Pursuing Excellence through Continuing Education
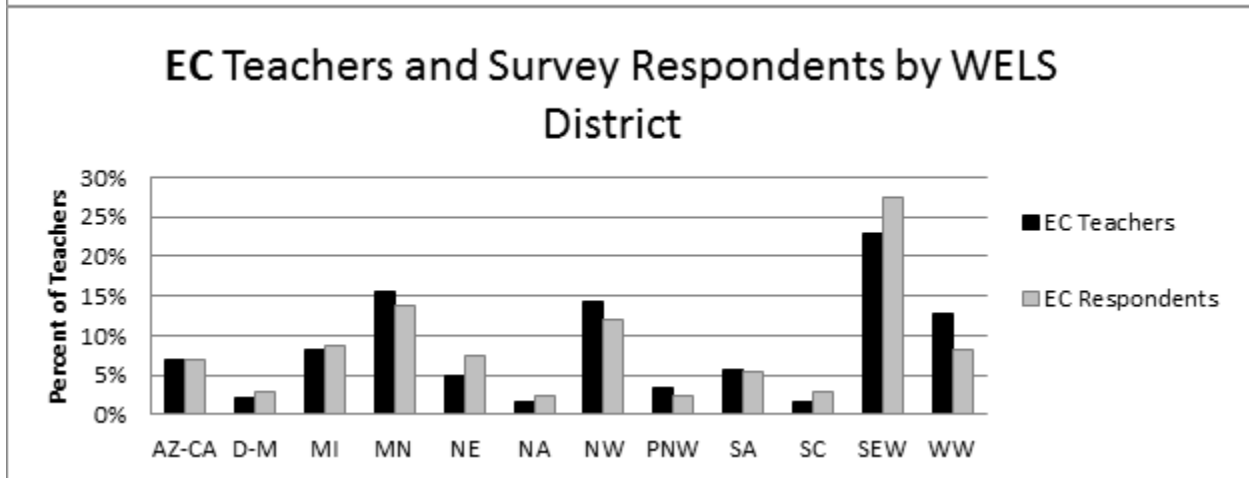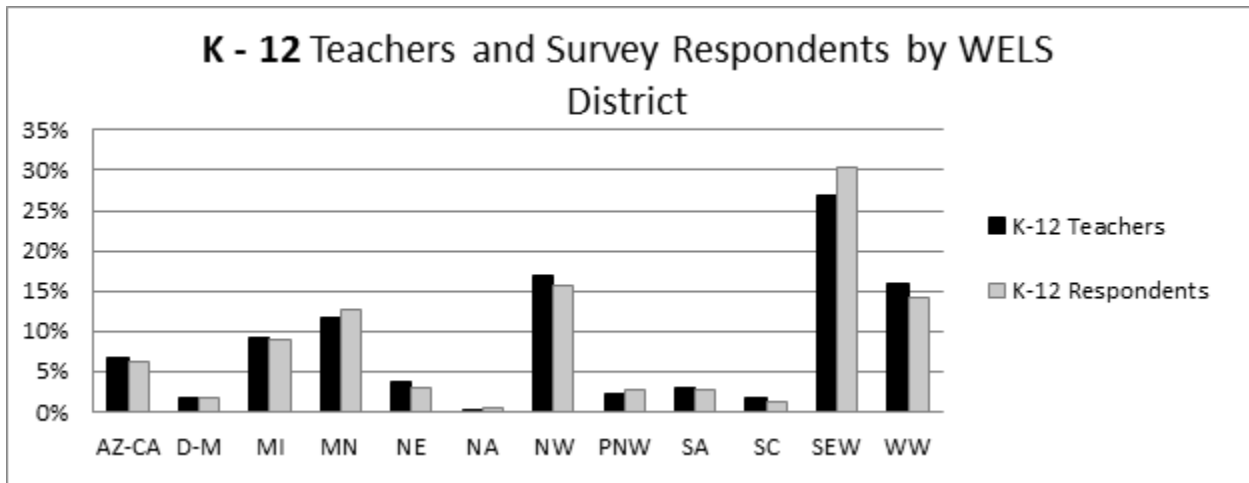
GROW Conference
Houston, TX

February 6, 2015

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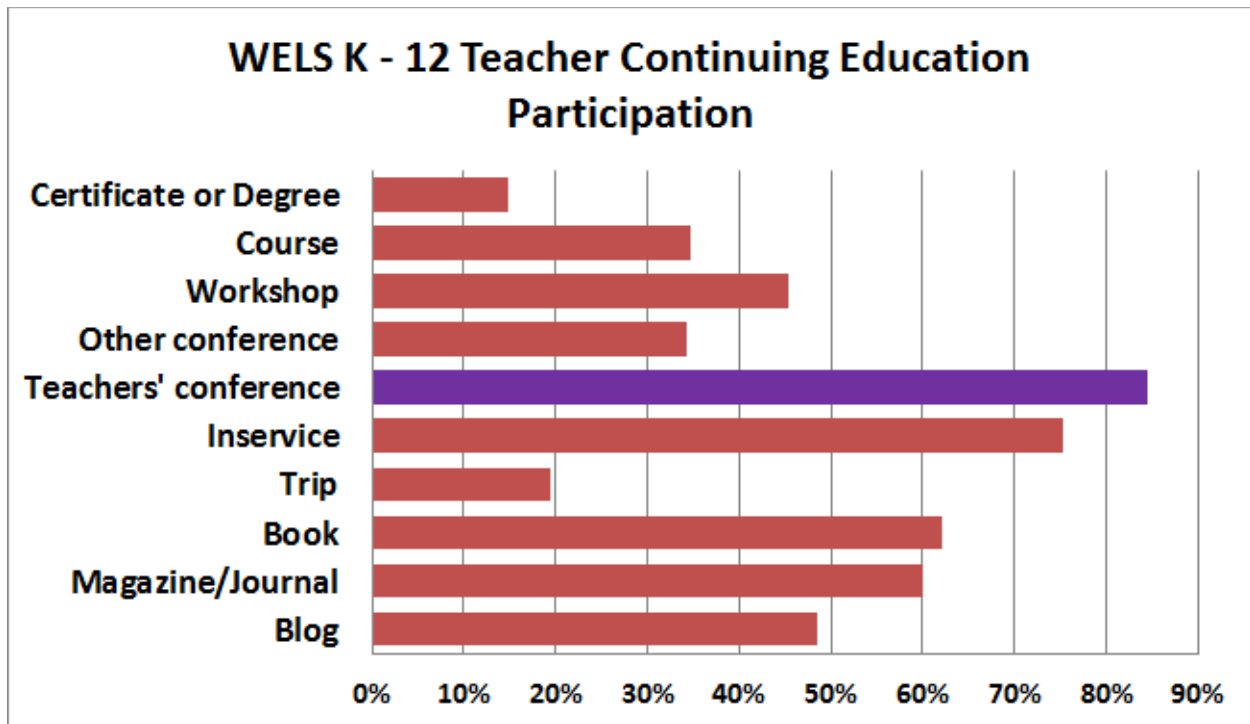Martin Luther College
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Pursuing Excellence through Continuing Education

Let me begin by saying thank you to the program committee for inviting me to speak to you today. It is both an honor and a privilege to be in the presence of Christ's called servants and share with you information that I pray will assist you in your calling. You expend your energies and give your first fruits of time, talents, and treasures for the purpose of sharing the love of Jesus with children and their families. Through you, Jesus will raise the next generation of children to know him, to lead his Church, and to share his gospel with the world.

I distributed an email survey in early August to WELS preschool through grade twelve teachers. Over half (52%) of our teachers responded. The respondents were proportionally representative of the overall WELS teacher population. From time to time during this presentation, I will share some of the results as they apply.

Speaking to a teachers' conference on the importance of professional growth is a lot like sharing a sermon to a congregation on the topic of church attendance. As the saying goes, "it's like preaching to the choir." Those who value professional growth are already here. In fact, it is your most popular form of continuing education with 84% of teachers saying they participate.

WELS K - 12 Teacher Continuing Education Participation

Category	Participation
Certificate or Degree	~15%
Course	~34%
Workshop	~45%
Other conference	~34%
Teachers' conference	~84%
Inservice	~75%
Trip	~20%
Book	~62%
Magazine/Journal	~60%
Blog	~49%

I also realize that my topic can be frustrating to WELS teachers who dedicate their lives to faithful service and sacrifice their time and resources for the children and families they serve. When WELS teachers are presented with a message that there is more that one can or should do, it can be exasperating.

This morning I will try not to frustrate you. Rather my goal is to encourage you in your calling, share with you information you may not already know, and present practical continuing education ideas.

I.   Pursuing Excellence

The title for this paper stems from a report to the 2009 Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) convention. The report was delivered by a group of ten pastors, teachers, and laymen appointed by the 2007 convention to investigate numerous synodical concerns and bring recommendations in 2009. The group was called the Ad Hoc Commission, and their report contained a section entitled "Pursuing Excellence among Called Workers" (BORAM, 2009, pp. 184-187).

They wrote, "We believe that continuing professional education for those serving in the public ministry is a matter that should not be debatable" (p. 186), and made the following recommendation:

> *We recommend that a flexible program of continuing education with standards and minimum requirements for all called workers be developed by the Committee for the Continuing Education of Called Workers and presented to the 2011 Synod Convention.*
> (p. 186)

The convention adopted the recommendation and the following further resolutions from the Committee for the Continuing Education of Called Workers (CECW) were adopted in subsequent conventions:

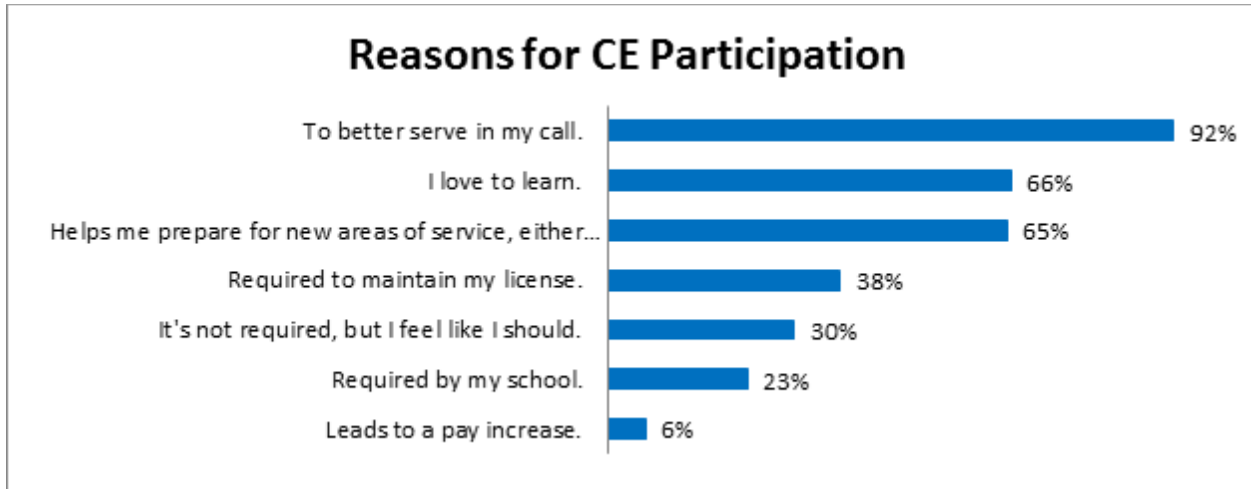- New Teacher Induction for all beginning teachers (2011)

- Ministry Development Plans for all veteran teachers (2011)
- All congregations are to provide at least $1,000 annually for each called worker's continuing education (2013)
- All schools should provide the Commission on Lutheran School's recommended level of Administrative Release Time for principals (1 hour/week for every 7.5 students) (2013)

Important for today's discussion, is the background the commission gave for their 2009 recommendation. They wrote,

> *Having a program of lifelong learning and professional development is recognized as vitally important in virtually every field and occupation. It should be no less important for those who are entrusted with the **faithful** proclamation of God's truth and with the spiritual health of souls in their care.*

Thus the Ad Hoc Commission invoked one of the most revered WELS called worker constructs—faithfulness.

