Chapter

6

Leadership—The Director

In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling. (Exodus 15:13)







A

Selecting an ECM Director

The first and maybe most important task a board has after it establishes the structure of the early childhood ministry (ECM) and its board responsibilities is that of calling a director (administrator). The prayerful and careful calling process helps board members and candidates to sharpen their vision of the ministry. (Cf. Appendix 6.1 Sample Call Document or in the Chapter 6 folder)

A clear job description is needed for all to understand the function and responsibilities of the director and for the board's guide in serving with and evaluating the director. (Cf. Appendix 7.1 Ministry Job Description—Director, 7.2 Ministry Job Description-Administrator or in the Chapter 7 folder)

Remember that the director sets the tone for the ECM. Whether building a new church or expanding church ministry, the director is key in communicating, managing, planning, and educating.

A director needs to possess:

- a faith-filled life of sanctification
- active membership in a WELS Lutheran church
- education and experience in early childhood education; a graduate of or certified by Martin Luther College; one or more courses in administration of an FCM

- ability to relate to children as unique members of God's family
- capability to guide the behaviors of a group of children
- excellent communication skills with adults and children
- willingness to grow spiritually and professionally
- desire to work with a team in ministry to families and young children
- ability to supervise a group of adults
- capability to handle financial and management responsibilities



The Early Childhood Center Director

Whether the ECM director is a seasoned administrator or a first-time leader, the ministry can be very demanding and yet very rewarding.

There are many resources to assist the ECM director. Local Lutheran early childhood educators in the area, in the WELS district, and on the national level are eager and able to help. This manual is one resource to assist both the Director and governing board to operate a quality early childhood program that brings the Gospel message to many young children and their families. (Cf. Appendix 6.2 Sample Vision Statements for Leaders or the Chapter 6 folder)



Are Lutheran early childhood centers different from other early childhood centers? Yes, when ECM directors stay true to who they are—Christians who believe and profess they are saved solely through faith in Jesus who suffered and died and rose again for the salvation of the whole world. There is nothing anyone does to earn heaven. In Lutheran early childhood settings, children hear every day throughout the day that Jesus loves them no matter what. Bible teachings are much more than lessons in moral living. The Christian faith is integrated into the entire curriculum. This is the distinctiveness of Lutheran education.

- The director is a spiritual leader for children, staff and families as well as within the congregation and community, sharing faith in the unconditional love of Jesus with all of these groups. This is done by words, actions, and interactions with all whom God places in one's path each day.
- The director is a leader in ministry, a key element in assuring that the early childhood ministry is truly part of the mission and ministry of the operating congregation.
 Leadership in ministry includes serving people. The Director's role is to help meet the physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs of the many families enrolled in the early childhood program.
- The director is a leader in curriculum development. Many directors have had specialized training in the development of early childhood curriculum. The uniqueness of a Lutheran early childhood ministry is that the Christian faith is integrated into the developmentallyappropriate curriculum for young children.
- The Director is a leader in building relationships, with the responsibility to communicate to the congregation the power of the ministry of their early childhood ministry. Leadership is crucial in building relationships between members, staff, and families.

- The director is a leader in staff
 development. A quality, caring, Christian
 staff insures a high caliber Lutheran early
 childhood ministry. In order to maintain this
 level of excellence, the director must
 provide for the professional and spiritual
 growth of the staff. It is the director's role
 to plan time and resources for staff
 development.
- The director is a leader in financial planning. Congregation leaders rely on the director to manage the financial aspect of the early childhood program in the most cost-effective manner. Challenges often arise over operating expenses, realistic fees, and adequate compensation for the staff. Seek help if needed from congregational members having expertise in this area. All of this is related to the way the early childhood ministry is part of the ministry of the congregation.

The role of financial planner is crucial to the effective operation of a Lutheran early childhood ministry that is truly connected to the congregation.

