

Steps in Getting Started

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

(Matthew 19:14)



Beginning a quality Lutheran early childhood ministry (ECM) that is an integral part of the congregation's outreach to the community and ministry to families is hard work. It requires much prayer and careful planning. As one WELS member stated, "It is not just buying a bunch of crayons and scissors."

The planning process will focus on insuring that the mission and vision of the early childhood program grows out of the mission and ministry of the congregation. Congregational consensus building will drive the planning process so that the early childhood ministry will have the members' support and involvement. The congregation's outreach and nurture ministry will be reflected in the mission, vision, structure, and strategies of the early childhood ministry. "Keeping the main thing (the congregation's ministry of gospel outreach and nurture) the main thing" will be a hallmark of the planning process.

The planning process outlined in this chapter is adapted from the Forward with Lutheran Schools (FWLS) process. The FWLS process began as a part of the WELS' Parish Assistance consulting service

for WELS congregations. FWLS was developed in 1999 to provide specific assistance to congregations desiring to begin a Lutheran school (early childhood ministry, elementary school, or high school). It has proven to be a significant blessing to congregations who desire to use their new school as part of their ministry to reach out to the community and to strengthen the faith of their children and their families. In 2009, FWLS became part of the Commission on Lutheran Schools, which has provided these services on a limited basis since then.

This adaptation of the FWLS process is provided for those congregations who desire to begin an early childhood ministry without the use of a consultant. We cannot emphasize strongly enough however, that the planning process is best undertaken with the assistance of a FWLS consultant. If it is impossible to engage the services of a FWLS consultant, a knowledgeable member of the congregation should be assigned the responsibilities to guide the planning process. For more information on FWLS, please contact the Director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools.

The planning process has five major steps:



Exploring the Possibility

An initial step to gauge the congregation's interest in undertaking a thorough study of the potential of using an early childhood ministry as an integral part of its ministry of outreach and nurture.



Analyzing the Potential

A thorough analysis of congregational and community information and attitudes to determine the advisability of beginning an early childhood ministry at this time and in this place.



Creating the Mission

The development of the congregation's mission and vision for the early childhood ministry, based upon an examination of contemporary trends

and the congregation's ministry of outreach and nurture, that will shape every aspect of its development and operation.



Developing the Program

The development of the essential elements of the early childhood ministry in a manner that will accomplish its mission and vision.



Making it work

The support of the program to assist in its success and continuous improvement so that we are able to celebrate the blessings of God's grace through our high quality Lutheran early childhood ministry.

Planning Time Line

It is recommended that twelve to eighteen months be allowed for the planning process.

Exploring the Possibility	1-2 months
Analyzing the Potential	5-7 months
Creating the Mission	2-3 months
Developing the Program	4-6 months
Making it Work	Celebrate the School's Opening

Exploring the Possibility

Purpose: To make an initial assessment of the congregation's interest in undertaking an analysis of the potential of using an early childhood ministry as an integral part of its ministry of outreach and nurture.

Form an Exploration Committee

The suggestion to form an early childhood ministry within the congregation may come from the Board of Education or School Board, a group of interested parents, or a similar group of members who are interested in expanding the congregation's ministry to young children and their families. The Exploration Committee will likely include members from these groups and others; it would be very appropriate to include qualified women on this committee.

The committee should be representative of the broader interests and attitudes of the congregation.

The Exploration Committee should consist of four to seven members who are willing to conduct the initial assessment of the congregation's interest in undertaking a more thorough analysis of issues related to using an early childhood ministry as an integral part of its ministry of outreach and nurture. Members of the committee should love the Lord and his Word, have the best interests of the congregation at heart and have the respect of others. They will help assess the congregation's readiness to move forward with the planning process through their individual and collective reactions in key areas of congregational development. Upon the recommendation of the Board of Education

or School Board, the Church Council should appoint the committee and its chairperson.

EXPLORATION COMMITTEE DUTIES

- Assess the current and future status of the congregation's ministry;
- Assess the current and future of the immediate community in which the church is located;
- Review and understand the planning process for beginning an early childhood ministry;
- Prepare a recommendation to continue or discontinue the process of planning for beginning an early childhood ministry; and
- Communicate the recommendation to the appropriate constituencies within the congregation.

Keep in mind that this is an initial assessment to determine the congregation's interest in beginning the planning process. This is not an analysis of the advisability of beginning an early childhood ministry. This analysis will be the focus of the next step in the planning process.

Begin with Prayer

To begin with prayer is to follow the Lord's command and to rest in the assurance that he will answer a believer's fervent prayer. Thank God for the opportunity to explore this ministry option and seek his guidance on all activities.

Overview the Planning Process

Each member of the Exploration Committee should look over the entire planning process to help understand the procedures for planning to begin an early childhood ministry. This overview will help place the first step into the context of the entire planning process.

Consider the Foundational Beliefs in Planning

- The basis for an effective ministry is a dynamic and helpful relationship among Christ, the servant, and those being served.
- A Lutheran early childhood ministry is operated so that a congregation is better able to carry out its mission.

These foundational beliefs are central to the planning process and to the initial determination of the congregation's readiness to consider beginning an early childhood ministry. Consider and discuss all of the Foundational Beliefs and Essential Characteristics of WELS Early Childhood Ministries (pg. 9-Chapter 1, C and D) in order to put the planning process into the perspective of the congregational ministry.

Considerations for the Exploration Committee

The following suggestions will assist the Exploration Committee complete its work in a timely and efficient manner:

Exploration Only: This is only the exploration phase. Leave the gathering of supporting information and detailed analysis to the next phase of the planning process.

Only Estimations: Detailed and exact figures and reports are not necessary in this exploration phase. That work will be undertaken in the next phase of the planning process.

Proper Understanding: Promote proper understanding of this work by emphasizing the preliminary nature of this exploratory work. This will help avoid premature hopes or uninformed opposition.

Objectivity Essential: Perhaps all of the members of the Exploration Committee already support the idea of starting an early childhood ministry. It is also possible some members of the congregation oppose that idea. Encourage all members of the committee to keep open minds and open ears as they do their work.

Sufficient Time: Allow sufficient time for exploration work. Meet regularly and do not allow unrealistic deadlines to hamper gathering of information.

Expenses: Money will need to be spent as necessary information is gathered for the report. The church council should be asked to assume these expenses.

Exploration Only: Again, remember this is only the exploration phase. Preliminary information is being gathered to build support. An idea is being explored. The report and recommendation are intended to determine the feasibility of an early childhood ministry, not make the final decision to begin this ministry.



Assess the Mission and Ministry of the Congregation

It will be helpful for each of the committee's members to consider the following set of questions individually prior to meeting as a committee. The individual answers should then be discussed with the entire committee. A consensus summary should be formulated for each question. The summary will serve as the basis for the committee's assessment, recommendation, and report to the congregation. The submission of the final report with its recommendations completes the work of the Exploration Committee.

CONGREGATIONAL MISSION AND MINISTRY ASSESSMENT

- Describe the people of the congregation. (Consider their age, socio-economic background, previous affiliation with WELS or other Christian congregations, spiritual maturity, etc.)
- Describe the history of the congregation. (Consider its age, founding, recent challenges, recent successes, growth in ministry, etc.)
- Describe the community. (Consider age of residents, socio-economic status, growth patterns, need for and availability of early childhood programs, etc.)
- What does each member of the committee believe are the strengths (advantages) of beginning an early childhood program as part of the congregation's ministry?
- What does each member of the committee believe are the special challenges facing the formation of an early childhood program as part of the congregation's ministry?
- What does each member of the committee understand is the attitude of congregational members regarding their emotional and financial support of an early childhood ministry?
- What does each member of the committee understand to be the intended purpose of an early childhood program as part of the congregation's ministry?
- What is the committee's vision for the enrollment, facilities, staff, governance, and location of this early childhood ministry?
- What does the committee believe is the congregation's commitment of time, human resources, and financial resources to undertake a thorough analysis of the foregoing issues prior to opening an early childhood ministry?
- Does the committee think the congregation should proceed with the next step of the process: Analyzing the Potential?