The concept of faithfulness to one's calling is deeply ingrained in the psyche of WELS teachers and is the strongest motivator for growing professionally. When asked why they participate in continuing education, 92% reported the desire to *better serve in my call*, while extrinsic motivators like *maintaining a license* were selected by 38% or fewer.

Reasons for CE Participation

Reason	Percentage
To better serve in my call.	92%
I love to learn.	66%
Helps me prepare for new areas of service, either…	65%
Required to maintain my license.	38%
It's not required, but I feel like I should.	30%
Required by my school.	23%
Leads to a pay increase.	6%

This desire to serve faithfully was true regardless of teacher age, gender, grade level taught, or congregational financial support. WELS teachers clearly demonstrate a Holy Spirit motivated desire for faithfulness in their calling.

"Serving Better" as Reported across All Factors
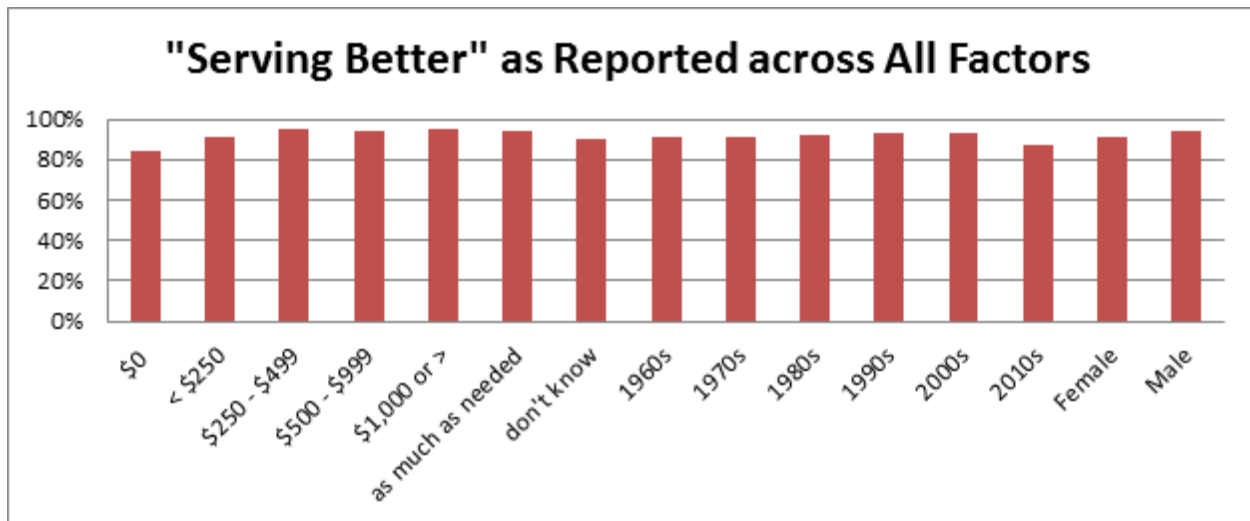
As the conditions in which we live and the needs of God's people change, a faithful servant seeks to learn new ways to communicate and serve. In the mid-nineties, Prof. Arthur Schulz (date unknown) delivered a paper entitled "Continuing Education of WELS Teachers" in which he pointed out the changing nature of a WELS teacher's ministry:

> One of the engaging challenges of teaching is that subject matter changes, the technology of teaching changes, and in some ways children also change in what they need in order to learn. In a very real sense the needs that the Lutheran teacher was originally called to meet are in almost constant state of change. The very important attribute of faithfulness (I Corinthians 4:2), not only to the Word but also to the service we are called to render, moves the Lutheran teacher to keep abreast of these changes. Commitment to faithfulness constantly confronts the called teacher with the decision how best to keep expertise and judgment fine tuned… The Lutheran professional teacher's response is one of faithfulness and giving attention to those things that will continually enable them to be approved by God, workmen who do not need to be ashamed (I Corinthians 4:2; 2 Timothy 2:15)." (p. 2)

As an expression of faith, the called teacher constantly seeks to grow in his/her ability to serve God's people better.

II.   Things That Don't Change Stay the Same

You may have heard the popular definition for insanity. "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results" (Brown, 1983, p. 68).

Mr. Meyer is Dome

I learned that lesson the hard way in my early years of teaching. I had four grades in my classroom. My students were generally well-behaved and their parents were supportive. One of my students was a boy I'll call Sam. Sam was a pleasant boy who was excited to meet me when I came for my home visit. He drove up to the farmhouse on a tractor, having been helping his dad in the field. He was a sixth grader whose mom had him repeat a grade somewhere along the way, and he was respectful, friendly, and eager to please.

Once the school year got under way, I noticed that Sam struggled with some of his assignments. Workbook pages might be turned in with most of the blanks filled in incorrectly

and with many words spelled wrong. Wanting to encourage Sam's best work, I had him re-do his assignments, often repeatedly. It was not unusual for Sam to miss recess because he was fixing his mistakes. It seemed to me that Sam was being careless, and that he and I just needed to work harder to turn things around. After one particularly frustrating morning of me sending Sam back to re-do and re-do his work, I sent the students out for recess and noticed a piece of paper on the floor by Sam's desk. I picked it up, and in Sam's handwriting were the words, "Mr. Meyer is Dome."

At the time I thought something like, "Well, that's a bit ironic." But upon reflection I realized that Sam was right. Sam was not being successful, and my usual approach was not working. My approach worked well with the other students, so I figured it should work well with Sam, too. Rather than question my approach, however, I believed it would work if Sam and I just worked harder. Like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole, I simply applied more force. I fulfilled the definition of insanity, doing the same thing but expecting different results. The fact that I was not being successful with Sam should have alerted me that my approach was wrong, but my limited experience and knowledge left me with no alternatives. To preserve my efficacy as a teacher, I blamed Sam.

The same principle holds true for Lutheran elementary schools in general. Things that don't change, stay the same. During the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, Lutheran elementary schools were well suited to the needs of the American population, so that by 1990, their enrollment peaked at 31,982 students in 366 schools. But as we all know too well, the trend since 1990 is that fewer and fewer children are attending fewer Lutheran schools, putting financial and human resource stress on the system.
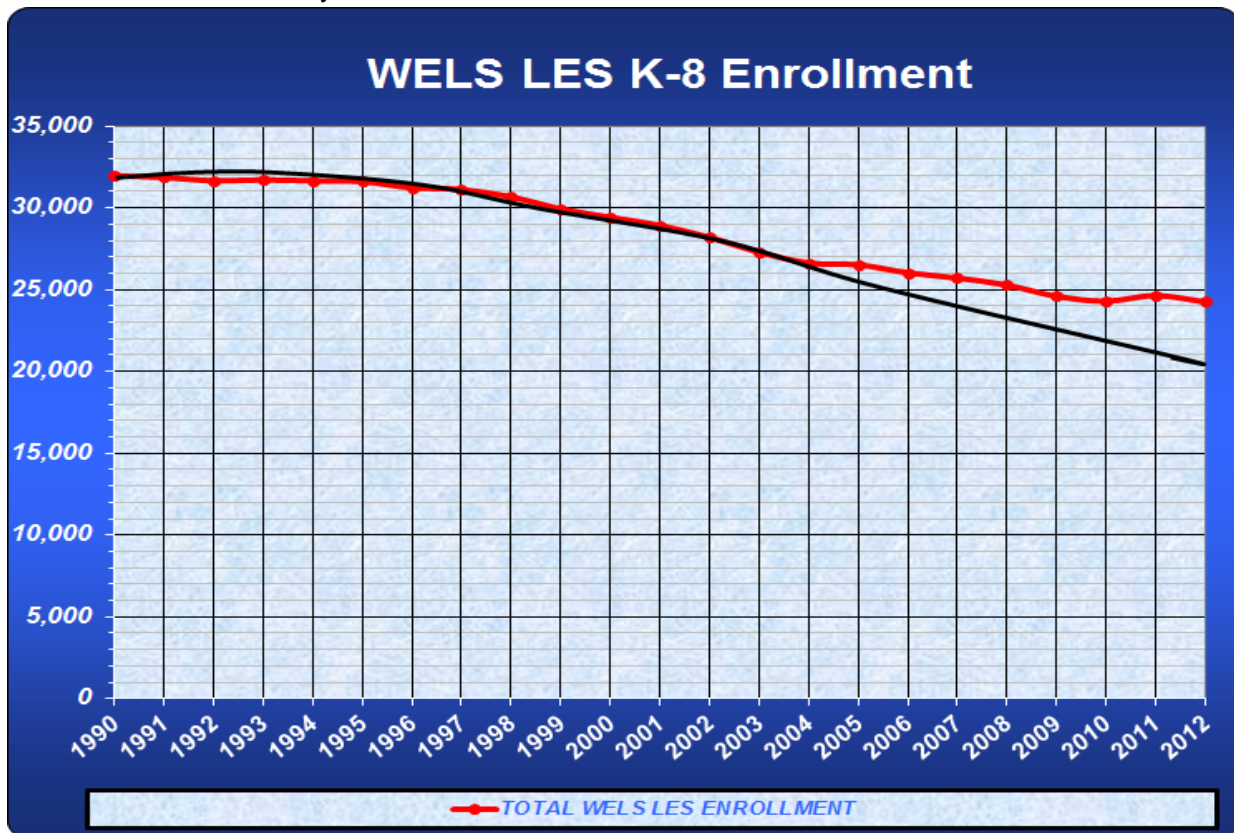
graph by Bruce Becker, 2013

At first glance there appears to be hope. The enrollment decline seems to have slowed since 2005 and may be leveling off. This leveling, however, is likely skewed by a few schools and is not reflective of the vast majority of WELS schools. In 2003, St. Marcus opened its new building, and by 2005 the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program began to take off in WELS schools. In 2004, Divine Savior Academy in Doral FL opened its doors. The fast-growing schools of St. Marcus and Divine Savior have over 1,000 elementary students today. Milwaukee Choice schools and Divine Savior combine for over 3,000 students. Without those schools the downward trajectory remains unchanged. By district, only Florida, Southeastern Wisconsin, and Nebraska are holding their own or growing. Since 2006, the other district enrollments have shrunk by as much as 28%. The Commission on Lutheran Schools report four more Lutheran elementary school closings this year, leaving 314 remaining.