With the Lord and Savior always present, all believers share this promise:

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)



Time Management

Time management is an important skill for directors to develop.

Begin by Scheduling a Time with the Lord

Those moments in God's Word and in prayer will put the proper perspective on your tasks for the day. A Christ-centered life finds a peace "that passes all understanding" (Ephesians 4:7) throughout each day.

Create a "To Do" List Each Day

- Prioritize tasks.
- If the task doesn't require immediate attention set a timeline for completion.
- Cross out each item as it is completed to realize a sense of accomplishment.
- Include tasks that require very little time and are easily achieved.
- Focus on all the items you have crossed off your list at the end of the day rather than those still to be accomplished.
- Accept interruptions as an essential part of ministry.
- Thank the Lord for the time he has given to do his ministry each day.
- Realize the list won't be accomplished each day but be thankful that God will give new opportunities each day.

Delegate Tasks/Responsibilities

Examine the "To Do" list. Which tasks could be delegated to someone else? Give clear directions and trust that person to carry out the responsibility.

Administrators are both managers and leaders. Managers focus on the specific details of the operation of a program. Leaders spend time in reflective planning and goal setting. Leaders provide vision and inspiration. Manage time in a way demonstrating leadership for staff, board, families, and congregation. (Cf. Appendix 6.4 ECM Director's Master Planner, 6.5 Leadership Tasks or in the Chapter 6 folder)



Working with the Governing Board

The governing board may be the School Board, the Board of Education or an Early Childhood Committee that reports to one of the previous named groups. Whatever the congregation's structure, the director's relationship with the governing board is an important link between the congregation and its early childhood ministry. The director and governing board as well as the pastor and key leaders of the congregation work together to ensure that the early childhood ministry is part of the mission and ministry of the congregation.

An effectively functioning governing board is an essential element of a quality Lutheran early childhood ministry that is part of the mission and ministry of its operating congregation. It is important that board members have a clear understanding of their role and function as it is related to the day-to-day operation of the early childhood center. See Chapter 3 for specific helps in working together with the governing board.



The ECM Staff

The quality of an early childhood ministry is directly related to the quality of the staff. The expertise and attitude of the staff significantly determines the effectiveness of a congregation's early childhood ministry. It is through staff members that the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed to young children and their families. It is the director's responsibility, along with the support of the governing board, to engage and develop a quality staff. (Cf. Appendix 6.6 Sample Review of Director/Administrator or in the Chapter 6 folder)

THE DIRECTOR COMMUNICATES WITH THE STAFF

Be an active listener. Encourage each staff person to listen actively and respectfully. Share:

- **information** to help each other understand situations and deal with problems
- feelings to celebrate joyous events and clear any misunderstandings
- feedback and emphasize the positive actions of care givers and parents
- responsibilities assisting with the load and showing flexibility
- **expertise** with the parents and co-workers to benefit everyone



The Director as Advocate

An advocate is one who supports, speaks, acts, and writes on behalf of a group of people or policy. The director of an early childhood ministry is an advocate of children and their families and of the staff.

The director is an advocate for children and their families when:

- Providing a safe, secure, loving Christian environment. Both the facilities and staff should reflect the love and care of Jesus.
- Leading the staff to communicate the Gospel message to young children throughout the day.
- Planning for and providing a curriculum appropriate for the age and development of young children
- Building relationships with families to encourage and support them in their God-given role as parents

The director is an **advocate for staff members** when:

- Providing adequate materials and supplies in an environment that is conducive to a quality program for young children
- Supporting and encouraging the professional and spiritual growth of staff

 Recommending adequate compensation and benefits for the staff according to their educational level, years of experience, and performance



Reaching Out to Families

When a child is enrolled in a Lutheran early childhood ministry, the family is also enrolled. In many cases, only a small percentage is members of the congregation. Some are active in another Christian church in the community. Others are nominal Christians. They identify with a denomination but are not closely connected with a church. Still others are admittedly un-churched or non-Christian. It is essential that all families feel part of the Christian community of the congregation. The goal is not for those active Christians to leave their church home, but for all to have a personal relationship with their Savior, Jesus Christ.

