts of the country. Approximately 50 million American women are in the work force, one third of whom have children 5 years old or younger. Today, women make up 45% of all workers in our country and in the future will enter the work force at a faster rate than any other group. Finally, commuters are taking over the world. People will commute to work and in their free time will commute to something they consider special.

F. Summary

In summary, global and multicultural pressures will alter the way of life in the US. Because of technological advances, life will be characterized by rapid change; knowledge will become obsolete at a more rapid rate. School children will be more likely to come from single-parent homes or from homes in which both parents work. Finally, the world of work will require managing information and working with people. Workers will need higher-level thinking skills as well as the ability to adapt to different occupations.

These societal trends for the 1990's and beyond provide exciting opportunities for us. Predictions are that many of the gray hair generation will go back to school. By using staff ministries that involve teachers teaching and training graying adults (nicknamed geezer education), their education can include Christian education that enables them to be active lay ministers.

The increasing ethnic diversity of our country requires understanding different cultures. Does your present curriculum foster a thorough understanding of at least one or two different cultures? How about teaching Spanish in all our grade schools and high schools? We need to prepare our students to meet college

entrance requirements which increasingly are requiring a foreign language background. It could be done using interactive video where one master Spanish teacher teaches and students watch on video and interact with the teacher as if the teacher were right in their classroom. And how about using our schools as mission outreach arms? Most immigrants want a good education for their children. They know that education is the gateway to success for their children. Your school is a gateway for children's success not only in this world but also for success in eternity. Does your school have an outstanding academic record and reputation that will attract minorities and others? Are people willing to commute to it because it is special?

Because of the shift from specialized to general knowledge, elementary and secondary education must focus on broad general knowledge. Specialized knowledge will be found in technical schools and graduate schools.

Finally, teachers will continue to take on more parental roles such as counseling children, giving them needed attention and in general providing role models for them.

II. Criticisms of American education

A. General criticisms

Now given these scenarios, are our schools preparing students for life in the 90's and the 21st century? It is no secret that American schools have come under fire in the 1980's. You've heard and read the same statistics I have. Over 60 million Americans are illiterate. An international test of mathematics achievement found that American 12th graders ranked 14th among the 15 nations surveyed in advanced algebra - just behind Hungary and slightly ahead of Thailand. Over 300 recent reports have lamented the scandalous state of science education so that "science illiteracy" has become a cliché. The Educational Testing Service reported last year that Korean 13-year olds succeeded three times as often as Americans at designing a simple scientific experiment. Isn't it time then to take a look at the way we teach science? History education in America has been summarized by this joke: "It's the one about the teacher standing in the schoolroom door waving goodbye to students for the summer and calling after them, "By the way, we won World War II." Social Studies and history books are getting thicker and thicker and of course if it's in the book we have to teach it and kids have to learn it! But they don't learn it.

Why the poor performance? Let's look at four criticisms of American schools that are predicted to increase in volume in the 1990's.

B. Passive learning

The first criticism is aimed at passive learning. Observational studies confirm that passive learning is the predominant mode of operation in our schools. For example, the teacher lectures to students on all the facts they are supposed to know, students are given assignments to read poorly written textbooks or students are filling out worksheets and workbook pages. These three methods of teaching are pervasive in schools.

Instead, futurists call for active learning of two types. First, students must participate in learning experiences where they are actively involved in the process of learning. That is, learning is not seen as students sitting at a desk listening to a teacher lecture about things; students are doing things.

For example, this past summer high school students could spend several weeks in a language village run by Minnesota's Concordia College. French students lived in an environment that was completely French. Students passed through customs gates as they arrived and changed their dollars into francs and the immersion process began. Only French was allowed to be spoken. They lived, spoke, and breathed the French language and culture. Other students did the same to become actively involved in learning other languages. Now that is active learning. Is it possible to have that type of learning and teaching in our classrooms?

Let's consider the teaching of science. Science is simply a way of looking at God's creation. Cut to the bare bones it consists of asking questions, proposing answers and testing them rigorously against the available

evidence. Science is really a course in analytical thought. Unfortunately, few American students ever get to taste real science, for few of the nation's schools teach it. Most schools still teach science by lecture, textbook and memorization. Those three unnatural elements combine to produce a familiar chemical reaction: boredom. By the way, that style of pedagogy doesn't do much good in history, reading or English either. Teachers get into trouble when they forget that the best way for students to learn science is to have them do science. That means at a minimum, throwing out the vocabulary drills. Nothing is more anathema to science than rote memorization. Instead, youngsters should observe, measure, collect, categorize, record and interpret data, whether they are growing radishes in the dark, listing the colors of autumn leaves or measuring how fast a volleyball crosses the net. The best science lessons teach less, emphasizing depth rather than breadth. Let them rediscover the principles of science by doing it. Then you've made the switch from passive learning to active learning. As Nobel Prize-winning physicist Leon Lederman of the University of Chicago puts it, schools take "naturally curious, natural scientists and manage to beat that curiosity right out of them."

