

End of the Year Celebrations and Recognitions: Ideas from your leadership team

It's Graduation Time! by Drew Gerdes - For nearly 175 (more or less) days we have been working with children and bringing them forward on their journey in life. As the year comes to an end do you celebrate with a graduation? For some teachers this is an annual tradition, a rite of passage, while for others it is just one more thing on the "to-do list." I've always enjoyed a simple graduation service. Seeing children with smiles on their faces, parents with flashing cameras, and grandparents with little toys and gifts has always given me a warm, fuzzy feeling.

I encourage as many family members as possible to attend our graduation and chapel service. Why? Because it's another opportunity for people to hear about Jesus! We are all about Jesus! Our school is about Jesus! By inviting others for a special graduation celebration, we have them in the building for such an awesome outreach opportunity. Some don't know about Jesus, and others, for some reason or other, placed Him on the back-burner. The Holy Spirit uses these opportunities to stir up the faith. As the end of the year approaches think about what you will do to share the love of Jesus, not only with your students, but with their family and friends as well!

End of the year celebrations: by Cheryl Iverson - **All School Family Carnival**...Fishers of Men: Games and activities centered around a "fishing" theme, combined with "old fashioned" school carnival games such as a duck pond; "fishing" for prizes; BINGO using fishy crackers; a cupcake walk to music from the ocean. Create a literacy area and read stories from the Bible such as "Jesus calming the storm," "Jesus calling the disciples," and "Loaves and Fishes." Have a craft booth and provide families with the opportunity to make Japanese fish prints. Make this a multigenerational activity and invite families from the church and members of the congregation. **Celebrate diversity**...after all "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world!" Have a cultural fair and invite families to bring items reflecting their heritage; enjoy a multicultural potluck as well. Bring recipes that can be copied and compiled into a cookbook as a gift for families. Have each classroom choose a country and decorate their rooms accordingly; have arts and crafts available for each family to enjoy or teach families a game or dance. Make musical instruments together when they stop in to visit. Each class could also recite a poem or sing a special song reflecting "their" country. *Be sensitive to making your celebration child focused, family friendly, age and developmentally appropriate, play-based, and fun! Make certain your expectations of children and staff are reasonable. Use every family event as an opportunity to reach out with intention and purpose to families with Jesus' love, grace, and forgiveness.*

Did you know... Having just completed the 2008 LEA Convocation I am in "recovery mode" as well as "overload" with all the awesome ideas that I received from the different sectionals. For those of you who did not attend (and those of you who did), **one** of the highlights was the recognition of the LEA award recipients during the last three years. I do not know how many ECEnet/LEA members realize that every year there are three awards given specifically to outstanding or distinguished early childhood teachers and administrators. It is important that we recognize the "outstandings" among us — it is good for them to get a pat on the back; it is also good for those who work with and around them. It is a win for everyone. The three awards given specifically for early childhood are: **Distinguished Lutheran Early Childhood Teacher** - this is a teacher in preschool to 2nd grade at a Lutheran early childhood center, preschool, or elementary school, who has at least 4 years of teaching experience in a Lutheran school, demonstrates effective teaching skills, is an active member of LEA, ECEnet, and other professional organizations. **Outstanding New Early Childhood Teacher** - this is a teacher in preschool to 2nd grade at a Lutheran early childhood center, preschool, or elementary school, who has three years OR LESS of teaching experience in a Lutheran school. This nominee must also be an LEA and ECEnet member/participant and a member of other professional organizations. **Distinguished Lutheran Early Childhood Administrator** - this is an active administrator in a Lutheran early childhood center or program with at least 5 years experience, who demonstrates outstanding leadership through curriculum development, staff morale, and family involvement. This nominee must also be an LEA and LEADnet participant and a member of other professional organizations. If you know someone who fits into one of these award categories, consider nominating them for the 2009 awards — the nomination forms will be available online at www.lea.org in late May.

A Tidbit for the Soul from Julie Klopke

During this school year God has blessed your students and classes in many ways. He has been with them during the high points of pumpkin-patch field trips to the low points of dealing with the unhappy feelings of being left out of receiving a birthday party invitation to a classmate's party. Through the many events and activities of the school year God has been a major part of our students' lives through His love, forgiveness, and the growth that He has encouraged in their many areas of development.

As the school year draws to a quick close our students need to be encouraged to share God's love, forgiveness, and growth with others around them. Discuss how wonderful it is to share these gifts and talents with their family, friends, and communities. Finally, encourage them to be filled with excitement and passion as they find ways to personally share their experiences of God's love in their lives with others.

A Tidbit for the Inquisitive Spirit by Drew Gerdes

Now Where Did I See that Email? Blog It!

Do you ever receive an email, possibly from one of the LEA list serves, and delete it thinking it did not pertain to your ministry at the current moment, but then three weeks later you wish you'd have saved the e-mail?! Problem solved! All ECEnet list serve emails are now archived at www.lutheraneducation.net and are available when needed. There's no cost to participate, and registering only takes a minute or two.

Another great opportunity on the ECEnet section of this site allows for more in-depth discussion on a variety of topics. Do you like some of the ECEnet Tips of the Week and have more ideas to share? Would you like to know more about a topic mentioned in an LEA article? Would you like to brainstorm ideas with other early childhood professionals around the world? Please take a moment to visit www.lutheraneducation.net and discover the possibilities it has for your ministry!

A Tidbit for the Creative Spirit from Lisa Schmidt

Favorite Mother's and Father's Day Gifts

Mother's Day - Each child's hand is painted with his favorite color for his mom. Then the painted hand is placed on the paper and embellished with a stem and leaves. If the child is able to write her own name or would like to attempt it, her "signature" is placed on the work. The work is dated and then placed in a black frame from a discount store.

Father's Day - Copies are made of the attached "Footprints" poem. (Author Unknown) Using a jumbo, well-inked, washable stamp pad each child places both bare feet on the pad to ink it up and then they place their feet on the printed poem. Dad's really love this special something made just for them.



A Tidbit for the Mind by Cheryl Iverson

LEA ECE Leadership Institutes:

- June 18 and 19 at St. John's Lutheran in Seward, NE following the ECE Conference at Concor dia, Seward, NE.
- August 1 and 2 in Palm Beach, Florida - more details to come.
- Please contact CHERYL IVERSON at 206-788-4145 or at cheryli@childhaven.org for more information about the Leadership Institutes OR contact Kathy Slupik at the LEA office 708-209-3484.