Percentage Change in Children in WELS Churches and Schools from 2006 to 2012
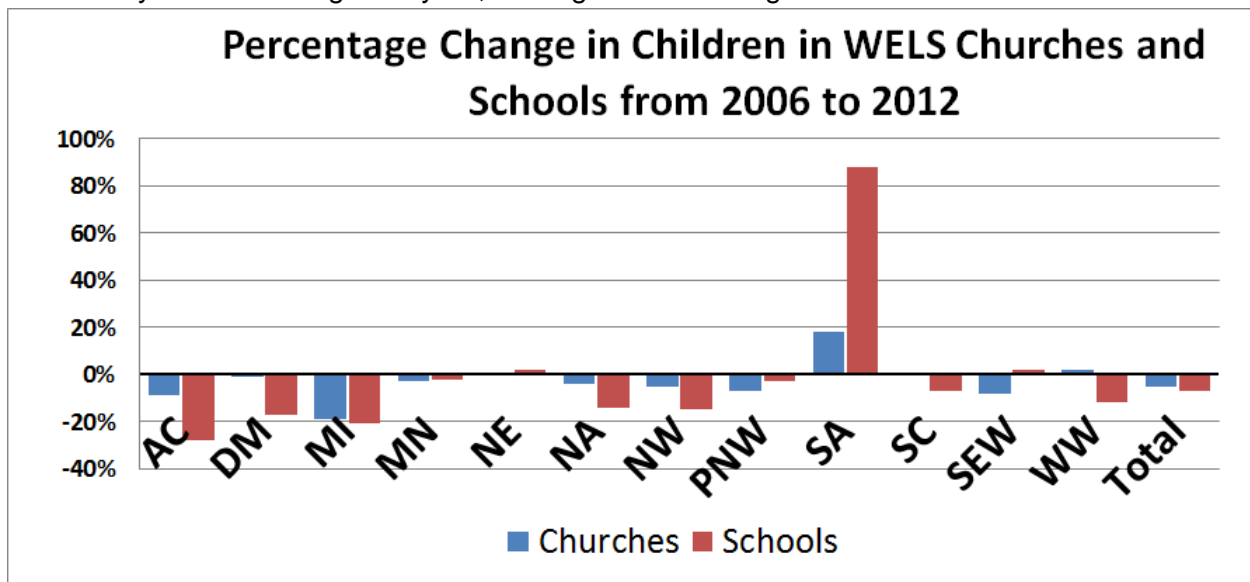
What is going on? Tremendous societal shifts have occurred over the past 25 years while the Lutheran model of education has remained largely unchanged. Thus there appears to be a mismatch between the Lutheran school and the society it seeks to serve, leaving some to wonder whether Lutheran schools have become obsolete.

Societal Changes

God calls us to serve the people he places before us today. Generations have unique experiences that influence their thoughts and behaviors. Although not typical of each person, general patterns emerge. Today's parents are members of what has been called Generation X, and we are beginning to see parents of Generation Y (Rodriguez, Green, & Ree, 2003; Strauss, 2005). What communicates well with one generation may not with the next. Let's consider some of the generational differences and their implications for Lutheran schools and teachers.

Baby Boomers. Boomers were born before 1964. While few of our students' parents belong to this generation, they are grandparents. Many of the traditions and practices we have in our schools were designed for Boomers. Our WELS school paradigm is highly influenced by the Boomers. They are joiners. They join organizations and help run them. They are loyal to organizations and brands. They sacrifice personal gain for the benefit of the group. When they

went to school, school budgets were relatively small and congregational offerings were able to support the school. They join churches, attend voter's meetings, and sing in choir. They joined parent-teacher organizations and worked to make the school a better place, even after their children graduated. When their children struggled in school or they had a disagreement with a teacher or principal, they remained loyal to the school and tried to make things better. Children of Boomers were generally compliant and self-controlled.

Generation X - the Me Generation. Gen Xers were born between 1964 and 1982. Most of our parents belong to this generation. They are less likely to join an organization unless the organization can provide something they need. Rather than an unquestioning commitment, however, their allegiance is based upon how well the school fits their needs at the moment. They look for the next, best thing and the highest return for their investment.

They have a tendency to value academics over the spiritual needs of their children and prioritize what is best for their child rather than the organization. They want school to be fun, not to interfere with family plans, and yet they expect high academic achievement for their children. They give much weight to their children's input on the school they attend. Faced with a conflict, they often choose to exit rather than work for improvements or a resolution saying, "I need to do what's best for my child."
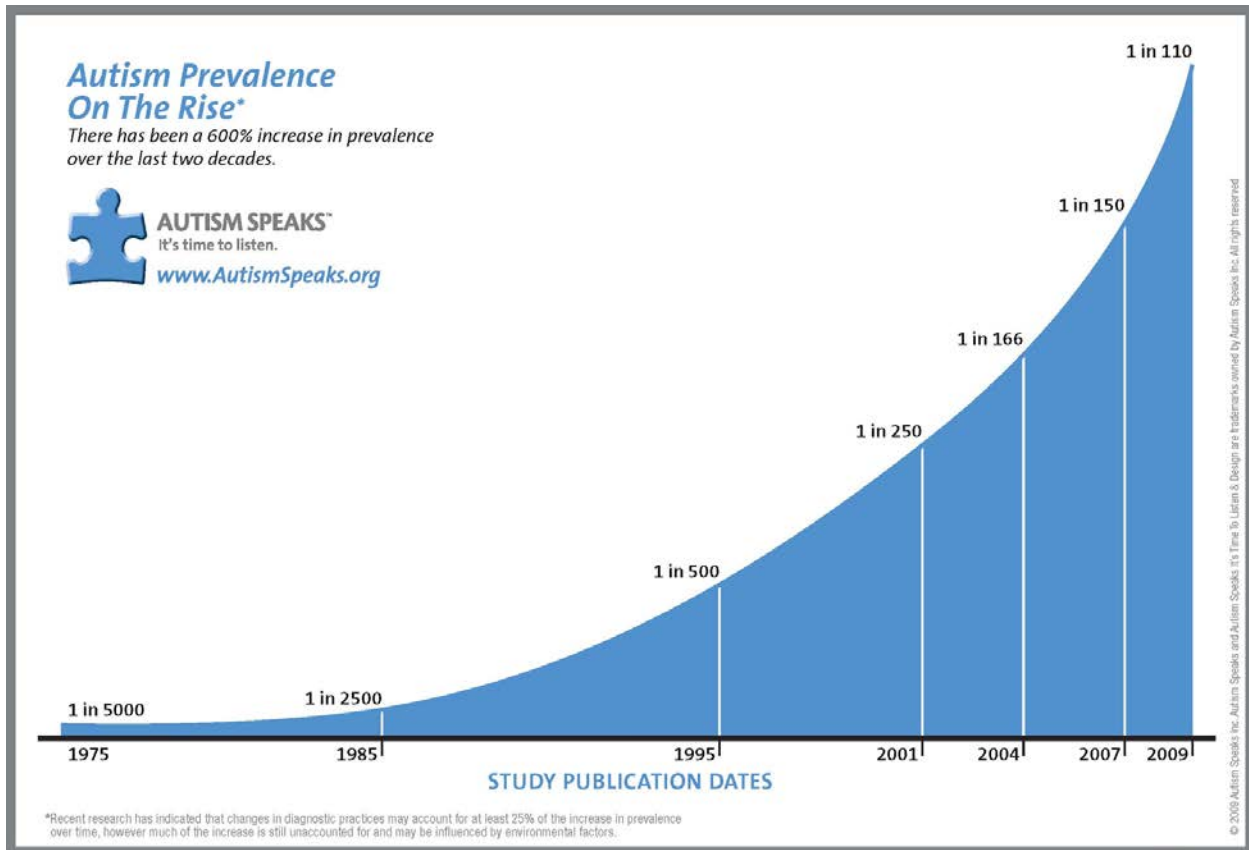
Children of Generation X parents are expected to obey authority, but not unquestioningly so. Their children have ready access to information and gratification, so they have a difficulty in delaying rewards. Their children have a tendency to miss the connection between effort and achievement.

Parents and students want to learn and excel, but need to learn from school what that means. They want homework and learning that is meaningful, but less rigorous. They want more knowledge but less coverage of material, drill and kill, and lecture. They believe their and their children's opinions are important and should influence school decisions.

Generation Y - the Millennials. Millennials were born between 1982 and the late 1990s. They tend to wait a little longer to get married and have children. School shootings, the internet, cellphones, and social media have been a significant part of their lives. They grew up in an era of tolerance and received recognition for most things they did. They have focused on private lessons or single sports and so have developed high ability levels in a narrow skillset. They expect work and the workplace to be fun, but also meaningful. They want to help others and are passionate about causes and service opportunities, but their interest may shift frequently. Safety and tolerance are extremely important for both themselves and their children. They believe in collaboration and being a team player. They want constant communication, but prefer social media and texting to a phone conversation or notes (Asghar, 2014; Gibson, 2013).

Special Populations

Autism. Today's students are different than students of twenty or thirty years ago. Perhaps nowhere is that more clear than the increasing rate of Autism identification in our country. Today 1 in 68 children are diagnosed with some form of autism. Just twenty years ago, that number was 1 in 500.

Autism Prevalence On The Rise

There has been a 600% increase in prevalence over the last two decades.