Now the same active learning principle applies to all subjects of the curriculum. Thirteen percent of our children leave school illiterate, 40% among minority groups. Again, isn't it time we examine how we teach reading and the language arts? We can workbook and worksheet kids to death on isolated skills that drill kids about specific aspects of reading and the English language. But, we do the same thing to kids; namely, turn them off to reading and writing. Let them do reading! Let them do writing! In Social Studies how many facts do you expect your students to memorize in one year? Why not use some literature books and read stories and accounts of historical events; after all those were real people with real emotions discovering the New World and fighting in those wars. And that brings us to a second point about active learning; namely, let students do some choosing about what they want to learn. Hold all students accountable for a few basic facts, but then let them follow their interests and actively discover answers to their own questions.

C. Product approach

The second criticism is closely related to the first. Because knowledge will have a short half-life, future-oriented educators advocate the shift to "learning how to learn." Learning would move from a knowing to a searching emphasis. Traditionally, subject matter has been regarded as a fixed body of knowledge which all people needed to know. More recently, we have realized that in a world in which the amount of knowledge increases geometrically, we need to change our emphasis from what to learn to how to learn. Twelve years of education will not prepare students for everything they need to know for the rest of their lives. As teachers, one of our goals should be to work ourselves out of a job by graduating self-directed learners. Then during the twelve years they are in school, we need to motivate and inspire kids to want to continue learning and help them learn how to learn.

D. Special education

A third criticism involves special education. The number of students disadvantaged by poverty, family structure, limited English proficiency and other socioeconomic factors now stands at nearly 18.5 million or more than one-third of the school-age population. One estimate claims the population of disadvantaged students will grow by 7 million by the year 2000. The vast majority of these students and others are placed in special education classes.

At the same time, more and more voices are beginning to question the effectiveness of special education programs. Criticisms focus on the following three issues. First, most procedures for classifying children in special programs are unreliable and invalid. The same child may be classified as disabled by one test or diagnostic and not by another. James Ysseldyke and his colleagues from the University of Minnesota reported that as many as 80% of all children could be classified as learning disabled by one or more of the procedures now in use in the nation's schools. The second criticism involves the practice of pulling-out remedial students from regular classrooms. This method places all of the reasons for the child's learning problems on the child and

overlooks the regular classroom and the quality of instruction in that classroom as at least one source of the child's learning problems and also as a possible site for improvement efforts. Research studies (Richard Allington & Peter Johnston, Mariana Haynes & Joseph Jenkins) have found that students in pull-out remedial programs actually ended up with less instructional time than regular students. In addition, most remedial instruction is narrowly focused on "skill and drill" lessons. Henry Levin of Stanford's School of Education maintains that special education programs have failed because they have isolated and labeled students while slowing down instruction and targeting it to low-level skills.

A third criticism of special education is based on research that shows "special education" students do better in a regular classroom where quality instruction is occurring. Special education students can be helped more by being exposed to literature, problem solving and a range of higher level thinking experiences. They can benefit greatly from cooperative learning, peer-tutoring, paired learning and parental involvement techniques. Critics suggest drawing on students' strengths rather than highlighting their weaknesses.

E. Standardized testing

A fourth area receiving increasing criticism is standardized testing. For decades there have been complaints about standardized tests. These complaints have grown louder and will continue to accelerate.

One criticism is aimed at the reliability of the tests. Their reliability is lower than what the public commonly believes. For example, a typical IQ test has a range of 13-15 points in which any student's true score might lie. That means there may not be a significant difference between 45th percentile and 60th percentile scores. The reliability of tests for students below third grade is even lower. One research study found that between 30-50% of the readiness tests used to test if kids are ready for first grade were inaccurate. A second criticism is leveled at the validity of the tests. It is argued that the reading subtests of an achievement test do not measure reading at all, but are measuring isolated reading skills which are never used in isolation when actually reading.

Other critics claim standardized tests are unfair to minorities by being geared to white middle-income children. Another criticism is that the test results encourage tracking of students by grouping them according to ability when ability grouping has been shown to be detrimental to the lower grouped students without necessarily helping the students in the higher groups.