The pastor is key to helping develop this friendly relationship. He is the spiritual shepherd of every family enrolled in the congregation's early childhood ministry. Be his encourager.

The key to ministering to families is building relationships. Help families get to know you, the staff and members of the congregation.



Relationships are built by meeting the needs of the families served.

- Offer names of members of the congregation's youth group who are willing to serve as baby-sitters.
- Arrange to bring meals to families in times of need.
- Celebrate with families at the birth of a child.
- Provide referral services for the special needs families may have.

COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS

Provide a variety of parent education opportunities. Communicate through informal conversations, parent newsletters, parent bulletin board and parent resource center.

Provide Christian witness to children and their families. As a director "walks the walk" and "talks the talk" of a Christian life, a picture of the joy of the Christian community in the congregation is painted. The picture is an open door with beckoning arms and voices inviting others to come to meet Jesus. More help is found in Chapter 10.

Listen to Parents. Parents are often isolated from other family members and may be too busy to talk with neighbors about their concerns and questions regarding parenting. They want the director and teachers to listen to them. It's important for the director and teachers to serve as support for family members.

Maria rushed in one morning with her daughter and said, "I called my mother last night and told her I went back to work this week. Mom had a fit! She said it was too soon and my place should be at home."

Is Maria saying that she's feeling frustrated and guilty for going back to work? Is she stating her mother's view while feeling fairly comfortable with working again? Listen to the whole story (words, tone and cues) to interpret accurately what parents share Listen to what parents say not only about their children but also about their own needs.

Maybe parents are telling information about their children and themselves. Details about what the child does at home are needed by the director and teachers. Listen carefully and record the information as soon as possible.

Inform Parents. Information blesses! Parents need information about the daily experiences their children have while in the ECM. Use a Monthly Schedule, Message Board and Care Sheets to help organize and record special things the child has done to be shared with the parents.

- Share the child's rate and pattern of development by referring to the child's developmental profile.
- Communicate ideas for stimulating the child's development.
- Send home Christ Light parent handouts for each Bible lesson taught.
- Provide information about the ECM—it's mission, goals, policies, curriculum and descriptions of daily activities.
- Share personal feelings with parents. Let them know their children are loved and respected. Thank them for the trust they place in the ECM and staff by enrolling their child. Share excitement about the child's new developments—a first time she rides the tike bike, catches a ball, hugs a new friend. When a child's accomplishments are shared the parents realize the ECM's excitement about the student's growth and development. Express empathy during the trying, frustrating times. Show sympathy of hurt, fear, and loss.
- Share Parent's Crosslink and Forward in Christ with each family.
- Share information relating to parents concerns about their children. Some might need information about separation anxiety. Others might want information about toilet-training and consistent discipline helps.
- Communicate goals and expectations formally and informally.
- Accept and affirm parents as they are. They look to the ECM for child care but not for

additional demands and expectations.
Gently offer helpful information to help them grow in their parenting skills.
Continually thank them for supporting the educational program. (Cf. Appendix Connect People to One Another Appendix 6.3 or in the Chapter 6 folder)



Notes		

A. Sample Call Document

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD Minister of Religion, Commissioned

IN THE NAME OF the triune God. Amen.

We, (name of church) Evangelical Lutheran Church of (city, state) herewith call you, (person whom you are calling), to teach (position) of our early childhood ministry.