AUTISM SPEAKS
It's time to listen.
www.AutismSpeaks.org

1 in 110
1 in 150
1 in 166
1 in 250
1 in 500
1 in 2500
1 in 5000

1975   1985   1995   2001   2004   2007 2009

STUDY PUBLICATION DATES

*Recent research has indicated that changes in diagnostic practices may account for at least 25% of the increase in prevalence over time, however much of the increase is still unaccounted for and may be influenced by environmental factors.
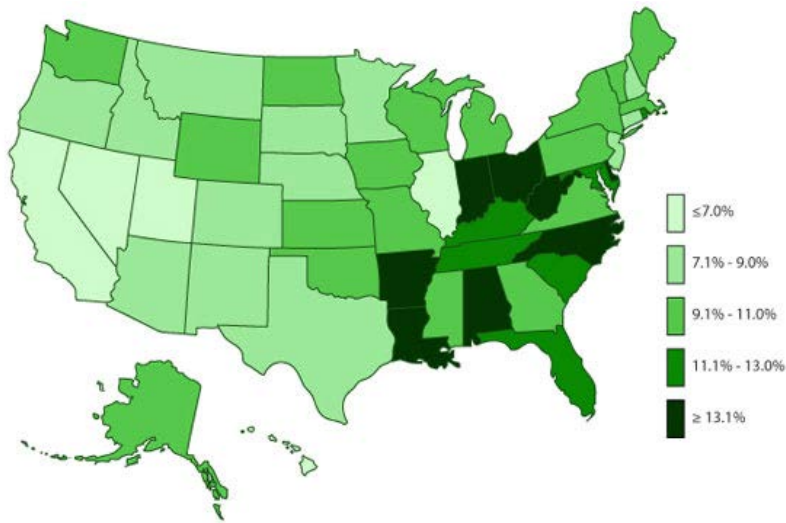
Autism Speaks

ADHD. Attention Hyperactivity Deficit Disorder continues to be a national epidemic. The epidemic increases the farther east one travels in our country. According to the U.S. Center of Disease Control, 2 million more children were diagnosed with ADHD in 2011 than in 2003. On average, more than 1 in 10 children (11%) have a diagnosed condition. Maps of the country from 2003, 2007, and 2011 show the trend

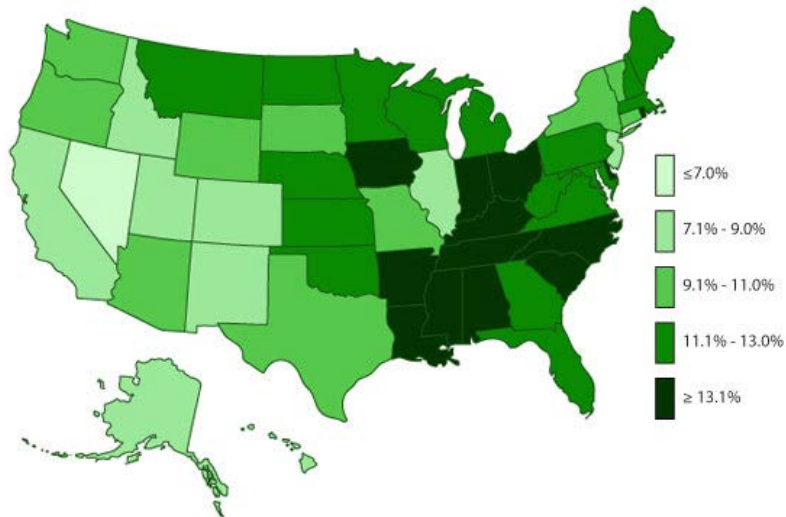**Center for Disease Control report of diagnosed ADHD in 2003**

≤7.0%
7.1% - 9.0%
9.1% - 11.0%
11.1% - 13.0%
≥ 13.1%

(http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/prevalence.html)

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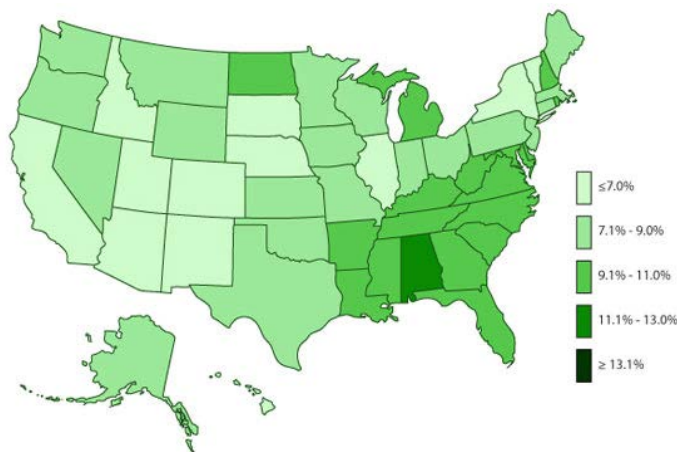
Center for Disease Control report of diagnosed ADHD in 2007


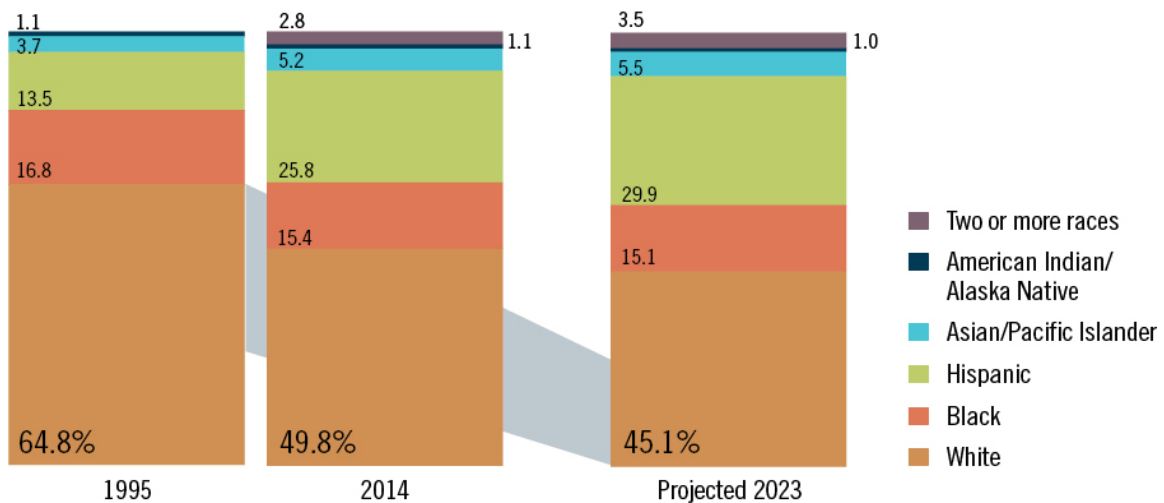**Center for Disease Control report of diagnosed ADHD in 2011**

English Language Learners. The National Education Association estimates that English Language Learners are the fastest growing segment of students in the United States. During the 1990's the number of ELL students grew by 105% compared to a 12% increase in total enrollment growth. Today, it is estimated that over 9.1% of the student body is ELL students (Kena et al., 2014).

National Center of Educational Statistics ELL Population by State 2011 - 2012

Less than 3.0 percent (13)
3.0 to 5.9 percent (15)
6.0 to 9.9 percent (15)
10.0 percent or more (8)
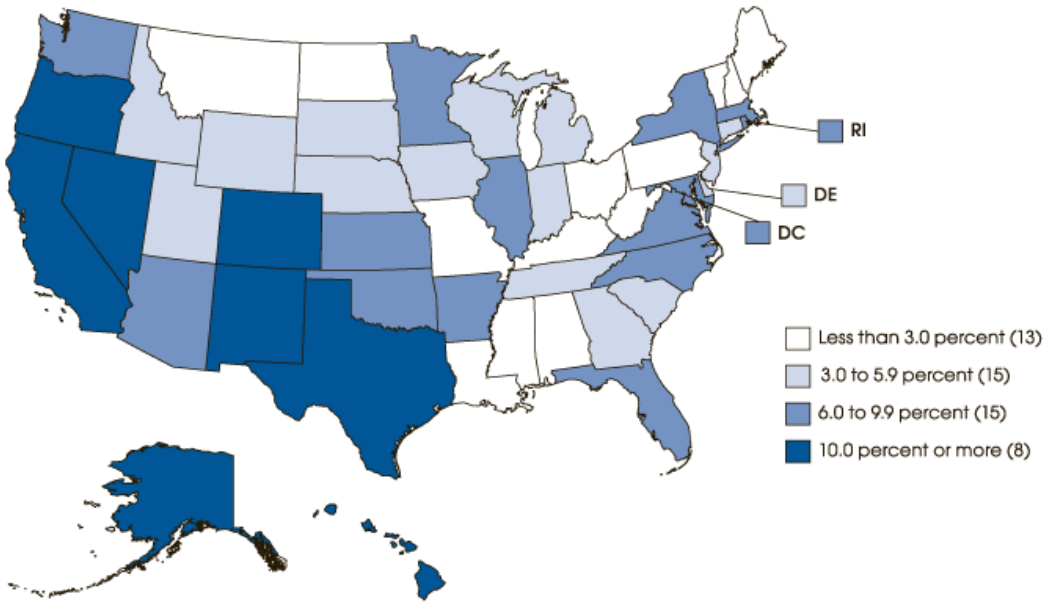
http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp

Minority Student Population. This fall, the United States has more minority K-12 students than caucasian. The minority majority, as it is called, is estimated to be 50.3%. The National Center for Educational Statistics reports that in 1995, 65% of the K-12 student population was caucasian. The NCES predicts that percentage to be 45% by 2023 (Education Week, 2014).

	1995	2014	Projected 2023
Two or more races	1.1	2.8	3.5
American Indian/Alaska Native		1.1	1.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.7	5.2	5.5
Hispanic	13.5	25.8	29.9
Black	16.8	15.4	15.1
White	64.8%	49.8%	45.1%

EDUCATION WEEK

Standards Changes

Before 1990, there were few educational standards. In 1989 the National Council for the Teachers of Mathematics published their math standards. In 1990, President Bush encouraged the National Governor's Association to agree to educational goals, which were passed as *Goals 2000* in 1993. By 1998 every state had standards and accountability testing. In 2001, No Child Left Behind tied national funding to standards and testing. Finally, the the Common Core State Standards were proposed in 2009, and every state was encouraged to adopt them. So far 45 states have (CCSS, 2014: Nerison-Low & Ashwill, 1999).

Educational Changes

The idea that all students should be held to and meet the same standards is a relatively new concept in American education characteristic of an *equal outcomes paradigm.*

Prior to 1993 the common educational paradigm was one of *equal opportunity*. This paradigm held that schools/teachers are morally responsible to provide an environment in which each child has an *equal opportunity* to succeed while recognizing that results will vary by individuals. This paradigm operates under the assumption that the Bell Curve describes any given student population. Two-thirds are found clustered near the average and the remaining are dispersed at the edges.

Working within this paradigm, schools enact policies to provide equal opportunities for student success like desegregation, busing, and equal funding models. The teacher's role is to provide a learning environment in which every child has the same opportunity to succeed. People operating within this paradigm recognize that student achievement will vary depending upon individual ability and effort. The *equal opportunity* teacher teaches to the middle of the class. Students who excel or fail do so mostly because of extraordinary or below ordinary ability or effort. Since all students are provided an equal opportunity to succeed, the students, parents, or society shoulder the blame for failure.