And probably the criticism that is gaining the most momentum is the argument that standardized tests cause teachers to use rote learning by teaching to the tests. And since the tests test only simple basic skills and isolated facts that are easily tested in a multiple choice format, that is where most instruction is aimed. Thus, tests that focus on low-level cognitive work actually become the curriculum. In essence, in order for a teacher and his/her students to look good on these tests they are reduced to rote learning of isolated facts rather than the learning of higher-order thinking skills in a creative problem solving setting. Finally, if we are to change education to meet the demands of the information age, we must overcome our habit of using product-oriented assessment techniques to measure process-oriented education.

Alternatives to standardized testing have been suggested and are being tried. For example, California has revamped their assessment program because their educators realize that what you test is what you get. Their eighth grade writing assessment includes eight types of writing. They are an autobiographical incident, report of information, an evaluation, a problem-solution, firsthand biography, a story, a speculation about causes and effect, and an observation. Now wouldn't that give you more information about a student than the Language subtest on the Iowa Test for Basic Skills? This approach is known as portfolio assessment. The math test includes complex problem solving situations where alternative approaches are possible, where there may be more than one right answer, and where a group of students work together for three to five days during which time students are stopped and interviewed about their work. Other innovative assessment techniques are being used for other subject areas. However, after listing all of these criticisms of standardized tests, I believe the 90's will see standardized tests continuing to be a dominant practice. Before radical changes in assessment will occur nationwide, legislators, parents, school board members and the public in general must be re-educated to

understand that standardized scores are inadequate indicators of the quality of schools, teachers, and students. There will be attempts to improve the tests. Even the ACT and SAT tests are making changes that include having students write an essay and solve some open-ended math problems.

III. Educational trends

Now let's turn our attention to educational trends which have the potential of influencing our schools and our ministries. In large part these trends are being advocated as medicine for the ailing American school system.

A. Early childhood education

Early childhood education is a trend that is already here and will continue to be a major trend in the 90's and beyond. Some of our schools are using early childhood programs as mission outreach tools. With both parents working, young children need to be in day care centers, preschools or with a babysitter. Day care will probably be emphasized in the beginning years of the next century just as preschools were emphasized in the 80's and 90's. The question to be answered is, "What type of early childhood program (day care or preschool) will you have?" Will it be a "watered-down" version of Kindergarten? Or will it be a distinctly unique program appropriate to the developmental level of these young children?

In researching trends that are affecting churches, Lyle Schaller noted that people are looking for the "shopping mall" church. This type of church offers many services for everyone. An example I'm familiar with is a large Baptist church which has a dynamic preacher for church services, fantastic music, counseling of every type, preschool, day care as well as support groups and community based projects. That same trend is beginning to appear for schools.

Some public schools already have an extended day program. It begins with breakfast for the entire family. Then mom and/or dad goes off to work and the children go to preschool, daycare, or regular school. The children stay until 6 or 7 in the evening when they are picked up to go home. That is one step toward a shopping mall school. Other steps are latchkey programs, parenting programs and counseling for families. A very successful program begun in several states is the HIPPY program. It is based on Israeli ideas and stands for Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters. In the program educators go to the homes of parents and teach parenting skills including such basic things as how to talk to your children, how to discipline, how to read to your children, how to regulate TV viewing and wouldn't it be nice to add how to teach your child about Jesus, how to pray with your child and how to conduct family devotions.

B. Parental Involvement

Because of single parent families and both parents working, parents are pressed for time. As a result of these changes in family life, parents have become distanced from schools. Yet, it is evident that schools alone cannot do everything that is being asked of them.

The timeworn slogan of "parents and schools must work together" is being sounded again. Former US Education Secretary, Terrel Bell, suggests that each school should have a written agreement with parents in which parents agree that each child will get a good night's sleep, arrive at school on time, have a quiet place at home to study, and that parents will read to their child at least 10 minutes a day, limit TV viewing, and help children with homework.

The flip side of this issue is that schools and teachers must back up their cry for parental involvement with specific programs and activities that enlist the aid of parents. Our schools and classrooms do not substitute for parental guidance and teaching. God is very clear about parental responsibilities. The Chinese have a proverb that goes like this, "A parent is worth a thousand teachers." Perhaps it is time to not just want parental involvement, but to expect it. I really believe we can expect more parental involvement provided we have a

strong ministry to families program that includes teaching parents how to help their children.