Next Steps

A recommendation to the appropriate decision making bodies of the congregation will include a "Go" or "Don't Go" decision to proceed with the planning process. If it is decided to go forward with the process, the next step will follow the activities outlined in **Analyzing the Potential**.

Analyzing the Potential

Purpose: To conduct a thorough analysis of congregational and community information and attitudes to determine the advisability of beginning an early childhood ministry at this time and in this place.

Form an Assessment Committee

The Assessment Committee will likely include members of the Exploration Committee. It should be a larger committee and may also involve additional congregational members, both men and women not on the committee—to assist with the various tasks involved in the analysis of the congregational and community information.

The Assessment Committee should consist of eight to twelve members. They should be willing to conduct the thorough analysis of the information and attitudes of the congregation and community regarding the advisability of beginning an early childhood ministry at this time and as part of this congregation's ministry of outreach and nurture. Members of the committee should love the Lord and his Word, have the best interests of the congregation at heart and have the respect of others.

It is important that they have a high level of commitment, good organizational and communication skills, and a track record of getting things done. Upon the recommendation of the Board of Education, the Church Council should appoint the committee and its chairperson.

The chairperson, or some other person appointed by the Church Council, will have extensive responsibilities for guiding the analysis process. This person will be responsible for assigning individual responsibilities, holding committee members accountable for those responsibilities on a timely basis, facilitating individual interviews and focus group discussions—or designating that responsibility to others, organizing the objective and subjective data into a comprehensive package of information, guiding the committee in analyzing the issues, and reporting the recommendations of the committee to the appropriate constituencies.

ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE DUTIES

- Prepare a profile of the congregation;
- Research other early childhood programs in the community;
- Research community demographics;
- Identify and schedule interviewees for individual interviews and focus groups;
- Conduct individual interviews and pulse group discussions;
- Prepare a recommendation regarding the advisability of beginning an early childhood ministry; and
- Communicate the recommendation to the appropriate constituencies within the congregation.

Begin with Prayer

Begin each meeting of the Assessment Committee with a prayer and/or Bible study that focuses on the work of the committee and the purpose of an early childhood program as an integral part of the congregation's ministry of outreach and nurture. The committee may also wish to study and discuss one of the Principles of WELS Early Childhood Ministry (pg. 10-Chapter 1, E).

Keep the committee's focus on the mission of the congregation to reach the lost and to strengthen the believers through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Consider the Foundational Beliefs in Planning

- The Word of God is applied faithfully and issues will be addressed honestly throughout the planning process.
- A Lutheran early childhood ministry is a significant and integral thrust of a congregation's ministry of outreach and nurture.
- Lutheran early childhood ministries actively minister to the family system of their students.

These foundational beliefs are central to the planning process and to the assessment of the potential for beginning an early childhood ministry. Consider and discuss all of the Foundational Beliefs and Essential Characteristics of WELS Early Childhood Ministries (pg. 9-Chapter 1, C and D) in order to put the planning process into the perspective of congregational ministry.



Profiling the Congregation

The Congregational Profile will provide a comprehensive look at the congregation. It is important to have this completed by someone who has access to the congregation's records and is thorough in research and entering the information. Copies of the completed profile should be given to each member of the Assessment Committee (Cf. Appendix 2.1 Congregational Profile or in the Chapter 2 folder) Information to be gathered will include:

- Historical information on the church
- Congregational membership and attendance trends
- Congregational membership gains and losses
- Congregational financial information

Preparing a Community Profile

The Community Profile helps the congregation understand its community area. Accurate information is important. Someone involved with the community or real estate should complete this report. Copies of the completed profile should be given to each member of the Assessment Committee. (Cf. Appendix 2.2 Community Profile or in the Chapter 2 folder)

Information to be gathered will include:

- Description of the congregation's surrounding area
- Community's population characteristics and trends
- Community's economic state
- Community's religious climate

Researching Other Schools

Someone on the Assessment Committee should research the private and church-related early childhood programs in the congregation's service area. If possible, a minimum of five programs should be surveyed in order to get a representative range of services and prices of programs in the area. A summary of this information should be prepared and distributed to each member of the Assessment Committee. (Cf. Appendix 2.3 Researching Other Schools or in the Chapter 2 folder)

Surveying Member Parents

Congregation members who have children below the age of 5 should be interviewed to determine their interest in an early childhood ministry sponsored by the congregation. This should be done anonymously. A member of the committee should tally and summarize the responses. A copy of the summary should be given to each member of the Assessment Committee. (Cf. Appendix 2.4 Parent Survey or in the Chapter 2 folder)

Surveying Parent-Friends and Neighbors

Enlist all members of the congregation to ask their non-member friends and neighbors with pre-school aged children to complete this anonymous survey. It is desirable to have a minimum of thirty returned surveys in order to get a meaningful sample. A member of the committee should tally and summarize the surveys. A copy of the summary should be given to each member of the Assessment Committee. (Cf. Appendix 2.4 Parent Survey or in the Chapter 2 folder)

Analyzing Additional Information

In addition to the aforementioned profiles and surveys, the Assessment Committee may find it helpful to consider the following additional information in order to obtain an accurate picture of the congregation's readiness to begin an early childhood ministry:

- Copy of the congregation's current budget
- Copy of the year-end financial reports for the past two years
- Copy of the congregation's annual report
- Copy of the Voter's minutes for the past four meetings
- Copy of the congregation's constitution and by-laws
- Copy of any policy manuals and position descriptions
- Copy of the salary schedule for called workers
- Anything else the committee believes would be helpful in understanding the congregation



Conducting Pulse Group Discussions

The oral comments of congregational members are an important source of information in analyzing the potential for beginning an early childhood ministry. Pulse group discussions provide an excellent source of information and help build ownership in the planning process. Three pulse groups are recommended in the planning process: parents of pre-school aged children, congregational members who do not have pre-school aged children, and the elected congregational leaders. Each pulse group should have eight to twelve participants.

The pulse group discussion is intended to gather the honest opinion of the members of the congregation on a range of issues related to the beginning of an early childhood ministry. Participants should be seated around tables in a “U” format that enables all to see each other. Participants should be encouraged to express their opinion freely and openly without fear that their opinions will be shared outside of the discussion group. The meeting should last no longer than one hour.

The facilitator of the pulse group should be able to lead a discussion without bias or interjecting his own opinions. He should be positioned at the open end of the “U” with an easel, large chart paper, and a marker. He will begin the meeting with a short explanation of the process and a prayer asking for God's blessings upon their work together. He is to write the participants' responses to the questions on the chart paper commenting only for clarification. At the conclusion of the meeting, the facilitator will thank the participants for sharing their honest opinions and assure them that their views will be considered in the analysis process. The Lord's Prayer or other similar prayer will close the meeting.

The facilitator or his assistant will transcribe the comments (without attribution) from each meeting separately. A copy of the three sets of meeting summaries should be given to each committee member. This will enable the members of the Assessment Committee to analyze the opinions of each of the three pulse groups separately. It will be important to note any similarities or outstanding differences in the views and attitudes of the groups toward the beginning of the early childhood ministry. (Cf. Appendix 2.5 Pulse Group Questions or in the Chapter 2 folder)

Conducting Individual Interviews

Another source of information important to the analysis process is gained through individual interviews. Two or more members of the Assessment Committee should be designated to conduct confidential interviews of a cross section of the congregation's members. It is recommended that ten to fifteen members be interviewed individually for thirty

minutes each. The pastor(s) and any other called worker should be provided additional time as needed for their interview. The interviewees should be assured that their comments are confidential and will not be attributed to them in any manner. Notes are taken for future reference in compiling the summary of congregational views.