Since 1993, the educational world has shifted to a new paradigm of *equal outcomes.* Schools are responsible to ensure that each child succeeds regardless of ability or societal factors. When students fail, the school and teachers are to blame and must be held accountable. The idea of a Bell Curve to define a student population is morally unacceptable— there should be no lower tail. This paradigm is embodied in policies like *No Child Left Behind.*

Within the *equal outcomes* paradigm, the teacher's role is to provide a learning environment tailored to each child's needs. The teacher must know where the student is socially, emotionally, and academically, and provide the necessary support to ensure success regardless of student ability, effort, or family circumstance. Educational literature within this paradigm proclaims that all children can succeed, and it is the teacher's job to get them there.

The thought of trying to meet all the varied needs of students is daunting, and not teaching to the middle requires new and unfamiliar teaching approaches (Subban, 2006). Whether teachers agree with or understand the paradigm shift, most of today's parents have made the transition. They interpret what they see and hear at their child's school from an *equal outcomes* perspective. The result can be a gap between the parents' and teachers' understandings of the teacher's role. What seems logical within one paradigm seems illogical in the other. When the teacher and parent paradigms clash, misunderstanding and frustration result for both parties.

Technology Changes

Perhaps the most obvious change in education over the past twenty years is in the area of technology. Students today have more computing power in their pockets with Smartphones than all of NASA in 1969 when they put a man on the moon (Kaku, 2011). Schools are struggling to compete in this rapidly changing technology landscape and are finding it necessary to provide 1:1 computing with Chromebooks or iPads.

Outside of school, students are finding information, collaborating, composing, creating, and sharing for fun. Many parents have difficulty making them stop. Yet most schools continue to consider a child's smartphone or tablet a distraction from school and have strict rules limiting its use while simultaneously trying to provide a learning tool of equal or better capacity. While outside the classroom technology continues to transform interaction and productivity, inside the classroom most teachers still struggle to see a purpose - envisioning technology tools as a digital version of a chalkboard, textbook, worksheet, game, or poster board.

Conclusion

The world is replete with examples of obsolete organizations that failed to adapt to changes in society. Blockbuster, Kodak, Circuit City, and Woolworth are only some names that come to mind. Newspapers and magazines are faltering. At the same time 3M, IBM, and Apple thrive because they continually learn and grow.

The Lutheran education model matched that of the Baby Boomer generation well and in the 1970s and 1980s when their children were going through schools our WELS schools thrived. In some respects the culture, practices, and policies of many WELS schools has changed little in 25 years. Like me with my student, Sam, it is tempting to believe that if we just try harder, things will improve, or that if we returned to the practices of the good old days, things will get better. But the gap between traditional Lutheran education and the society around us only continues to widen, and the definition of insanity is doing the same thing, but expecting different results. The struggles we have recruiting and retaining students cue us that something needs to change.

A few weeks ago students in my MLC undergraduate course were discussing the need to add additional teaching tools to those they experienced in their own schooling. A student commented, "Why should we have to learn new ways to teach? The problem is that parents are giving kids sugar and letting them sit in front of screens all day. The teaching methods we've used in the past seemed to work. Can't we just educate the parents better on how to raise their kids?" I thanked him for voicing the feelings of every teacher. Then I asked the class two questions.

1) If some of your students don't learn or achieve, who are the parents going to blame?
2) Which is easier for you to change - society or your teaching?

The single most important school factor for student achievement is the classroom teacher. A school's success is determined by the collective quality of its teachers. A successful school is one in which all teachers continue to learn and grow in their ability to serve the children in front of them today.

Discussion Scenario

An obviously frustrated parent comes to you complaining that his son Paydon is struggling in math.You begin your response by saying, "Thank you for speaking to me about this. I've noticed that lately as well." What do you say next?

  a. Paydon tries hard, but some students just struggle with math. Don't worry. There are many occupations that don't require a strong math background.
  b. I don't really have extra time right now to spend with Paydon and our school can't afford a special education teacher. Maybe I can send some extra work with Paydon that you can practice at home.
  c. Paydon's success is important to me. I'll consult with some other teachers and try some approaches that can help Paydon and the other students succeed. Let's continue to touch base on this.
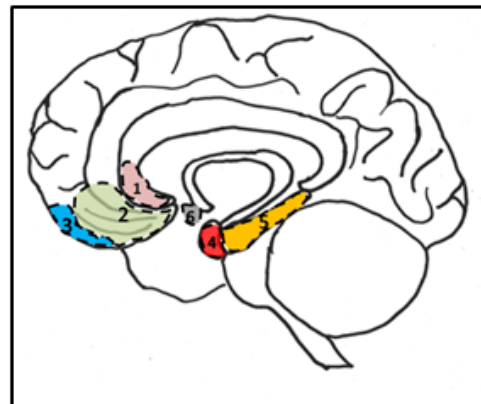
III.   You CAN Teach an Old Dog New Tricks

An Irishman named Nathan Bailey (1721) is said to have originated the expression, *An old dog will learn no tricks.* He was wrong. They can, but it won't be fast or easy.

Teachers are no different than anyone else when it comes to learning new ways to do things, especially if the new things involve changing underlying assumptions. Learning to teach in new ways is slow and difficult.

God created our brains to work efficiently and use past experiences to guide future decisions. It seems we have two types of neurological processes that help us govern our daily lives (Bechara & Damasio, 2005; Evans, 2008; Lieberman, 2010; Stanovich & West, 2008; Toplak et al., 2010; Willingham, 2009). One is *automatic* and the other is *controlled.*

Automatic processes do not require working memory. They are rapid and preconscious, and they supply content for conscious processing. They are associated neural regions such as the limbic system, amygdala, hippocampus, and ventromedial prefrontal cortex. These neural regions encode information through either a) intentional learning from repetition and memorization, or b) daily experiences. This stored information influences actions and decision-making, often without our realizing. It is tied to our emotions so that we sometimes experience automatic influences as gut reactions or hunches. Automatic processes guide most of our daily decisions.

Automatic Processing Neural Regions[i].
1. rACC 2. vmPFC 3. orbitofrontal PFC
4. amygdala   5. hippocampus 6. ventral
striatum

When we walk down the cereal aisle with a myriad of choices, we don't compare the health and price benefits of every cereal. We make a quick decision based upon a variety of factors including emotional messages in advertising and previous experiences with the product. This basic decision-making process is the reason most commercials focus on a brand's feelings
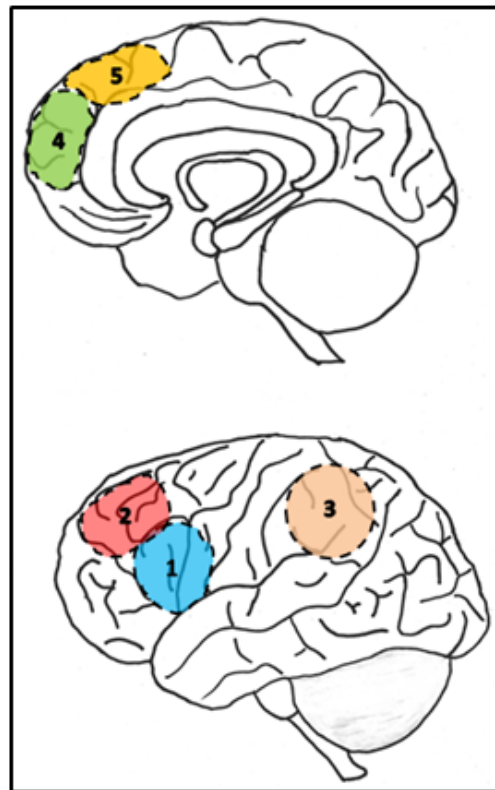
rather than any actual product quality. The cereal we eat, the clothes we wear, the meals we cook, or the way we teach all are heavily influenced by these automatic processes working at a subconscious level. When we try to get our reason involved, we struggle with indecision, and if asked why we do a certain action, we frequently have to manufacture a reason that may or may not accurately reflect our real reasons.

The second type of processes that govern behavior are controlled. They rely upon working memory and are slow, sequential, and capacity limited. They are intentional and both receive information from automatic processes and can exert control over them, so that one can resist the automatic response. Instead of blurting to your principal what you really think, you just smile and nod. It is these controlled processes that contribute to rational thought. Controlled processes include neurological regions associated with executive functions like the lateral prefrontal cortex and the parietal cortex. These regions allow us to hold at bay automatic responses while we project possible alternatives.

Toplak et al., (2010) describe the brain as a *cognitive miser*. Whenever possible it defaults to automatic processes that leave working memory free for other tasks. Accordingly the brain relies on automatic processes to rapidly react to its surrounding, and it preferentially recruits existing, automatic memories and beliefs. This occurs regardless of one's intelligence or ability for more reflective thought. Reliance on these automatic processes is especially important when working memory load is high or when time is pressing. We sometimes call such decisions or actions common sense. But really they are the result of previously learned automatic responses, so that the farmer believes the city slicker to have no common sense

Neural Regions of Control[i].
1. vlPFC 2. dlPFC 3. parietal cortex
4. mPFC 5. dmPFC

when he comes to the farm, and the city dweller believes the hick from the country likewise to have no common sense in the city.

Teachers develop a common sense approach to teaching that is based upon years of experience in classrooms as they were growing up, during student teaching, and in their first few years on their own. Once solidified, these automatic responses become the foundation of a teacher's beliefs and actions. These automatic behaviors enable the teacher to keep working memory free when teaching and to attend to the many decisions needing to be made during a lesson and school day. However, they also become ruts which prevent new ways of approaching a problem and make learning new approaches more difficult the longer and deeper the ruts get (Lortie, 1975; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992).

Changing even a simple part of the teaching routine can be difficult, and taking on a completely new approach is nearly impossible. That's because until the new practice becomes automatic, it must be consciously practiced; exhausting working memory. This prevents a teacher from attending to the many other decisions that need to be made. The teacher is left feeling tired, frustrated, and defeated, and since things rarely go right the first time, she feels the effort is hardly worth it.

Remember learning to drive a car. Your working memory was preoccupied with remembering the turn signal, monitoring the speedometer, having your foot on the right pedal, and keeping two hands on the wheel. Until the process became automatic, you hardly even noticed the traffic on the road. Now that the process is automatic, you can drive, daydream, sing with the radio, and carry on a conversation (just not on your phone).

A few years back I decided to add the SMARTboard to my teaching routine. I attended a training that showed me how to do things. I created my math lesson, and I practiced it. Then I taught it. The whole time I was teaching, my working memory was maxed out trying to figure out what to touch, what not to touch, and how to make the board operate. My lesson took twice as long as it normally did, and after my lesson I realized I had no idea whether any of the students understood the concept. I was frustrated and ready to say that the SMARTboard was a waste of valuable teaching time. I could do better without it. But I believed that the end result would be beneficial, so I persisted. Now I would never want to teach without it.

