

Parent

pages



Resources for Christian parents in the 21st Century

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No Teacher Left Behind

The U.S. government asserts that standardized tests can tell us the abilities of students and therefore the health of a school. A school has many different aspects in addition to students and books. If one part of a school has its health at risk, the efforts of the whole school are affected.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul talks about the church as being a body with many different parts. Verse 26 reminds us:

"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."

Teachers and administrators carry a heavy load. They not only minister to children, but to the families of the children as well. Teachers must keep up with changes in our world. I started teaching 25 years ago, and in my first three years I had one child from a broken home.

Now, it is not unusual for my children to have step families, single parents, foster parents or grandparents raising them. I remember my first school board debating the wisdom of computers in the classroom (because the computers would just give kids the answers) and now I need to be technologically astute to make use of new teaching methods available. Has your school checked on the health of its teachers lately?

***"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."* 3 John 4**

Spiritual Health: We assume that rostered church workers are spiritually healthy; they certainly are well trained. However, spiritual health is not a virtue of a good education. Spiritual health is an on-going process and vital to all other aspects of health for an individual and for a school.

Does your school staff have regular devotions and Bible study? Do your teachers have break time during the school day that can be spent on personal Bible study? What about Sunday morning? Does the school staff get to attend Bible class or are they leading the class or teaching Sunday school?

Remedy: Could the elders or other church members be encouraged to lead Bible class or teach the children? Could the congregation hire a teacher aid to do recess duty, allowing the teachers personal Bible time? What about a later start to the school day to allow the staff more time for devotions and Bible study?

***"You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men."* 1 Cor. 7:23**

Physical Health: The busier a church worker's schedule, the less time is spent



tending to needs of physical health.

What is the physical health of the school's teachers and principal? Does the church cover a fair share of the health care insurance for its workers? Does the health of the teachers indicate a high level of stress?

Remedy: Encourage teachers into healthier habits. Some businesses offer lower insurance premiums to workers who exercise regularly, eat healthy, and quit smoking. Be an advocate for teachers when the budget process is looking at reducing insurance benefits.

What kind of extra-curricular activities are your teachers responsible for? Make sure they have the time needed to tend to their physical health.

A Growing Christian makes the Best Parent!

"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight." Phil. 1:9

Professional Health: The education profession is a fast moving profession. The student teachers I work with have no idea what teaching was like before internet, computers and DVDs. It takes intentional professional development to stay ahead of the game. Additionally, teachers should participate in inquiry in their own classrooms to evaluate methods and practices. What are the professional development practices of your teachers?

Remedy: Lutheran Education Association is a professional organization for your school staff. The school's professional development budget should include money to help pay for membership fees.

Teachers should be encouraged financially to pursue a graduate degree. Most of our synodical schools have on-line programs making this option possible for more people.

Please remember that the church and the school benefit from the education of its church workers. These teachers will be better equipped to assume leadership roles in the work of the church.

"For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.'" 1 Tim. 5:18

Remedy: It is difficult for churches to make the commitment to pay their church workers what they are worth. Tight budgets are a reality everywhere.

However, it is one thing to expect a teacher to live within his or her means and another thing entirely to reduce those means by denying a cost of living raise. Additionally, the cost of a synodical education is very high. Most teachers

of 10 years or less have student loans.

Do your teachers need second jobs to cover family expenses? Teachers support the church budgets by living with low salaries and the school budgets by paying for many classroom supplies. This is not indicative of a healthy congregation.

Remedy: Congregations and districts need programs to help church workers pay off school loans and become more financially literate. Be an advocate for your school's teachers at church meetings when finances are discussed.

Find out how many teachers have second jobs or student loans and bring this to the attention of the congregation. Work with the PTL to fund reimbursement for teacher's classroom expenditures.

Prayerfully consider your own giving habits. Churches with members who practiced tithing would have no financial worries.

"The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." 1 Tim. 5:17

Emotional Health: Our world does not always view teachers as professionals. Teachers are blamed for everything from low test scores to the number of children on medication.

Does your child's school participate in this sort of thinking? Does your church recognize the gifts of its teachers? Does the administration value the expertise of teachers? Are they treated like professionals in other fields are treated?

Remedy: Compare the employment practices of your church to that of other businesses that hire people with similar education levels.

Do your teachers get personal days? Are they able to choose the method of

professional development that works best for them? Is that professional development recognized and celebrated? What could your school or church do to support its teachers and other church workers?

No school or church can do a perfect job of tending to the health of its teachers and administrators. However, many of our schools could do a much better job. Remember that your teachers do not have a union. God provides their needs and He does that through the members of the church.

As parents in your child's school, be the teachers biggest supporters. Pray for them on a daily basis, check on them, and give them words of encouragement. Speak up for them at church meetings. Show your gratitude for the work they perform for the Savior you share.

For discussion

1. What does God expect us to do to support the full-time workers of the church?
2. How is a school positively or adversely affected by the treatment of its workers?
3. What is your school already doing to support its staff?

For further study:

To read research on teachers and to find practical ways to support, go to www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?navid=529.