Each interviewer should prepare a summary of the interviews (without attribution). The interviewers will discuss their findings following the completion of the interviews. The interviewers should then prepare a summary report of interviews for distribution to members of the Assessment Committee. (Cf. Appendix 2.6 Individual Interview Questions or in the Chapter 2 folder)

Interviewing Community Leaders

The final sources of information to be considered in the analysis phase are community leaders. Interviews should be arranged with members of the community who have a perspective that will be helpful in analyzing the potential for beginning an early childhood ministry at this time and place. (Cf. Appendix 2.7 Community Leader Interview Questions or in the Chapter 2 folder) Sources of such information should include:

- Public school educational leader
- Director of a private/parochial early childhood program
- City councilman or city planner
- Real estate agent familiar with the area
- Pastor of a growing church in the area

The interview should begin with an expression of appreciation for the meeting and an explanation of the purpose of the meeting and the analysis process. The interviewer should ask permission to take notes of the interview, thank the interviewee for his time and thoughtful information.

Interpreting the Information

The most challenging aspect of the analysis process is the interpretation of the information that has been gathered through the profiles, surveys, and interviews. After all of the information has been gathered and distributed to the members of the Assessment Committee, the committee members

should meet to study and interpret the information. To assist the interpretation, the information can be divided into two categories, community and congregational factors. Again all are encouraged to promote a climate of speaking the truth in love for the sake of effective ministry planning, particularly when considering the congregational factors.

Notes

COMMUNITY FACTORS

- Community profile
- Friend and neighbor parent survey
- Research on other schools
- Interviews with community leaders

In interpreting the community factors, committee members may consider the following questions:

- What information about our community is notable in affirming previously held opinions about the community?
- What information about our community is notable in providing new information about our community?
- What growth and traffic patterns in our community have a positive or negative impact on the establishment of a new early childhood program?
- What demographic information—size of families, age of families, socio-economic status of families, etc.—impacts the decision regarding the establishment of a new early childhood program?
- What is the present and projected future demand for early childhood programs in our community?
- What kinds of early childhood programs are over-supplied and/or under-supplied in our community?
- What are the price ranges of early childhood programs in the area?
- What is the likelihood that non-member parents will enroll their children in the congregation's early childhood program?
- What is the potential for gospel outreach into the community of a new early childhood ministry?
- What encouragement/discouragement did the community leaders provide beginning a new early childhood program as part of the congregation's ministry of outreach and nurture?

CONGREGATIONAL FACTORS

- Congregational profile
- Assessment of congregational development
- Member parent survey
- Pulse group discussions

In interpreting the congregational factors, the committee members may consider the following questions:

- What information about our congregation is notable in affirming previously held opinions about the congregation?
- What information about our congregation is notable in providing new information about our congregation?
- What information about our congregation's past, present, and future has a positive or negative impact on the establishment of a new early childhood program?
- What congregational demographic information—growth patterns, age of families, socio-economic status of families, etc.—impacts the decision regarding the establishment of a new early childhood program?
- How does the financial status of the congregation impact the decision regarding the establishment of an early childhood ministry?
- How do the congregation's physical facilities impact the establishment of an early childhood ministry?
- What is the attitude of members toward providing financial support for the early childhood ministry?
- What is the likelihood that member-parents will enroll their children in the congregation's early childhood program?
- What is the predominant attitude of the members regarding the purpose of an early childhood program?
- What encouragement/discouragement did the congregation's leaders provide to beginning a new early childhood program as part of the congregation's ministry of outreach and nurture?

Wherever possible, the decisions of the committee should be made by consensus rather than a vote. The chairman of the committee, or his designee, should serve as the facilitator of the discussion. One of the committee members should serve as the recorder of the agreed upon points that will serve as the outline for the committee's report. One or more committee members will be assigned the task of writing the report. Several drafts of the report may be necessary before final consensus is agreed upon.

The outline of the report will serve as the basis for organizing the discussion of the information. One or more meetings may be necessary for each part of the report.

Reporting Analysis

Once the committee has agreed upon the report, it should submit the report to the Board of Education and/or the Church Council. Copies of the report should be made available to all members of the Church Council. The chairman of the Assessment Committee should formally present the report and be prepared to answer questions regarding it. The Church Council should reject, amend, or adopt the report as presented by the committee.

Once the Church Council has acted upon the Assessment Committee's report, it should be distributed to members of the congregation. An open forum of the congregation's members may be held to provide an opportunity for all members to discuss the report and clarify any questions regarding it.

Following the action of the Church Council and the discussion in the open forum, the Assessment Committee's report can be submitted to the voters' assembly for action.



Suggested Report Outline

Part One

Foundations of WELS Early Childhood Ministry

1. Review of:
 - a. Scriptural Foundations
 - b. Characteristics of WELS Schools
 - c. Philosophy, Principles, and Guidelines for WELS Early Childhood Ministry
 - d. Introductory Thoughts
 - e. Expressions of Appreciation

Part Two

Analysis Process

1. Review of Foundational Beliefs for Planning
2. Summary of Analysis Process

Part Three

Community Factors

1. Discussion of Community Forum
2. Profiling Receptivity of Community

Part Four

Congregational Factors

1. Discussion of Congregational Factors
2. Profiling Receptivity of Congregation

Part Five

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Critical Concerns Regarding Beginning an Early Childhood Ministry
2. Emerging Mission/Vision for an Early Childhood Ministry
 - a. Enrollment and Outreach Potential
 - b. Program Potential
 - c. Funding Potential
 - d. Facilities Potential
3. Conducting Recommendations Regarding Beginning an Early Childhood Ministry

Next Steps

- If the congregation decides not to begin an early childhood program as part of its ministry of outreach and nurture, the issue is set aside until new circumstances arise that might warrant reconsideration of beginning an early childhood ministry.
- If the congregation decides to begin an early childhood program as part of their ministry of outreach and nurture after certain conditions are addressed, planning and work can move forward to address the conditions in a timely manner. Once these conditions have been addressed, the congregation can move forward into the *Creating the Mission/Vision* phase of the planning process.
- If the congregation decides to begin an early childhood program as part of its ministry of outreach and nurture immediately, the congregation can move forward into the *Creating the Mission/Vision* phase of the planning process.

The work of the Assessment Committee is completed upon the action of the voters. The members of the Assessment Committee should be dismissed with appreciation for their work.



Creating the Mission

Purpose: To develop the congregation's mission and vision for the early childhood ministry based upon an examination of contemporary trends and the congregation's ministry of outreach and nurture that will shape every aspect of its development and operation.

Form a Mission/Vision Task Force

The Mission/Vision Task Force may include members of the Exploration Committee or the Assessment Committee. It should be a smaller task force with a more focused job description and shorter work period. The Task Force should consist of three to five members.

Members of the committee should have:

- A high level of Biblical insight and understanding of Christ's mission for the church,
- The ability to work with concepts on a theoretical level,
- A deep commitment to Christian education and the congregation's future,
- The ability to express ideas in clear and concise language, and
- Personal maturity and sensitivity to others.

Since the final work of the Task Force will ultimately be approved by the Church Council and voters' assembly, it is not an authoritative body. Elected officers may be represented on the Task Force as well as other members of the congregation. The pastor and other called workers would be advisory. It would be highly desirable to have at least two women on the Task Force. If possible, all members should have participated in the previous activities of the planning process.

TASK FORCE DUTIES

- Consideration of trends in the world, education, and the church that may impact the establishment of an early childhood program as part of the congregation's ministry of outreach and nurture,
 - Drafting and refining a statement of mission, vision, and objectives for the early childhood ministry to present to the Church Council and congregation for acceptance.
-

Begin with Prayer

Begin each meeting of the Task Force with a prayer and/or Bible study that focuses on the work of the committee and the purpose of an early childhood program as an integral part of the congregation's ministry of outreach and nurture. The initial

meeting of the Task Force may begin with the Bible study “Mission Focused Ministry” (Cf. Appendix 2.8 Mission Focused Ministry or the Chapter 2 folder). Keep the committee’s focus on the mission of the congregation to reach the lost and to strengthen the believers through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Lift the vision of the congregation beyond the local circumstances to the world and community in which we live.

Consider the Foundational Beliefs

- A Lutheran early childhood ministry is a significant and integral thrust of a congregation’s ministry of outreach and nurture
- A Lutheran early childhood ministry actively ministers to the family system of their children
- A Lutheran early childhood ministry is operated so that a congregation is better able to carry out its mission with the early childhood ministry.