In extending this call to you, we solemnly charge you:

- 1. To instruct and train the children entrusted to you diligently and faithfully in the chief truths of the Word of God as they are revealed in the Scriptures and set forth particularly in the Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther.
- 2. To teach the children thoroughly also, the elementary branches of learning in the spirit of the gospel.
- 3. To maintain Christin discipline in the school.
- 4. To serve the congregation as an example by your Christian conduct.
- 5. To endeavor earnestly to live in Christian harmony with the pastor.
- 6. To submit to the supervision of the pastor and others who are responsible for the conduct of the school, and with the help of God to do everything within the limits of your call for the general advancement of the kingdom of Christ.
- 7. To assist also, as the present circumstances of the congregation require, in the following capacities:

On our part we solemnly promise:

- 1. To receive you as a servant of Jesus Christ for our children.
- 2. To accord you the honor and love that we owe you as a servant of Christ.
- 3. To support your work among us with our prayers and personal assistance.
- 4. To send our children to school punctually and regularly.

	To aid you in maintaining the pro	, ,	
	To provide for your proper mainted of God, and for the present to pa	enance according to our y you promptly and regu	, ,
	per and		
us	ay the Lord lead you to accept our for the growth of our early childho many souls.	•	,
Siç	gned in behalf and by authority of	(name of church) Ev. Lut	theran Church of (city, state).
			_ Pastor
			_ Chairman
			_ Secretary
Giv	ven and signed this	day of	, A.D

B. Sample Vision Statements for Leaders

"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)

Vision is a picture of the way things, events, or situations can be in the future. It is your personal picture based on your experiences, dreams, and prayerful interaction with God. Vision helps you set goals that will allow you to be more effective as you serve those God has led you to serve.

Your vision comes from God through what you may envision, events, workshops, and discussions with others. When you identify and clarify the vision, you will be stretched to refine what you are currently doing and focus on what can be done. God is with you and strengthens you. Your desire to accomplish your vision will drive you to the goal.

Once you've realized your vision, you will want to share it with others, discuss it, and constantly pray about it.

In Developing a Vision Statement" Know Yourself

- Why am I in this ministry?
- What are my values?
- Whom do I respect and why?
- What are my spiritual gifts?
- What is my personality type?
- What are my strengths? Weaknesses?
- Who are my biblical role models?

Know God

- Study his Word
- Evaluate your prayer life

Know your ministry environment

- The community
- The congregation
- Your co-workers

Verify the Vision

Focus on key words and phrases that describe your vision. Evaluate and refine the statement. Share it with others for feedback. Memorize it.

Having a vision is different from having a plan. A vision inspires creativity while a plan dictates action. A vision catches the spirit of a people. – George Land and Beth Jarman

Sample Vision Statement

Inspired and motivated by the Holy Spirit, I envision directing the ministry of the ECM so that:

- More children and families are led to Jesus' loving, forgiving arms.
- Staff and congregation members reach out to the community in loving service
- Faith is nurtured within family and congregational life

A vision without a task is a dream. A task without a vision is drudgery. But a vision with a task is the hope of the future. – Source unknown

C. Connect People to One Another

Consider ways you as a director can help people in your early childhood ministry get connected to each other.

Connect Children to One Another:

- Schedule regular opportunities for older children to help younger children: zipping, tying shoes, washing hands, serving food, reading books, and writing letters.
- Develop an ECM directory, listing children's and families' phone numbers and addresses so
 they can visit each other away from the center. Be sure to obtain permission from each
 family to share their contact information.
- Display photos of children and their families on walls around the center and in homemade books or photo albums.
- Share verbal and visual stories of the children's friendships and activities with each other.

Connect Families with One Another:

- Develop a "skill and resource exchange list" so staff and families can trade skills, tools, child care, and other helpful resources.
- Organize family gatherings such as book fairs, barbecues, breakfasts, field trips to the zoo/museum
- Arrange your insurance and janitorial services so that you can make your center available to families for activities such as baby showers, gardening exchanges, aerobic classes, birthday parties.