C. Outcome Based Education

Outcome Based Education (OBE) looks at the intended outcomes you want to see in a student when he/she graduates from your school. What is it that an eighth grader should be able to do? What is it that a high school senior should be capable of by graduation day? The idea is that once you have identified the outcomes you want to see in students, then you can work backwards and figure out what experiences, courses, and requirements will help students gain those desired outcomes. Their motto is that all kids can learn and succeed, that success breeds success, and that schools control the conditions for success.

Let me give some examples. A graduating high school student might say, "I took four years of English." OBE says, "So what? What can you do with it? For instance, can you write an opinion paper and support it?" In grade school a student might say, "I got A's in Reading." "So what?" What specifically can this student do after graduation that demonstrates this person is literate? Can this person analyze, synthesize, and interpret what is being read?" These are hard questions to ask, and we are being encouraged to ask them about everything we teach. Surely, we don't teach lessons because it happens to be the next page in the textbook, or surely we don't give assignments because the teacher's manual says to assign workbook, page 32. Why are you teaching what you are teaching? And why are you using the method you are using? Is it tied to a student outcome? OBE means teachers can no longer say, "Well, I taught what was in the book." or "I covered the entire book." Those statements are now replaced with this question, "What have students learned?" And that may be entirely different than what was taught.

Now there is a danger in tying everything we do to observable student behaviors. Not everything students learn is observable. There is more to school than just head knowledge. There is social, emotional, and spiritual growth that is more difficult to measure in a specific exit outcome. I also think we need to be careful not to turn broad desired outcomes into isolated, specific behavioral objectives when teaching on a day to day basis. Teaching to isolated, specific, measurable objectives means we will teach to tests again. And this practice has been largely responsible for leading the educational system in the US to stress lower-level skills at the expense of higher-level thinking.

D. Cooperative Learning

The real world of the 1990's and the 21st century is not a world in which people will work alone. Cooperative learning is a trend that began in the 80's and some form of it will become even more popular in the 90's. In a service and information based economy, it will not only be brain power that counts, but also how a person interacts and works with other people. It is people skills that are and will be in demand. And of course, that's what ministry is all about. That's what every day evangelism is all about. How do we prepare our students for a people - oriented society and ministry? Not by having children do all their work independently! They need to learn to work together. There will continue to be a need for cooperative learning or some form of it. It is not just group work, but rather it is a deliberate philosophy and set of teaching strategies that not only accomplishes the learning of certain knowledges and skills, but also teaches the necessary social skills needed to be successful.

E. Whole Language - holistic learning

During the last three to four years it has become almost impossible to pick up a catalog or professional journal without seeing the words whole language. What is whole language and why is it sweeping the country? First, we need to realize that the label whole language is an American label. The philosophy driving whole language originated in other English speaking countries, most notably New Zealand. New Zealand began this method of teaching about 30 years ago and today boasts the highest literacy rate in the world while we in the

US are ranked 49th in the world for literacy.

Briefly, what is whole language? Whole language is not a set of particular teaching techniques, but rather it is a philosophy. It is a philosophy about children; namely, that children's cognitive growth, just like their physical growth, occurs at different rates. It is a philosophy about learning; namely, that children learn best by actively being involved in hands on activities and that they learn best by creating meaning as they read and write. And it is a philosophy about teachers; namely, that teachers are professionals who can make decisions about materials, curricula, and instructional methods that will meet the needs of their students. This basic philosophy applies to teaching all, subject areas in a whole language classroom. It especially focuses on the teaching of the language arts. It believes that reading, writing, knowledge about language, and spelling are best learned by doing them. It also means that reading, language, spelling, handwriting, speaking, and listening can be integrated instead of taught as separate subject areas. That means beginning readers begin by reading and writing whole, meaningful stories and that any phonics or language skills are taught and learned in the context of a whole story. Instruction proceeds from the whole to the part. Students in middle and upper grades read whole literature books and write and publish their own books and while they do this they learn all about nouns and verbs, how to create mental images and how to write from a particular viewpoint. No workbooks or worksheets are used. Students don't have time for that. They're reading and writing. In general, its focus is on holistic, active learning, and teacher decision-making.

F. Teacher empowerment

Miami and Chicago have instituted "school based management." Each school is run by parents, teachers and the principal. Each school has its own school board that allocates the funds and creates the curriculum for that particular school. There are no dictates from a central office. The idea is to give people a feeling of ownership of their neighborhood schools. The trend is away from centralized decision making to teacher empowerment.