The way the brain functions is complex, and the environments in which people learn, grow, and apply that learning are dynamic—involving the interplay of a variety of conditions and people in unique situations. This is especially true for teachers who work in a highly complex and highly dynamic context. It is not surprising that research into how teachers learn and grow is difficult.

Changing one's teaching practice involves disrupting one's automatic routines and consciously attending to new practices - consuming working memory. Until the new practices become routine, a teacher experiences a sense of confusion, disorientation, and a drop in self-efficacy (confidence in one's ability to succeed). That is not a fun place to be, and it causes stress. No one likes to feel incompetent—least of all someone who has felt competent in his teaching for many years. Understandably people seek to avoid being in that situation whenever possible.

For a teacher to willingly enter into the stress of new learning and persist until a change becomes automatic, the following conditions are necessary (Meyer, 2013):

1. *A Cue to change is needed.*
   Teaching is demanding. It consumes time, energy, and mental resources to handle the many decisions needing to be made each minute. If a teacher has a set of automatic skills, routines, and practices that enable her to function and be productive, why should she bother to change them? It takes pretty compelling evidence to convince a teacher to abandon what has worked well and to risk feelings of incompetence and confusion. What can cue a teacher to change? Usually something more unpleasant than the confusion of new learning—like parent complaints, student failure, fear of job loss, etc. Although it can happen, rarely do teachers willingly undergo change in order to seize new opportunities for students to learn and grow. That is one thing that may separate

WELS teachers from others. As we saw earlier, WELS teachers are highly motivated by an intrinsic desire to serve God's people better.

2. *Background knowledge must be provided.*
New knowledge and skills must be provided. Research is unanimous that becoming proficient in a new teaching strategy requires at least 50 hours of instruction and practice. If the instruction is inadequate or condensed into a short time frame, the teacher will lack the depth of knowledge and skill practice necessary to adopt the new teaching strategy.

3. *The teacher must possess certain internal capacities.*
   a. *A strong self-efficacy* - A teacher must believe that she possesses the ability to change. With persistence and hard work, the desired change can occur. If the teacher does not believe she can make the change, she will not attempt it because to not succeed would threaten her belief in her own abilities.
   b. *Openness or willingness to consider new ideas* - Some teachers refuse to consider alternatives because it a) will mean more work, b) they are convinced they are right, or c) they are too close to retirement.
   c. *Reflection* - A teacher must be willing and able to reflect critically on her practice and consider alternatives.
   d. *Persistence* - A teacher must have the ability to suspend the automatic process and consider alternatives. If the teacher gives in to the urge to return to what is comfortable, she cannot change.

4. *The school must provide certain external capacities.*
   a. *Time* - Learning new ideas takes time. New ideas must be considered and practiced over a period of time. The teacher will need extra time to plan and review the teaching. A reasonable period of time to practice the new practice must be given.
   b. *Support* - Administration, parents, and colleagues must agree with the changes and provide verbal, financial, and technical support.
   c. *Collaboration* - No new ideas can occur in a vacuum. A teacher must be able to talk through his concerns, understandings, and new ideas. Without peer support and discussion, change is unlikely.

If the above conditions are not supplied, the teacher becomes frustrated and perhaps even angry. These are normal human reactions to a difficult situation. People are tempted to label these emotions as resistance to change. Rather than resistance, however, they are indicators that the principal or school has not provided the necessary conditions to support change.

Discussion Scenarios
Example 1: A principal announces a new initiative to have every teacher use Chromebooks for their students. He lines up a one-day inservice prior to school to get all teachers on board. One month after the school year starts, he finds that only one of the four teachers is using the Chromebooks. He complains about his faculty because they always resist change.

What conditions for learning did the principal miss?

      a) He did not provide a cue, or compelling argument that the change was necessary. Without the argument, the teachers are likely to simply continue doing what they already know works.

      b) He did not provide adequate background knowledge. The training was too condensed, not thorough enough, and not supported.

      c) The principal likely did not provide the time. There is no indication that other duties are relieve in order to allow more time to plan and prepare lessons using the Chromebook. What the principal translated as resistance, is really poorly planned professional learning.

Example 2: Mrs. Schmidt decided she needed to learn some new ways to help struggling students to succeed. What used to be one or two students struggling in her first grade class has now become five or six. In addition, last year three families pulled their kids out of school. She fears the methods that seemed to work well in the past, are not meeting student needs and parent expectations today. She decides she needs to learn more about differentiation, but her time is precious. She finds a four-hour workshop in June that is offered nearby. It fits nicely between VBS and her family's summer vacation. Her principal is glad she wants to take the course and the school pays the cost. She attends the workshop and picks up a few ideas. When the new school year rolls around, she plans to put some new ideas into practice. After trying them a few times, she finds they take too much time to prepare and don't seem to make any difference, so she abandons them.

She was certainly cued and primed to learn and had her school support. Why wasn't Mrs. Schmidt's learning successful?

      a) She did not get the required background knowledge. The training she employed fit nicely into her schedule but was too short, too condensed, and disconnected from practice.

      b) She lacked the persistence. When it didn't work the first time, she gave up.

      c) Her school may have been unwilling to provide more time or money to get her training during the school year when it might have been more effective.

IV.   Creating a Professional Community

Successful teacher learning does not occur in a vacuum. It requires a school culture dedicated to organizational learning, professional community, and trust (Kruse & Seashore-Louis, 2009). In the last five years, researchers have made some remarkable breakthroughs in understanding effective professional development. In 2009, *The National Staff Development Council* (now called *Learning Forward*) published its first in a series of studies designed to discover best practice in teacher professional development by synthesizing previous research and conducting new research using Institute of Education Sciences (IES) data, international data, and case studies. Their report *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession* describes

the difference between professional development that results in increased student achievement and that which does not.

What doesn't work.

"Rigorous research illustrates the shortcomings of the occasional, one-shot workshops, that many school systems tend to provide, which generations of teachers have derided" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009, p. 9).
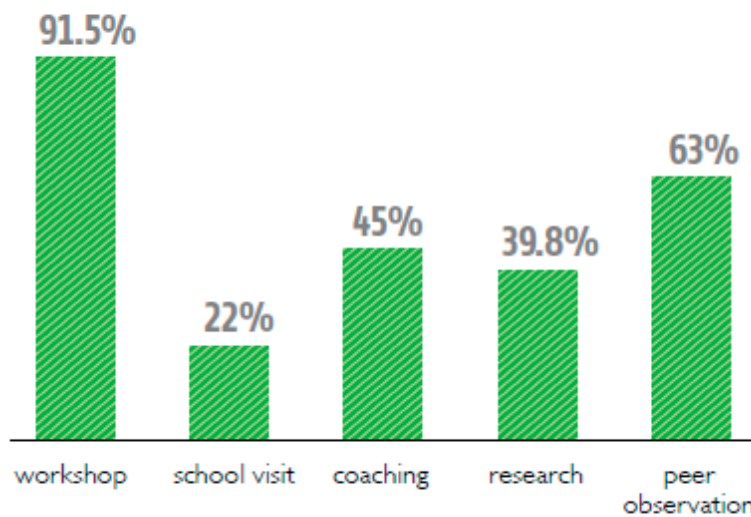
Unfortunately, short, one-shot activities are the most common and most accepted forms of educator continuing education among teachers. Over 90% of teachers reported using this least effective type of learning. WELS teachers agree. In 2012, 74% of WELS teachers reported that stand-alone courses and workshops were their preferred types of continuing education. Such options are popular because they require little investment of time and money.

Why doesn't it work? The idea that a workshop can enable a person to change his teaching beliefs and practice stems from an over-simplification of the change process we discussed earlier - that the only thing needed to effect change is knowledge. It ignores all other factors required, perhaps the biggest of which is what the *Center for Public Education* (2013) called the "Implementation Problem." Learning *about* something, does not mean you can do it yourself.

Types of Professional Development Provided to Teachers the Previous Year

- workshop: 91.5%
- school visit: 22%
- coaching: 45%
- research: 39.8%
- peer observation: 63%

SOURCE: Darling-Hammond et al., 2009

If knowledge or demonstration of a skill were sufficient, then a would-be golfer need only watch a how-to video and then go out and play par golf. The reality is that seeing and doing are two very different things. Learning any new skill (golf, organ, artistic painting, plumbing) requires repetition, coaching, and practice. A one-shot training can make a teacher aware of what might be possible, but not provide the skill to carry it out successfully. Only about 10% of teachers who hear or read about a skill are able to transfer the skill into practice (Bush, 1984). Programs of less than 14 hours have no effect on student learning (Yoon et. al., 2007). Rather, teachers require 50 or more hours of instruction (Yoon et al., 2007) and 20 instances of practice (Joyce & Showers, 2002) to master a new skill.

What does work.

To be effective, the report (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) shared that teacher professional development must have the following characteristics:
1. It must be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice.
2. It must focus on student learning.
3. It should align with school goals.
4. It should build strong working relationships with colleagues.

In addition, the report pointed to the following as effective strategies: Instructional Coaching of all teachers, and Mentoring Beginning Teachers.

The *Center for Public Education* (2013) furthered the discussion with five Professional Development Principles:
1. The duration of professional development must be significant and ongoing to allow time for teachers to learn a new strategy and grapple with the implementation problem.
2. There must be support for the teacher during the implementation stage that addresses the specific challenges of changing classroom practice.
3. The teacher's initial exposure to the content should not be passive, but rather should engage teachers through various approaches so they can participate actively in making sense of a new practice.
4. Modeling has been found to be highly effective in helping teachers understand a new practice.
5. The content presented to teachers shouldn't be generic, but instead specific to the discipline or grade level.

The *Center for Public Education* (2013) noted that a teacher is both a technician and an intellectual. Teaching requires both specific skills and underlying understanding and beliefs. Teachers often say, just give me something practical I can take back to my classroom and do. This works well for a "make and take" session or for adding a teaching tip, but new skills often require new understandings. If the teacher does not understand why the skill or procedure works, she is unlikely to implement it successfully.

To be sure, a teacher does not always participate in continuing education to change. Often, the teacher's goal is to become aware of new ideas and consider whether they might be worth pursuing or consider different perspectives. Other times a teacher may simply want a review of a concept or an affirmation of her current viewpoint. Lutheran teachers may look to renew their understanding of Scripture and recharge their spiritual batteries. But the teacher should be aware, that if the goal is to learn a *new* skill or adopt a *new* practice, a one-shot workshop is unlikely to accomplish that goal.

The CPE suggested two practical models that teachers/schools who wish to adopt new teaching strategies should consider.