These foundational beliefs are central to the planning process and to the creation of a mission for an early childhood ministry. In addition to these foundational beliefs, the Task Force will want to consider and discuss the following trends and issues that impact the establishment of an early childhood ministry.

Trends Impacting Lutheran Early Childhood Ministries

The Task Force will want to consider ministry within the broader context of trends within American society, education, and the church as it considers the mission for its early childhood ministry and develops a vision for the manner in which that ministry will enhance the congregation’s ministry of outreach and nurture. As each area is considered, the Task Force will discuss:

- How relevant is that trend (issue) within our community and ministry?
- What impact does that have on the establishment of an early childhood ministry within our congregation?
- How will our early childhood ministry’s vision be shaped in order to respond to that trend (issue)?

Examining Trends in America

Consider directions in which American society is moving in the 21st century.

- Changes in America’s ethnic composition
- Cultural changes
- Generational changes (Boomers, Generation X, Millennialists)
- Exchange of wealth
- Changes in family structure
- Multi-income households
- Global transiency of families

Examining Trends in Education

Consider these emerging issues in education nationally and within local communities.

- Parental concerns for the safety and security of their children
- Parental concerns for the quality of education and care of their children
- Parental desire for enduring values as an integral part of their children’s education
- Influence of technology as a means of enhancing communication and the sharing of information
- The importance of relationships in a highly technological and mobile society
- Educational trends/issues in the community are:

Examining Trends in the Church

Consider trends within America's churches as they impact the mission and vision of the congregation's early childhood ministry.

- A movement from sustaining the church's heritage to reaching the lost with the gospel
- A shift from a clergy-dominated congregation to a member-centered congregation
- Churches that are regionally centered rather than neighborhood centered
- Increased attention to ministries that are responsive to the needs of their community
- Ministries that are more focused on the greater community rather than primarily serving their own members

Developing the Mission Statement

A mission statement should clearly state the purpose for which the early childhood ministry exists. Ideally, it should be brief so that members can easily recall it when called upon to answer the question: "Why does this congregation operate an early childhood ministry?"

Since the early childhood ministry is a part of the congregation's ministry of outreach and nurture, the mission statement should reflect the congregation's mission statement. Since the early childhood ministry also provides an education and care for young children, it will not be identical to the congregation's mission statement. It is recommended that Task Force members:

- Brainstorm thoughts that they would want to have included in the mission statement.
- After the brainstorming is completed, each member of the Task Force should write his/her version of the mission statement.
- These statements should then be given to one member of the Task Force
- This Task Force member will write a draft mission statement based upon the versions submitted by the Task Force members.
- The draft mission statement then will be submitted to the Task Force for final polishing. (Cf. Appendix 2.9 Mission Statement or the Chapter 2 folder)



Developing the Vision Statements

The vision statements should answer the question: "What will our early childhood ministry look like in five years?" The members of the Task Force should consider the manner in which the trends and issues impacting American society, education, and the church give direction to the vision for their early childhood ministry. Vision statements may be developed in the following areas:

- Governance and leadership of the early childhood ministry
- Program of the early childhood ministry
- Enrollment in the early childhood ministry
- Staffing for the early childhood ministry
- Curriculum of the early childhood ministry
- Outreach activities for the early childhood ministry
- Family ministry and parent involvement in the early childhood ministry
- Facilities and furnishings for the early childhood ministry

The members of the Task Force should take each area and brainstorm ideas that express their vision for the state of the early childhood ministry in five years. After all areas have been brainstormed, return to each area for further discussion and refinement of ideas. If at all possible, consensus should be achieved in each area. Assign each member of the Task Force the responsibility to write a vision statement for one or more areas. Copies of each draft statement should be distributed to all Task Force members prior to the next meeting for consideration and discussion.

After the Task Force has reached agreement on the content of each vision statement, one member should be assigned the responsibility of writing the final copy.

Developing the Objectives

The objectives give direction to the vision statements. Objectives are to be achieved in order to realize the vision. Each vision statement will have two or more objective statements that will be necessary to actualize the vision.

Each member of the Task Force should take one or more Vision Statements and determine what objectives would need achievement in order to realize the vision. The objective should be broad in nature. Care will be taken that the objective statements are not too narrow and become action plans.

Draft copies of the objective statement should be distributed to all Task Force members prior to the next meeting for consideration and discussion. After the Task Force has reached agreement on the content of each objective, one member should be assigned the responsibility for writing the final copy.

Developing the Action Plans

The Action Plans will provide the step-by-step procedures through which the congregation will be able to accomplish its objectives and achieve the vision for their early childhood ministry. After the objectives have been established, each member of the Task Force should take one or more vision statements and write the action steps necessary to accomplish each objective. These action steps should identify what needs to be done, who is to be responsible for doing it, by when it is to be completed, and what resources (human, financial, etc.) will be necessary to accomplish it. A simple action planning grid may be developed for use by the Task Force members.

Draft copies of the action plans should be distributed to all Task Force members prior to the next meeting for consideration and discussion. After the Task Force has reached consensus

on the content of the action plans, the action plans may be placed in a binder together with Board of Education or the Church Council. If desired, the Task Force may also develop a timeline of the action plans as part of its presentation.

Reporting

Once the Task Force has completed its work, it should submit the report to the Board of Education and/or the Church Council. Copies of the report should be made available to all members of the Church Council. The chairman of the Task Force should formally present the report and be prepared to answer questions regarding it. The Church Council should reject, amend, or adopt the report as presented by the Task Force.

Once the Church Council has acted upon the Task Force's reports, it should be distributed to members of the congregation. An open forum of the congregation's members may be held to provide an opportunity for all members to discuss the report and clarify any questions regarding it.

Following the action of the Church Council and the discussion in the open forum, the Task Force's report can be presented to the Voters' Assembly for approval and implementation.



Next Steps

If the congregation adopts the mission, vision, objectives, and action plans for the early childhood program as part of its ministry of outreach and nurture, work can move forward to carry out the action plans in a timely manner. The appropriate body or person will make the assignments for the implementation of the action plans. The congregation can move into the *Structure and Strategies* phase of the planning process.

The work of the Task Force is completed upon the action of the voters.

The members of the Task Force should be dismissed with the appreciation for their work.

ministry staff to develop the strategies based upon the mission and vision established by the congregation. A critical decision of this phase of the planning process will be to determine who has primary responsibility for completing it. Under any circumstance, the ministry of the early childhood ministry should always be a partnership of all members, called workers, volunteers, parents, and children.

Work Teams

Six major program areas are to be developed at this stage of the planning process. A Work Team should be established for each area. Guide questions have been provided for each area to assist the Work Team.

Congregational work teams will have the task of preparing for the opening of the school by creating the conceptual design for the essential elements of the early childhood ministry. Each team should have 3-5 people who grasp the congregation's mission and vision for the early childhood ministry and are highly motivated to see it implemented. They will commit significant time and energy to carry out the work assigned to them.

The members of the work teams should have:

- A demonstrated ability to apply the Word of God;
- Enthusiasm for Christian education;
- Knowledge and skill relating to the area of work;
- The ability to plan collaboratively and work independently;
- The ability to put ideas into practice; and
- A track record of timely completion of tasks.

The proposals of the work teams will ultimately be approved by the Church Council and the voters' assembly; therefore, the work teams are not decision making bodies. Their membership should be open to men and women in the congregation who are qualified for a given area of work and who have participated in the previous activities of the planning process.



Developing the Program

Purpose: To design the essential program for the early childhood ministry.

Organizing for Action

As with the other steps of the planning process, this step has been designed to continue the extensive involvement of congregational members in planning for the early childhood ministry to open. This stage of the process will require extensive time and somewhat specialized skills. It will be important to keep this in mind while selecting the members of the Work Team.