Now doesn't this administrative structure sound a lot like your school? You have your own school board. You do not receive dictates from the WELS Board for Parish Education as to what and how you should teach. You already are empowered teachers and principals. You don't have layers of administrative red tape to go through if you want to try out a creative idea. We have much more freedom to make decisions than do public school teachers. Are we taking advantage of the decision making freedom we have? If there is any school system where experimentation should be taking place, it is ours. To try new techniques and new curriculum ideas, we as teachers must be knowledgeable. It will become imperative that all teachers truly are professionals who read professional journals and return to school to keep up with the changing research. In the 90's mandatory continuing education may apply to WELS teachers as well as public school teachers. And we should welcome this with open arms. We cannot be teaching like we taught 15 or 20 years ago. These aren't the same children of 20 years ago, our educational goals are changing, and the very definitions of such elementary concepts such as literacy are changing. To have teacher empowerment is wonderful, but keeping current is the responsibility that goes with it.

G. Restructuring schools

Perhaps the most far reaching cry on the horizon is to totally restructure our schools. This idea is not new. But this time, the voices are coming from not only so called "liberal" educators, but from many quarters including the National Governors' Association Task Force on Education and President Bush himself. One suggestion for reform is that states should move away from age grouping of students. They argue that the present arrangement of strict grade levels was designed to prepare a work force destined for the assembly lines of the industrial age. Some people are calling for an ungraded Basic School in the primary grades to let children develop according to their maturational timetable.

High schools having 45-50 minute classes for each subject area is being questioned. In Thayer High

School located in Winchester, NH, the school day is divided into two 4 1/2 hour blocks of time. Each 4 1/2 hour block of time is then divided up among three teachers who meet daily like football coaches to decide how to use the time for the next day. There are no fixed daily time periods. Instead, it is the particular activity that students are involved with that dictates how much time is spent on Math, History or some interdisciplinary project. These schools are moving away from a structured subject centered curriculum to an integrated curriculum. Other restructuring trends to watch are "free market" schools where parents and students can choose any school they want and the trend toward creating small schools within large schools. For example, there may be 2000 students under one roof divided into ten separate independent schools. The goal of smaller school size is to make every student feel that teachers care about them instead of just being a faceless number. Could it be that our WELS schools have been the leaders in this smaller school size trend?

IV. A WELS trend?

Finally, is there a WELS trend? If there is a WELS trend that affects our schools, it is probably one that began in mainline Christian churches and is now appearing in some circles of the WELS. It seems some are questioning whether or not Christian day schools and high schools are worth it. It seems some see mission work and outreach efforts as a better use of money. If this is a trend in the WELS, what is our reaction? First, I suggest we applaud the enthusiasm for outreach. Second, I suggest that we agree that our schools could do better. Yes, we need to reexamine our mental sets about what we are teaching and how we are teaching. A whole language philosophy of active learning, cooperative learning activities, an outcome based outlook and different assessment techniques challenge us to reexamine our teaching in general and our teaching of religion specifically. There are many exciting trends in education today waiting for experimentation by knowledgeable Christian teachers like you. We can do a better job of graduating students who do their religion instead of just talking about it in a classroom. Let's accept this type of criticism and do something about it! But let's not sit back and accept criticisms about the very existence of our Lutheran schools. Two of the strengths of the Wisconsin Synod are its adherence to the pure Word of God and its educational system. God has used our Lutheran schools to keep the pure Word of God in the WELS and as a result of this nurturing, our Lutheran schools have produced 85% of WELS pastors and 91% of the teachers in WELS schools.

In writing about Christian education Silas Krueger estimates that if a child attends church, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School and confirmation instruction and has perfect attendance for all of these and the child participates in a half hour of family devotions every day, this would total only 6% of the child's life from age three to 14. I question if 6% is what God had in mind when He teaches us that religious instruction for our children is to be continuous, repetitive, and intensive; in short, full-time! It is true that our schools cost more now than ever before to nurture our young people so that the outreach we do is reaching out with the pure Word of God. Perhaps, a more appropriate question to ask is, "Can we afford NOT to have Christian day schools and high schools?" We have not even begun to scratch the surface for using our schools as mission outreach tools and we should be extending our Christian education efforts to reach from the cradle to the grave. How refreshing it was this past summer to have our synod convention reaffirm the importance of nurture. Is there room for improvement in our schools? Yes! Will we improve our schools? There is no doubt in my mind. There are hundreds of reasons sitting right before me as proof that improvements will be made. There are no more dedicated teachers, ministers of the Word, and servants in the world than you, the teaching and preaching ministers of the Wisconsin Synod.

V. Conclusion

Friends, these are exciting and challenging times to be teaching and serving in the ministry. God bless your efforts to learn more about important trends in education so that the children of the 90's and the 21st century will be effectively equipped to share God's Word in everything they say and do.

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