The Coaching Model
Stage One: Introducing the New Teaching Idea
1. New Teaching Methodology is presented to teachers and the research supporting it.
2. Active participation.

3. Modeling.
4. Focused on the skills teachers will be using.

Stage Two: Support During Implementation
1. A coach meets with the teacher before she teaches the lesson to hear ideas and concerns and provide feedback.
2. The coach observes the lesson with the new skill.
3. The coach and teacher meet to debrief and suggest improvements.
4. The cycle is repeated as often as necessary for the teacher to feel confident.

Professional Learning Community Model
Stage One: Introducing the New Teaching Idea
1. The teachers meet as a group, looking at and discussing "artifacts" of student learning like student work or achievement test scores.
2. Teachers engage in collaborative analysis of the artifacts, discussing their implication for teaching.
3. The artifacts directly relate to the teachers' instruction.

Stage Two: Support During Implementation
1. Teachers identify an area of concern based on the artifact analysis.
2. Together, the team develops a teaching approach or innovation to address the concern.
3. All teachers practice the new approach in their classrooms.
4. Teachers reconvene to discuss the trial and coach one another.
5. Teachers may observe each other trying the new approach.
6. Repeat the cycle as necessary.

MLC's Teaching that Works Model
Two years ago, Martin Luther College developed a model for continuing education based upon the principles of effective professional development. We call it the *Teaching that Works Model*.

We start with a teaching practice or skill that has been shown to be effective through research and/or best practice. Then we instruct teachers how to gain that skill through four main components. Collaboration with peers and the instructor permeates each of the components. These four components are spread over five weeks of online instruction.

Component 1: Research & Theory (week 1)
Component 2: Modeling (week 2)
*Component 3: Planning and Implementation (week 3)*
Component 4: Reflection and Revision (weeks 4 & 5)

Teaching that Works courses are only offered during the school year so that they are embedded in actual teaching and are able to be practiced.

The above strategies sound great. We know that we need to adjust our Lutheran school and teaching model to meet today's learners, but there are two major hurdles - time and money. As we saw earlier, WELS teachers are highly motivated by the gospel to learn how to serve

better in their call. In 2012, I asked WELS teachers about their continuing education plans. 74% said they planned to take a course, and 35% planned to join a degree or certificate program. This summer (2014) I asked WELS teachers to look back at what they did. Only 35% actually took a course and 15% joined a program.

When I asked them to identify the barriers to continuing education, they reported time (79%) and money (71%).

Projected (2012) Versus Actual (2014) Course and Degree Participation

Potential Barriers to Continuing Education
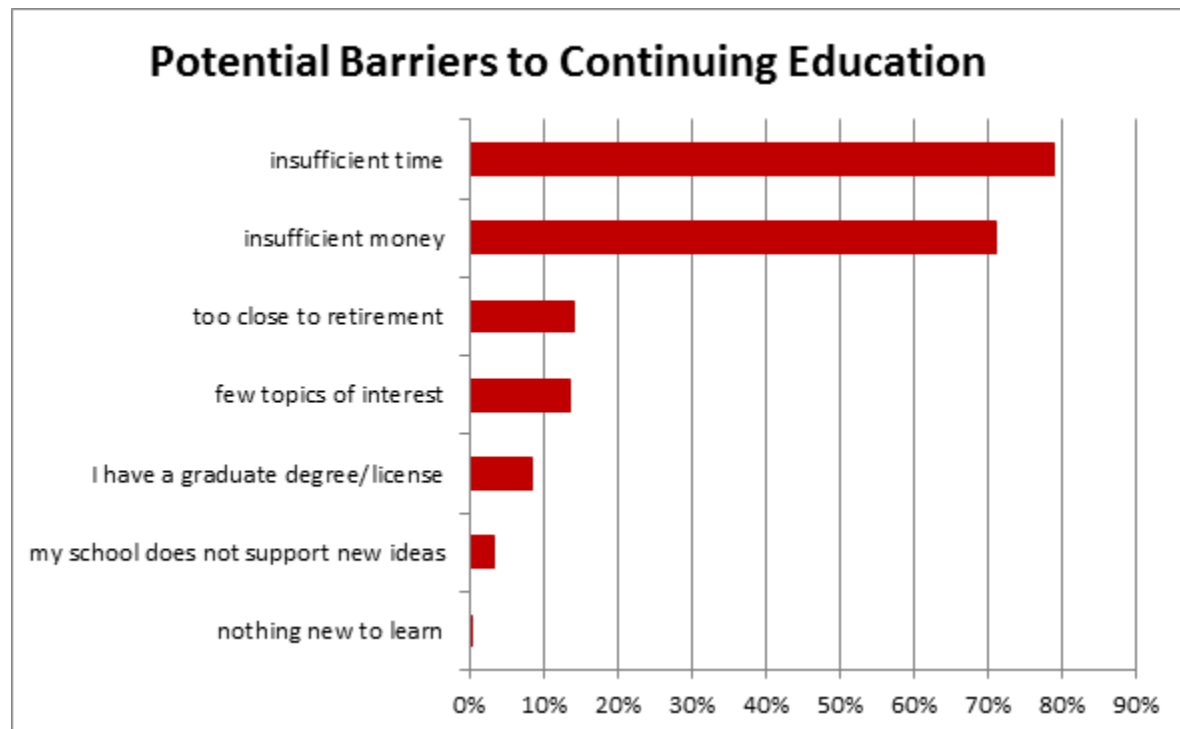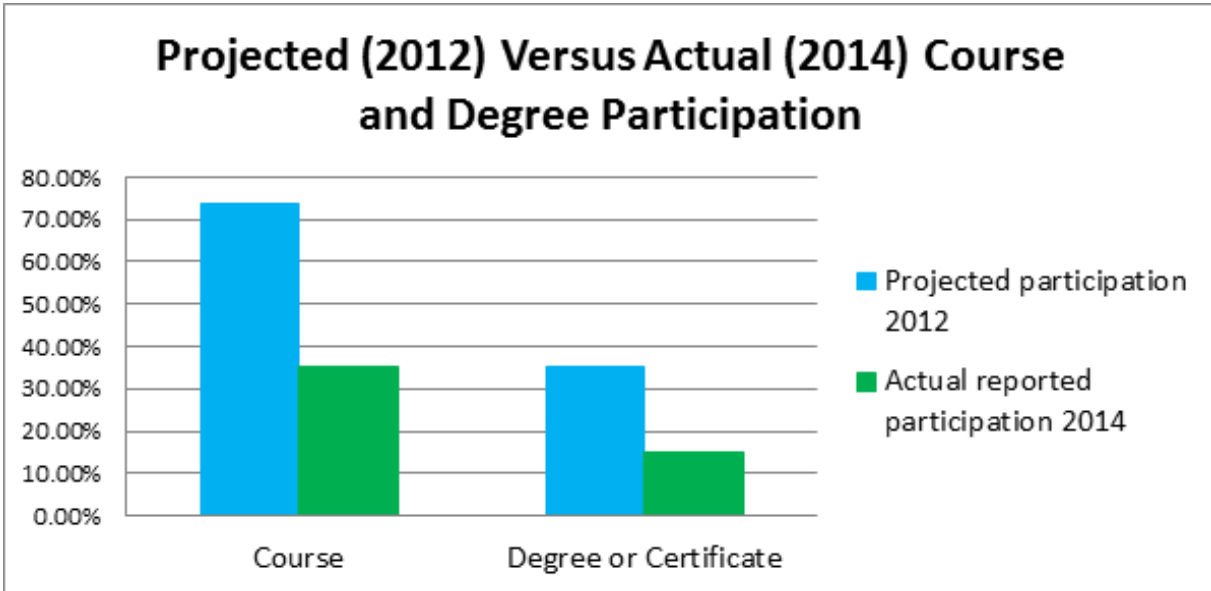
Time as a Barrier

The 2008 School and Staffing Survey data revealed that Lutheran teachers spend more time per week (55.1 hours) on all teaching related activities than *any other* group of teachers—public or private. And the teachers who desire continuing education the most, those in the early half of their careers, are the busiest.