The Task Force will need to decide how detailed to go with the planning prior to the calling of permanent staff and what planning they want the staff to do. This planning process has intentionally involved the entire congregation because the early childhood ministry is part of the congregation's ministry. This may be a point at which the committee asks the called, trained, professional

Begin with Prayer

Begin each meeting of the work teams with a prayer and/or Bible study that focuses on the work of the committee and the purpose of an early childhood program as an integral part of the congregation's ministry of outreach and nurture. Keep the work teams' focus on the mission of the congregation to reach the lost and to strengthen the believers through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Program Areas

Six major program areas are to be developed. They each have sub-areas to assist the work teams as they develop the policies and procedures necessary in each area. The program areas and their sub-areas are:

1. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

- a. Mission and Vision
- b. Congregational Organization
- c. Policies and Procedures
- d. Budgeting to Begin

2. STAFFING AND TEAM BUILDING

- a. Mission and Vision
- b. Profiling Staff Positions
- c. Building the Ministry Team
- d. Working Together

3. CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- a. Mission and Vision
- b. Desired Results
- c. Outlining the Curriculum
- d. Pursuing Results

4. OUTREACH AND ENROLLMENT BUILDING

- a. Mission and Vision
- b. Reaching in to Members
- c. Reaching Out to the Community
- d. Recruiting, Enrolling, Serving

5. FAMILY MINISTRY AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- a. Mission and Vision
- b. Understanding Families
- c. Serving the Family System through Education
- d. Serving the Family System through Intervention

6. FACILITIES AND FURNISHINGS

- a. Mission and Vision
- b. Student Space
- c. Program Space
- d. The Building and Grounds

Addressing the Program Areas

Each work team will address one of the program areas. The members of the work team should have some knowledge or specialized skill in the area of their assignment. The work teams may use the following questions to guide them in the development of the structure and the strategies applicable for their area of responsibility. Although the list of questions may not be complete, they will assist the work teams in addressing the issues within each program area.



1. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

- a. Mission and Vision
 1. How will the mission and vision of the early childhood's ministry shape the development of its governance and leadership?
 2. What major thrusts of the early childhood's ministry need to be reflected in its organizational structure?
 3. What safeguards need to be built into the organizational structure to insure that the early childhood program maintains its focus on its mission and vision for ministry?
- b. Congregational Organization
 1. How will the early childhood ministry fit best in the present organizational structure of the congregation?
 2. What, if any, changes need to be made in the congregational structure to accommodate the early childhood ministry?
 3. Should the early childhood ministry be governed by an existing board/committee or should a new one be established?
 4. What sub-committees or advisory groups need to be established to emphasize critical areas of the early childhood ministry?
 5. What will be the membership, roles, and responsibilities of each board/committee/advisory group?
 6. What issues need to be addressed with state or local regulatory agencies to satisfy legal requirements for beginning the early childhood ministry?
- c. Policies and Procedures
 1. What are the areas of the early childhood's ministry for which policies and procedures need to be established at this time?

2. How can the policies reflect the gospel-dominated tone of the early childhood ministry's mission statement?
3. Who will develop and who will approve these policies and procedures?
4. How will these policies and procedures be communicated?

- d. Budgeting to Begin
 1. What are the anticipated expenses prior to the beginning of the early childhood ministry's first year of operation?
 2. What are the anticipated expenses of the first year of operation?
 3. What is the anticipated income from each source—e.g. tuition, congregational budget, gifts?

2. STAFFING AND TEAM BUILDING

- a. Mission and Vision
 1. What priorities for ministry are established by the mission and vision?
 2. How will these priorities affect the calling and hiring of the staff for the early childhood ministry?
- b. Profiling Staff Positions
 1. What positions are needed immediately to begin the early childhood ministry?
 2. What qualifications will be required of these positions?
 3. On what basis will it be determined whether these positions are called, hired, or volunteers?
 4. What tasks will be distributed among these positions?
 5. What additional positions may be added in the near future?
 6. Who will develop the job descriptions for each position?
 7. On what basis will salary and benefits be determined?

- c. Building the Ministry Team
 1. At what point will the first people be called, hired, or volunteer?
 2. When and on what basis will additional staff be added?
 3. What services/ceremonies or symbols/rights of entry mark the addition of staff?
 4. How will the staff be oriented to the early childhood's philosophies, mission, and vision?
 5. What immediate and on-going professional development will be done?

- d. Working Together
 1. How often will the leadership team meet?
 2. How often and when will the staff meet?
 3. What effort will be made to involve the staff in planning and decision making?
 4. What policies are necessary for organizational stability and staff harmony?
 5. How will policies be communicated to the staff?
 6. How will performance be evaluated and feedback given?
 7. What provisions will be made to support and encourage the staff?

3. CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- a. Mission and Vision
 1. How will the mission and vision be carried out in the instructional program of the early childhood ministry?
 2. How will the Philosophy, Principles, and Guidelines for WELS Early Childhood Ministries (pg. 10-Chapter 1, E) be carried out in the instructional program of the early childhood ministry?

3. What elements of the early childhood ministry's vision and objectives will influence its curriculum and instruction?
- b. Desired Results
 1. What important beliefs and values will the children reflect in their Christian character when they leave the early childhood program?
 2. What essential knowledge and skills will the children be able to demonstrate when they leave the early childhood program?

 - c. Outlining the Curriculum
 1. What core activities will be a part of the early childhood program in order to achieve the desired results?
 2. What will be the scope and sequence of materials and activities in the early childhood program?
 3. What materials, equipment, and technology will be used to support the activities of the early childhood program?
 4. What special programs will set this early childhood ministry apart from others?
 5. What specific national, state or local requirements are in place?

 - d. Pursuing the Results
 1. How will the children's development be communicated to the parents and children?
 2. What special provisions will be made for children who have special academic and social/emotional needs?
 3. How will the curriculum and activities be evaluated?
 4. What on-going assessment and planning will promote quality and continuous improvement?

4. OUTREACH AND ENROLLMENT BUILDING

- a. Mission and Vision
 1. What emphasis does reaching out to the community have in the mission of the early childhood ministry?
 2. How does the early childhood ministry's mission and vision coincide with the congregation's mission and vision?
 3. How will the early childhood ministry's mission and vision set the tone for an outreaching culture throughout the program?
- b. Reaching in to Members
 1. What are the characteristics and needs of the member families with children?
 2. What will be done to meet the needs of families with preschool aged children?
 3. How will families with preschool aged children be encouraged to enroll in the congregation's early childhood ministry?
 4. What efforts will be made to build member awareness and satisfaction with the early childhood ministry?
 5. How will the early childhood ministry and its staff serve all of the members of the congregation?
- c. Reaching out to the Community
 1. How has the church and early childhood ministry's community area been defined?
 2. What are the characteristics and needs of the families in that area?
 3. What honest fears exist about actively recruiting community families for an early childhood ministry?
 4. What excites the leaders about serving community families?
5. How will the program be designed to effectively serve community families?
6. How will the school be promoted within the community?
7. What strategies will be developed to assimilate community families into the ministry of your congregation?
- d. Recruiting, Enrolling, Serving
 1. Who will primarily be responsible for leading as the early childhood ministry's evangelist and enrollment builder?
 2. What time and resources will this person be given to lead?
 3. How will the other agencies of the congregation collaborate in outreach?
 4. How will public and social media be used to create awareness of the congregation's early childhood ministry?
 5. What print, technology or electronic materials will be developed to communicate the message of this ministry?
 6. How will prospects be identified and contacted?
 7. What will be the key elements in a visit with a prospective family?
 8. What follow-up strategies will be used with prospects?
 9. What role and responsibility does every teacher and staff member have in an outreach oriented early childhood ministry?
 10. What are realistic expectations for non-member children and their families?
 11. How will the program minister to the family system of the children enrolled?
 12. What will be the pastor's role in the early childhood ministry?
 13. What criteria will be used to measure effectiveness?

5. FAMILY MINISTRY AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

a. Mission and Vision

1. How does the mission and vision address ministry to the entire family?
2. What gives this early childhood ministry special opportunities to serve the family?
3. How will this be a “family friendly” early childhood ministry?
4. How will the early childhood families and the congregation interact?

b. Understanding Families

1. What are the characteristics of healthy Christian families?
2. What are the characteristics of the families of this congregation?
3. What are the characteristics of the families of this community?
4. What are the most critical needs of the families to be served by this early childhood ministry?
5. How will this early childhood ministry address these critical needs?

c. Serving the Family System through Education

1. How will the teachers and staff of this early childhood ministry also be family ministers?
2. What training will be provided for them to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to serve as family ministers?
3. What should all enrolled families expect from the family ministry of this early childhood ministry?
4. How will God’s design for the family be taught to the children and their families?
5. What efforts will be made to support and strengthen the role of parents?
6. What activities and programs will bring families together or promote family life?
7. What activities and programs will bring families of young children together with families of older children?