Connect Staff to One Another:

- Organize outings and gatherings for staff and their families.
- Create visual displays around your building reflecting the lives and interests of staff members.
- Use part of each staff meeting to learn about each other-life experiences, values, skills.
- Provide comfortable space and time for staff to have short devotions, breaks, snacks, or perhaps exercise together.
- Give staff adequate space for personal belongings, books, treasures, photos.
- Plan celebrations to mark special events and shared history.

Connect With the Community:

- Invite members of the community to make regular visits or attend events at your ECM.
- Arrange a monthly exchange with another ECM, retirement center, or youth center.
- Expand staff development opportunities to include a concert, museum, or art museum.
- Arrange insurance and janitorial services so you can offer the ECM center for community events such as parenting classes or educational meetings.
- Offer your center's building for community events such as book and art fairs. Involve the children in supplying their creative posters, art work, and musical selections.

(Adapted from the Visionary Director, Redleaf Press, 1998)

D. ECM Director's Master Planner

Month	Activities	Your ideas
September	Labor DayPrepare next year's budgetRenew CPR and first aid	
October	ReformationBook FairPlanned Christmas service/program	
November	ThanksgivingParent/Teacher Conferences	
December	Christmas	
January	 Review policies and rates for next year Update handbook and forms Annual report due 	
February	 Review employee handbook and update Advance registration for members 	
March	Open registrationStaff performance review	
April	Parent/Teacher ConferencesHire summer staffEaster	
May	 Staff performance reviews Plan summer schedule Orientation of new staff Memorial Day Mother's Day Parent evaluation of program 	
June	 Clean toys/classrooms Father's Day Teacher assessments due at CLS 	
July	 Vacation! Independence Day Order Christ Light parent handouts and other supplies Teacher in-service and annual review of policies 	
August	 Send welcome letter Print calendar Decorate office, hallways, classrooms Home visits 	

E. Leadership Tasks

Directions for the Director: Consider each task and indicate the appropriate date in your planner or on your calendar.

Review job description	Parent Open House	Snack/Lunch Program	Review office procedure
Plan school year	Nominations for Officers, Boards, and Committees	Family-Church partnership	Develop prospect lists
Staff schedule leave time	Plan staff social events/appreciation	Family-School partnership	Update alumni file/mailing
Prepare budget	Monthly fire drill	Summer information letter	Plan home visits
Organize and review curriculum	Tornado drills	Farewell for non- returning staff	Plan chapel service schedule
Project enrollment 1 year/5 years	Review emergency plans—fire/disaster	Church-School partnership	Review website or other social media sites
Plan director/board/ staff dinner	Staff meetings	Enrollment update	Plan in-service activities
New staff orientation	Parent programs	Close/reconcile accounts	Plan staff Bible study schedule
Recruitment plan	Classroom schedules	Attendance records	Equipment inventory
Teacher/staff performance review	Renew professional/educational membership	Accounts receivable	Develop annual goals
Review tuition and registration fees	Schedule classroom visits staff supervision	Insurance forms student accident insurance	Review volunteer program
Voters assembly report	Self-study	Plan yearly staff policy review	Develop student service projects
Committee/board	Register for district teachers conference	Registration procedures	Plan mission offering recipients
Advertising	Licensing	School-community partnership	Prepare school calendar
Classroom maintenance	Schedule parent/teacher conferences	Print family directory	Grants
Bus inspection	Review maintenance contracts	Annual parent questionnaire	Review salary/benefit scale

E. Leadership Tasks

Materials/supplies— classrooms, office janitorial	Safety inspection of building and grounds	Review/evaluate communication weekly bulletin newsletter	Director conference
Review worker benefit plans	Equipment maintenance	Review/evaluate brochure	Appoint worker care committees
Synodical statistical report	Submit WELS forms/reports	Clean/organize file cabinets	Transfer student records
NPH book fair	Plan children's involvement in services	Develop referral list (counselors, social services, community agencies)	Vision screening
Review staff policy and procedures	Immunization report	Review program policy and procedures	Council and/or board report
Clean/organize storage	File annual IRS form 5578 non-discrimination form	Hearing screening	Gifts
Continuing education	Volunteers	Substitutes	Taxes
Accounts payable	Payroll processing	Bank deposits	CPR and First Aid training
Petty cash	Audits-internal/external	Field trips	

F. Sample Review of Director/Administrator

The person who plays a key role in providing leadership is the administrator of an elementary school and the director of an early childhood ministry program.