- d. Serving the Family System through Interaction
 1. How will the teachers and staff recognize family challenges?
 2. What steps will pastors, teachers and staff take to support families?
 3. What referrals and resources will the pastor, teachers, and staff make available to assist and support families?

6. FACILITIES AND FURNISHINGS

- a. Mission and Vision
 1. How will the early childhood ministry's mission and vision influence the facilities/furnishings?
 2. What first impression is intended by the appearance of the early childhood ministry?
 3. What standards of quality should the facilities and furnishings to reflect?
- b. Student Space
 1. What is the projected enrollment for the first 3 years?
 2. What are the recommended space requirements per student child in the *WELS Standards for Early Childhood Ministries* and the state's early childhood licensing agency?
 3. How many classrooms are envisioned?
 4. How many children will be in each classroom?
 5. How will the children store their materials and other possessions?
 6. Where will the students eat their snacks/lunch?
- c. Program Space
 1. How will the classroom be organized for learning?
 2. What space will be needed by the teachers and staff for planning and teaching?
 3. What programs or equipment will require dedicated space in each classroom?

4. What flexible space is needed in each classroom?
 5. What flexible space is needed for the ECM center?
 6. What space is available for administrative offices?
 7. Where will the materials and equipment be stored?
 8. What considerations have been made for accommodating parents as they enter the center? (Parent information boards, a space for parents to gather, etc.)
 9. What equipment and space are needed for parents to sign-in and sign-out?
 10. What equipment and space will be needed for parent and family activities?
- d. The Building and Grounds
 1. What local, state, or federal codes apply to the use of the building for early childhood education?
 2. What remodeling or construction is necessary to comply with the codes and to provide adequate space for the program?
 3. What cosmetic improvements would make the building more inviting and pleasant for the children, parents, and guests?
 4. Who will be responsible for cleaning and maintaining the building?
 5. Where will a safe play area and equipment be?
 6. How should traffic flow and parking occur?
 7. What signage is desirable inside and outside of the building?
 8. What plans need to be made for improving and upgrading in the future?

- e. Furnishings
 1. Do the furnishings add to young children’s play, enjoyment, exploration, discovery, and learning?
 2. Are the furnishings developmentally and age appropriate?
 3. Do the furnishings convey quality, safety, functionality, versatility, durability?
 4. Are the furnishings aesthetically pleasing?
 5. Are the furnishings easy to clean and repair?

Making it Work

Purpose: To thank and praise God for the gift of a new Lutheran early childhood ministry, to build an effective ministry team, to adjust to meet present needs, and to determine an agenda for the future.

Celebration

It is appropriate to thank and praise God who has blessed the congregation with the gift of a new tool for its ministry of outreach and nurture. A service of thanksgiving at the opening of the early childhood center will include appropriate music, Scripture readings, prayers, and sermon that celebrate the early childhood ministry as a gift of God’s grace and dedicate it to his service. An open house or celebratory dinner is also appropriate at which the members of the various committees can be recognized for their service in guiding the development of the early childhood ministry.

This celebration can also provide an opportunity to welcome members of the community to the worship service and the open house for the early childhood center. Non-member parents of children enrolled in the center might receive special recognition and welcome. The teachers and the staff can take a prominent role in welcoming newcomers and members to the early childhood center to introduce them to this new ministry of the congregation.

Meeting Present Needs

Regular staff meetings should enable all members of the staff to discuss issues of current importance to the operation of the early childhood ministry and to be a part of the decision-making process. Decisions are often best made by those closest to the implementation of those decisions. The director of the early childhood ministry should prepare a schedule of regular meetings of the entire staff and provide a written agenda in advance for those meetings. Recommendations of the early childhood staff can be taken to the appropriate decision making board or committee. Decisions of the board or committee should then be communicated to all of the appropriate people.

Additional Resources

Additional resources to help the work teams are available throughout this handbook, from the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools’ office, and from the Commission on Lutheran Schools’ website.

Included are samples of mission, vision, and objective statements along with other valuable tools (Appendix2-3.5).

As stated previously, the planning process is best undertaken with the assistance of a FWLS consultant. **For more information on FWLS, contact the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools.** If it is not possible to engage the services of a **FWLS** consultant, a knowledgeable member of the congregation should be assigned the responsibility to guide the planning process.

Notes

Team Building

The first year of operation is critical to the effective operation of the congregation's early childhood ministry. Attitudes and behaviors are established during this first year. It is, therefore, crucial that attention be given to developing attitudes and behaviors that enhance the congregation's ministry to young children and their families during this first year of operation.

Regular staff in-service activities should be planned and implemented. The following topics may be used as part of the in-service activities to help focus the staff's attention on its ministry of outreach to the community and the Christian nurture of the children and their families.

The Planning Continues

Train the staff to implement the Mission, Vision, and Objectives of the early childhood ministry in ongoing program development, curriculum planning, and instructional procedures.

Different People—Different Gifts—One Team

Build a ministry team through Bible study, personality assessment, and identification of spiritual gifts.

Outreach Never Ends

Recruiting and retaining students is everyone's job. Establish a culture that is infused with the attitudes and actions of Gospel outreach by teachers, parents, and children.

Serving the Family System

Understanding the dynamics of the family as a system and developing strategies for ministering to the family through education and intervention.

Other in-service topics may be selected as determined by the interests and needs of the teachers and the staff. Guest speakers or members of the staff may present topics of interest and prepared programs. Topics should provide opportunity for spiritual growth as well as address issues for professional growth. Time and appropriate compensation should

be provided to enable all of the staff to participate in the in-service activities. Staff members who are salaried by the hour should receive their regular compensation for attending in-service activities. In-service activities should be scheduled in a manner that best enables the participation of all members of the staff.

Determining an Agenda for the Future

Continuous improvement is critical to maintaining the quality of the congregation's early childhood ministry. Each year, the leaders should conduct an evaluation of their ministry with the goal of identifying improvement objectives for the future. The evaluation process should include an evaluation instrument that involves parents, members, friends, and the staff. (See example in the Appendix page 2.1 or in the Chapter 2 folder)

When improvement objectives have been identified, the director, in consultation with the governing board or committee, will assign responsibility for addressing those objectives, establish timelines for achieving the objectives, and allocate the appropriate resources for undertaking the work necessary to achieve the objectives. A record of the objectives and their completion will be maintained by the director as an indicator of the on-going improvement efforts.

By the time that the early childhood ministry is in its fourth year of operation, it is time to do a more thorough self-study of the program. *The WELS Standards for Early Childhood Ministries and Self-Study Guidelines* (included within this manual) are a helpful resource to assist the staff and the board or committee do a thorough analysis of the ministry and develop a plan for on-going improvement.

The saying: "If an organization is not going forward, it's going backward," is appropriate in describing our early childhood ministries. The needs and expectations of children, families, and communities are continually changing. A commitment to the continuous improvement of the ECM is critical to the development of an agenda for the future.

A. Congregational Profile

Purpose: The primary purpose of the congregational profile is to provide a picture of the current ministry of our congregation based upon its past and present ministry activities. A secondary purpose is to provide a database upon which to gauge progress in the congregation's ministry of outreach and nurture.

Process: Assign the responsibility for compiling the statistics to one committee member knowledgeable of the congregation's past and present ministry. Each member of the Assessment Committee should receive a copy of the completed *Congregational Profile*.

I. Historical Background of the Church

- a. The first services were conducted in _____ (year).
- b. The congregation became self-supporting in _____ (year). [If applicable]
- c. Our congregation has met in the following locations:

Location	Years
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____

- d. Our present buildings were constructed in:

Year	Description of Facilities
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- e. The most recent discussion of expanding our facilities occurred in _____ (year). The general conclusion at that time concerning future facilities was:

- f. The most significant event(s)/crises to affect our church in the last 3-5 years has (have) been (e.g. changes in pastorates, community, budgetary stress, internal conflict(s):

A. Congregational Profile

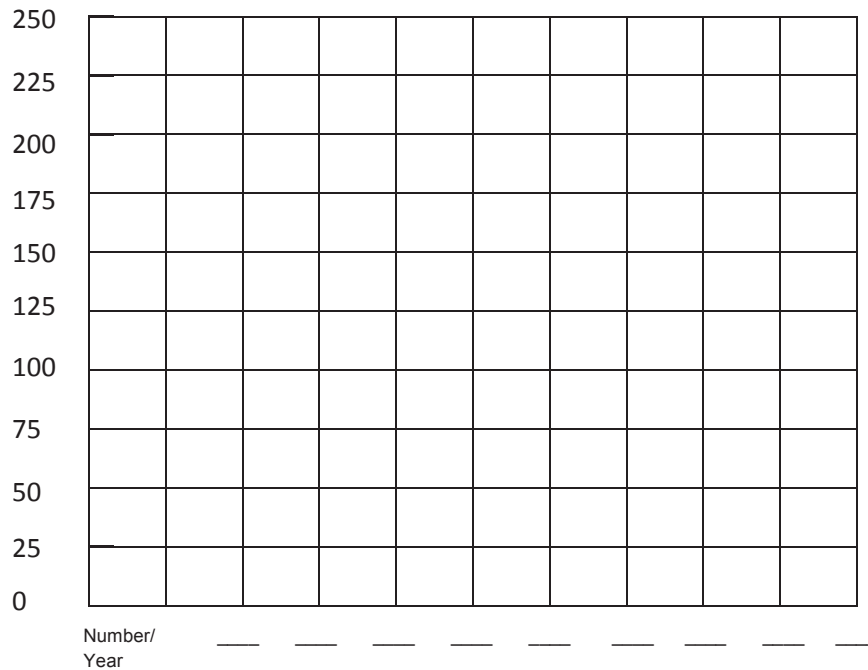
II. Membership and Attendance Information

Use the graphs below to compile congregation membership trends

Membership and Attendance Trends

	Baptized Members	Communicant Members	Avg. Sunday Church Attendance/ Week	Avg. Bible Class Attendance/ Week	Avg. Sunday School Attendance/ Week	Lutheran Elementary School Enrollment (if applicable)
4 years ago						
3 years ago						
2 years ago						
1 year ago						
This year						
Net gain (loss)						

Congregational Membership and Attendance Trends



A. Congregational Profile

Communicant Membership Gains

	Adults Confirmed	Profession of Faith	Transfers In	Children Confirmed
Year-to-date				
1 year ago				
2 years ago				
3 years ago				
4 years ago				
5 years ago				
Total				
% of total new members				

Communicant Membership Losses

	Deaths	Transfers Out	Releases	Excommunication/ Removal
Year-to-date				
1 year ago				
2 years ago				
3 years ago				
4 years ago				
5 years ago				
Total				
% of total losses				

A. Congregational Profile

III. Financial Background

Provide a five-year prospective of your congregation's financial condition

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Total Income					
Total Offerings					
Salaries and Benefits					
Missions (WELS)					
Other Outside Purposes					
Mortgage					
Year-end balance					
Percentage for staff					
Percentage for Mission and Other Outside Purposes					

B. Community Profile

Name of Congregation: _____

Location of Church: _____

Name and distance to closest WELS churches:

_____ miles

_____ miles

_____ miles

I. Parish Area

Define/describe the area served by your congregation. Provide a map that outlines the area and on which you identify area churches, growth sectors, commercial sectors, major traffic routes, as well as both natural and man-made barriers.

What percentage of your congregation lives within this parish area? _____%

Your comments:

B. Community Profile

II. Population (Numbers, Characteristics, and Patterns)

	10 years ago	5 years ago	Today	Projected (5 years)
POPULATION (in numbers)				
Target Area				
Persons				
Households				
City/Metro/SMSA*				
County				
ETHNIC MAKE-UP (in percentages)				
Caucasian				
African American				
Hispanic				
Asian				
Native American				
Other (_____)				
POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS (in percentages)				
Singles				
Young families				
Single parent homes				
Married (no children)				
Retirees				
Wage Earners				
Professional				
White Collar				
Blue Collar				

* Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area

B. Community Profile

Current Information:

How many new people (households) move in each month? _____

Are the majority of these **Renters** or **Homeowners**? (Circle One)

Identify any major issues of concern in the community during the past several years (social, educational, political, religious):

Your comments:

III. Economic

The unemployment rate for the target area/city/county (circle one) is _____ %

The current unemployment rate for the state is _____ %

The average cost of a three-four bedroom home is \$ _____

Describe any employment changes in existing businesses in the area:

What is known about new business development in the area?

B. Community Profile

NEW HOUSING STARTS			
	This year	Last year	Two years ago
Single family homes			
Duplex			
Multi-family units			

Your comments:

IV. Religion

List all (significant) churches in the target area:

Name	Age	Size 10 years ago	Size today	Worship Attendance	Comments

C. Researching Other Early Childhood Programs

Name of school: _____

Address: _____

_____ Private _____ Franchise _____ Faith-based
(Affiliation: _____ Affiliation: _____)

Distance from proposed site of new early childhood center: _____

Service area: _____

Tuition/fees charged: _____

Enrollment: _____

How has their enrollment changed in recent years?

Describe the program offered to children and families:

Staff

_____ Teachers
 _____ Full-time _____ Part-time
_____ Support Staff

Reputation

How is this program regarded in the community?

C. Researching Other Early Childhood Programs

Evaluate their facilities:

What can we learn from them?

D. Parent Survey

8. What travel distance would prevent you from sending your child to the new Lutheran early childhood center? _____ miles

9. Do you believe that a Lutheran early childhood center would be successful in this community? Yes/No

Why or why not: _____

10. Would you consider sending your children to a new Lutheran early childhood center?

_____ Definitely not _____ Probably not _____ Unsure
_____ Probably would _____ Definitely would

11. What best describes your family?

_____ Married with children _____ Single parent _____ Blended family
_____ Unmarried with children

12. Are you regularly attending a church in the area? Yes/No If so, which one?

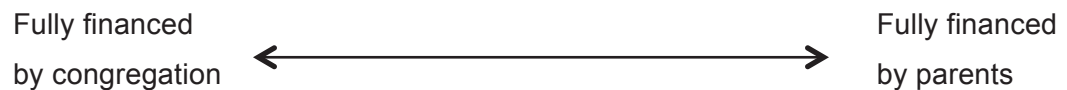
13. For our family to successfully worship together we would like:

_____ Reserved section in church
_____ Nursery for children up to 3 years old
_____ during worship service
_____ during Bible hour
_____ Children's messages that include children under three
_____ Worship helps for young children
_____ Cry room for parents and infants
_____ Sunday school class for parents and very young children
_____ Other _____

Comments:

E. Pulse Group Questions

1. When you think of your church, what is the first thing that comes to mind?
2. What do you understand to be the mission of your congregation?
3. What are the top 5 blessings this congregation has experienced in the last 5 years?
4. What was the biggest challenge this congregation faced in the last 5 years?
5. What concerns you most about the future of your congregation?
6. What seems to be your congregation's best opportunities in the future?
7. What would be the advantages to this congregation of operating an early childhood ministry?
8. What would be the obstacles to this congregation of operating an early childhood ministry?
9. How would an early childhood ministry help or hinder this congregation in carrying out its mission?
10. If an early childhood ministry would be started, how should it be financed? (You may consider using the following continuum and asking the participants to identify where they think the financing should be)



11. If the congregation would determine to begin an early childhood ministry, what do you believe its program should be? (In order to get their thinking started, you may suggest that early childhood ministries range from 2 or 3 ½ days per week to full-day child care; and that the ages range from infants to children 3 or 4 years old.)
12. If the congregation would determine to begin an early childhood ministry, when do you think that it should begin operation?
13. Based upon the information that you have at this time, would you be in favor of your congregation beginning an early childhood ministry as a part of its ministry of outreach and nurture? Why or why not?