Not only must the administrator strive for quality in the curriculum, facility, equipment, and staff, but also he/she needs to strive for quality in him or herself. The purpose of this scale is to help the administrator or anyone desiring to become an administrator in evaluating his or her personal qualifications for the position. This evaluation may be made by the administrator, members of the staff, or anyone whose judgment and honest response would be valid and valuable.

Evaluation Scale

Please circle the choice which most accurately expresses your rating.

Section 1: Personal and Professional Qualities High-Low			W			
1.	Is dependable and responsible	9	7	5	3	0
2.	Has positive attitude toward Christian calling	9	7	5	3	0
3.	Is respected for integrity	9	7	5	3	0
4.	Uses the means of grace regularly	9	7	5	3	0
5.	Is cooperative with staff members	9	7	5	3	0
6.	Exercises sound and mature judgment	9	7	5	3	0
7.	Promotes effective teacher-pupil relationship	9	7	5	3	0
Sect	Section 1 Total Score					

Sect	ion 2: Relationships		Hig	h-Lo	W	
1.	Develops and maintains cooperative parent-teacher	8	6	4	2	0
	relationships					
2.	Has Christian relationship with family	8	6	4	2	0
3.	Conducts life in professional manner	8	6	4	2	0
4.	Is caring of others	8	6	4	2	0
5.	Reflects total congregational view of "teaching ministry"	8	6	4	2	0
6.	Is accepted for leadership ability	8	6	4	2	0
7.	Knows current trends of curriculum development and practice	8	6	4	2	0
	in early childhood education					
8.	Is recognized as an effective teacher	8	6	4	2	0
9.	Takes criticism well	8	6	4	2	0
Sect	Section 2 Total Score					

Section 3: Leadership Role		Hig	h-Lo	W	
Speaks with conviction at opportune times	7	5	3	1	0
Delegates responsibility wisely when in leadership role	7	5	3	1	0
3. Reflects commitment to democratic leadership and decision	7	5	3	1	0
making					
4. Seeks opportunity for innovation	7	5	3	1	0
5. Dresses properly; is well groomed	7	5	3	1	0
6. Participates in in-service programs	7	5	3	1	0
Section 3 Total Score		•		•	

F. Sample Review of Director/Administrator

Section 4: Health and Well-being		Hig	h-Lo	Low			
Uses good common sense in all matters	6	5	2	1	0		
Possesses sound health and physical energy	6	5	2	1	0		
3. Has a sense of humor	6	5	2	1	0		
Reads widely in professional areas	6	5	2	1	0		
Demonstrates competence in congregational work	6	5	2	1	0		
6. Performs effectively as public speaker	6	5	2	1	0		
Section 4 Total Score							

Section 5: Community Involvement/Outreach			h-Lo	W	
Has been active in professional organizations	5	4	2	1	0
2. Is active in civic affairs	5	4	2	1	0
3. Is active in some physical activity (e.g., golfing, jogging, skiing)	5	4	2	1	0
Section 5 Total Score					

Score comparison and interpretation	
Score Received	Most Desirable Score Range
Section 1	63-49
Section 2	72-54
Section 3	42-30
Section 4	36-30
Section 5	15-60
Total Score	118-175

This form may be adapted and used by boards of education to evaluate the director/administrator of the early childhood program and by directors to self-evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Go to the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools website for assessment forms for early childhood teachers and directors.

(Adapted from *Lutheran School Administrator's Handbook*, LCMS School Department, Board for Congregational Services.)