F. Individual Interview Questions

1. How long and in what capacity have you been associated with this congregation?
2. What do you love about this church?
3. What disappoints you or concerns you about this church?
4. What is this congregation doing very well right now?
5. What does this congregation need to do better in the future?
6. What relationship have you or members of your family had with Lutheran early childhood ministries?
7. What kind of experience was it?
8. What do you think causes Lutheran congregations to operate an early childhood ministry?
9. What would be the major benefit for your congregation in operating an early childhood ministry?
10. How do you think an early childhood ministry would help your congregation reach out to the community?
11. How do you think an early childhood ministry would help your congregation minister to families?
12. What would be the major obstacle for your congregation in operating an early childhood ministry?
13. If your congregation begins an early childhood ministry, what do you believe its program should be? (In order to get their thinking started, you may suggest that early childhood ministries range from 2 or 3 ½ days per week to full-day child care; and that the ages range from infants to children 3 or 4 years old.)
14. If an early childhood ministry would be started, how should it be financed? (You may consider using the following continuum and asking the participants to identify where they think the financing should be.)

Fully financed by congregation ←—————→ Fully financed by parents
15. Would you be willing to provide financial support for the new early childhood ministry in addition to your regular offerings?
16. Would you recommend that your congregation begin an early childhood ministry? Why or why not?
17. If so, when do you think the early childhood ministry should open?
18. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

F. Community Leader Interview Questions

1. What are the responsibilities of your position?
2. What contact have you had with _____ Lutheran Church?
3. What is the reputation of _____ Lutheran Church in this community?
4. What is your understanding of the demographic (population, socio-economic level, etc.) trends in the area served by _____ Lutheran Church?
5. _____ Lutheran Church is considering starting an early childhood ministry as a part of its outreach ministry in the community and its ministry to families. What is your opinion of the need for an additional early childhood program in the area served by them?
6. What kinds of programs are most needed by the people in the area served by _____ Lutheran Church? (In order to get their thinking started, you may suggest that early childhood ministries range from 2 or 3 ½ days per week to full-day child care; and that the ages range from infants to children 3 or 4 years old.)
7. What will be the most important considerations for parents in determining their use of a church-sponsored early childhood programs?
8. Are there additional issues that _____ Lutheran Church should consider in making a decision regarding the starting of an early childhood ministry?
9. Would you recommend that _____ Lutheran Church start an early childhood ministry at this time in its present location?
10. Is there anything else that you might like to add?

G. Mission Focused Ministry—A Bible Study

Jesus' Mission:

Luke 19:10: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Notes:

Point: Jesus came for the sole purpose of seeking and saving the lost. In Matthew 9:36-38, we read that Jesus had compassion on the crowds "because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." He said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few" and asked them to pray for workers.

Connection: Who are the lost in your world today? Who are the workers that Jesus prayed for?

Discuss: What does "seek" mean in my personal daily life? What does it mean in the daily schedule of ministry in our school?

Mark 2:17b: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (See also Luke 5:32)

Notes:

Point: Jesus' call is his call to sinners with the gospel's powerful invitation to penitent faith. By sinners Jesus means those who confess and repent of their sin as opposed to those who are hypocritically "righteous." Read also Matthew 11:18-19.

Connection: Who in our present day society parallels the "sinners" at Levi's dinner?

Discuss: What deliberate plans do we have to call such sinners? What obstacles must we overcome as we seek the satisfied self-righteous? What stands in the way of our church as it seeks to reach people whose lives have been unraveled by sin?

G. Mission Focused Ministry—A Bible Study

Luke 4:43: “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.”

Notes:

Point: Notice how Jesus attaches his statement of mission, “that is why I was sent” to his desire to preach the good news to other towns also.

Connection: When ministry is going well in our school we easily become congregational-concentrating our prayers, efforts and resources only on our own church. What percentage of our attention and resources might be directed toward “preaching the good news to other towns also?”

Discuss: How effectively are you able to reach out to others who live more than walking distance to your church? How might your congregation effectively reach out to others in the community?

John 17:12: While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me.”

Notes:

Point: Jesus’ protection and safekeeping of his disciples is a part of what we call nurture ministry. Nurture is taking care of those who have been brought to faith and causing their faith to grow. Jesus said he did this nurturing by means of the name God gave him. The name Jesus, of course, is not just a reference to his personal name. It means his reputation, including not only his personal names (Matthew 1:21) but also the written and spoken message that announces his saving work (Acts 4:12).

Connection: How do we use the Word of God to strengthen the faith of our students? How do we use the Word of God to strengthen the faith of the parents and families of our students? How do we purposefully integrate all of the school’s curriculum and activities in and through the Word of God?

G. Mission Focused Ministry—A Bible Study

Jesus' Commission

Deuteronomy 6:6-7: “These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Notes:

Point: God gave parents the primary responsibility for the Christian education of their children. They were to nurture their children's faith by integrating every activity with his Word so that they children would learn to apply the truths of God's Word in every aspect of their lives.

Connection: Today's families are stressed and harassed in ways greater than previous generations. Parents do not have the models of Christian parenting as described in Deuteronomy to copy in establishing a Christ-centered home for their families. Does our school (do we, as teachers) have a responsibility to support and assist parents in establishing a Christ-centered home? If so, what can we do to assist parents in their roles as their children's primary educators? How can we make our school more family-friendly in order to support parents in establishing and maintaining a Christ-centered home?

Matthew 28:19-20: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

Notes:

Point: Jesus made outreach and nurture the twin elements of carrying out his work in the great commission of Matthew 28:19-20. He said we should make disciples (that's our mission) by baptizing (bringing them to faith) and by teaching everything he commanded (nurturing their faith and preparing them to go in his name). Those two elements of the mission he gave to us are also the two balanced elements of his own ministry.

G. Mission Focused Ministry—A Bible Study

Connection: On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), how do we do outreach and nurture in our personal ministry? Using that same scale, how do we do outreach and nurture through our school's ministry? What can we do to make our ministry more balanced?

Early Childhood Ministry's Mission

Notes:

Point: Jesus' mission was to "seek and save the lost" and to "preach the good news" to those to whom he was sent. He has commissioned parents to impress his Word upon the hearts of their children. He has commissioned his church to make disciples of all people.

What are the critical points that should be included in your mission statement?

Connection: 1.
2.
3.
4.

Develop a rough draft of a mission statement for your early childhood ministry that incorporates the critical points mentioned above.

Mission Statement:

H. Sample Mission Statements

Each one of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:10, 11

A mission statement is:

- a clear, concise statement (25 words or fewer)
- of the unique reason, or purpose
- for the existence and efforts of the congregation (or individual)

Sample Mission Statement of a Congregation

The Mission and Vision of St. Matthew Lutheran Church: To reach out with the Gospel and the caring love of Jesus Christ to people in our community and the world at large.

A personal mission statement helps one articulate the unique reason or purpose for their existence. It helps them focus on their leadership style and the purpose for which they have been called.

You'll want to create yours in 25 words or fewer so you can easily remember it and share it with others. In order for it to be effective and real to you, you'll want to pray about it, practice it, and talk about it with others.

Developing a Mission Statement

Ask:

- What is our (my) mission?
- Why do we (I) exist?
- What is our (my) strength, the gifts from God to use?
- Why am I in this position?
- How will I serve God and others in this position?

Then:

- Choose words or word groups to best define your answers.
- Put words and phrases together to form a statement.
- Share with others for input.
- Refine. Describe your mission in 25 words or fewer.
- Pray, redefine, articulate
- Print your statement. Print this mission statement on all documents from the early childhood ministry including letterhead, website, and forms. Hang it in your office. Print it on the back of your business card. Include it on your personal stationery. Use it when you talk about the early childhood ministry. Pray about it. Live it. Share it.

Sample Personal Mission Statement

The Mission of Director/Teacher Deanna Jones: To deliberately witness and model Jesus' love to the children and families in St. Matthew Lutheran Early Childhood Program.