WELS teachers who graduated in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s are eager to increase their continuing education. Yet those same teachers report having the least amount of time. Young teachers are often given more duties while veteran teachers tend to shed extra duties, and family life intensifies as children get older and in high school.
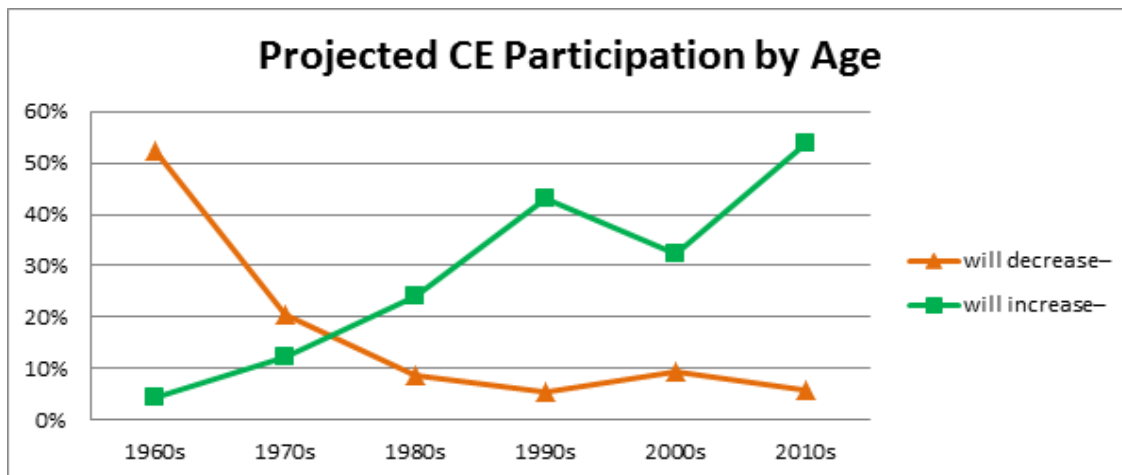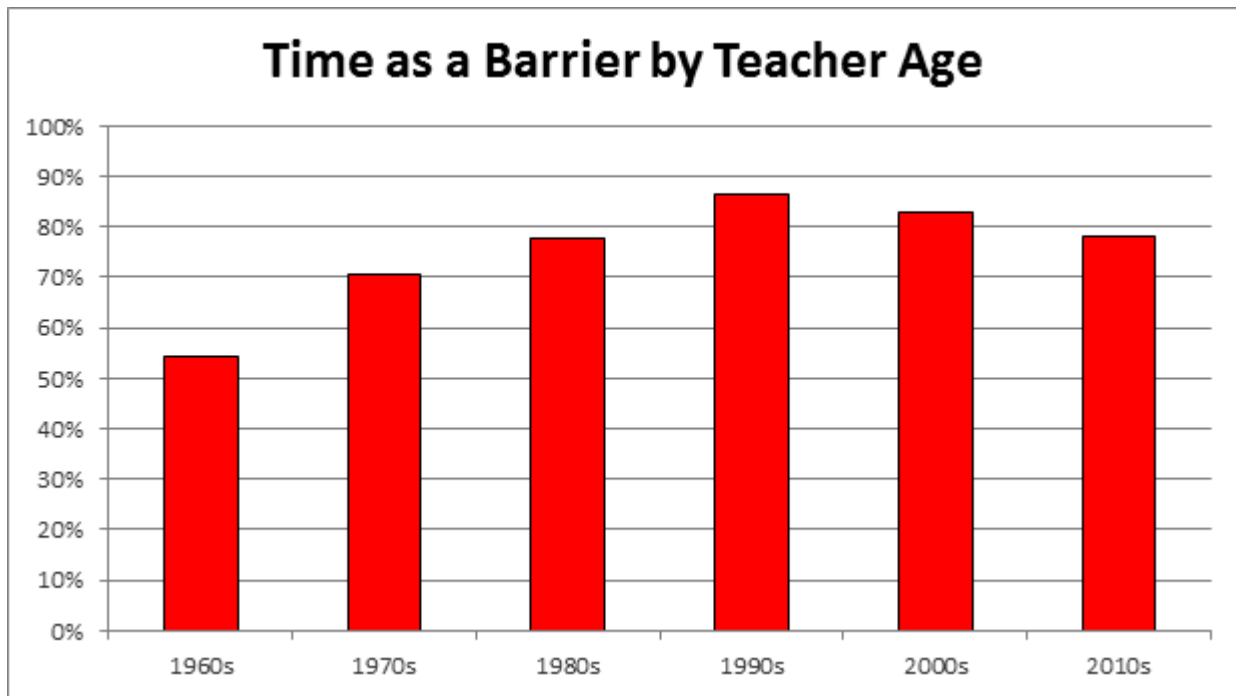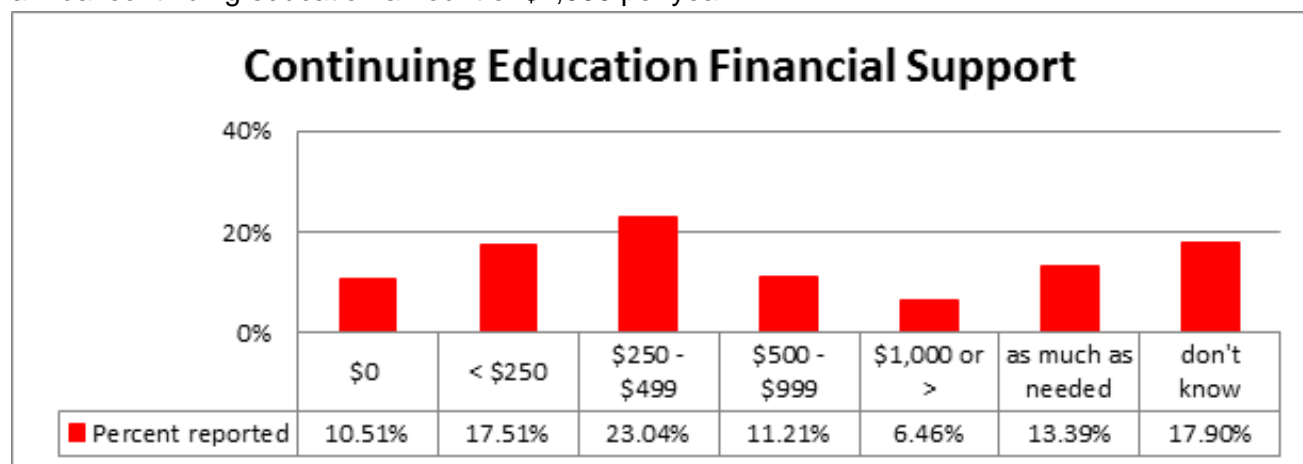
Money as a Barrier

   Ninety percent of those whose congregations provide no support reported money as their biggest hurdle to continuing education. Not surprisingly, the more a congregation provides in financial support for continuing education, the less money becomes a barrier. Only 40% of those who report their congregations provide as much funding as needed list money as a barrier to continuing education.
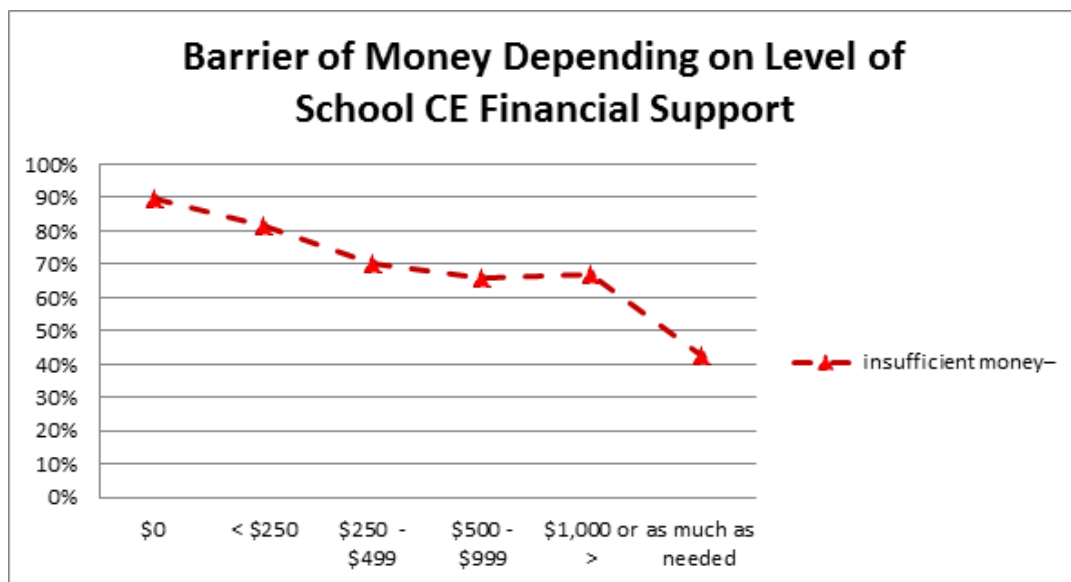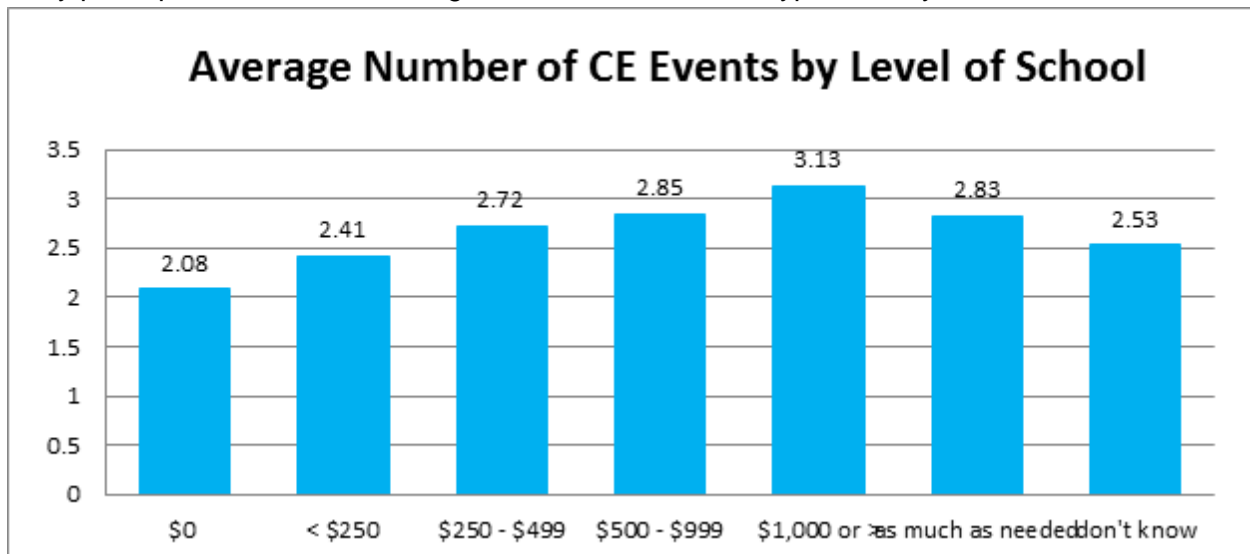

   The good news is that only about 11% of WELS teachers report receiving no funding for continuing education. The bad news is that 18% of WELS teachers say they don't even know how much their school provides, and only 6.5% say they receive the synod recommended annual continuing education amount of $1,000 per year.

	$0	< $250	$250 - $499	$500 - $999	$1,000 or >	as much as needed	don't know
Percent reported	10.51%	17.51%	23.04%	11.21%	6.46%	13.39%	17.90%

   Schools that provide at least $1,000 for each teachers' annual continuing education do so because they believe that professional growth is vital. These schools have a culture of professionalism. Their teachers participate in all types of continuing education—free or costly—at a higher rate than all other teachers. They are more likely to read professional blogs, journals, or books; attend school inservices and teachers' conferences; and take more courses. They are less likely to participate in a one-shot workshop.
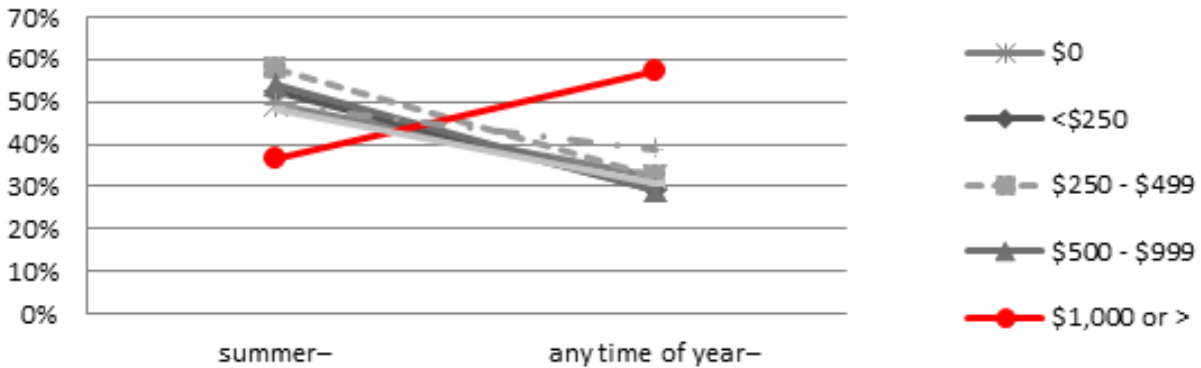
Impact of School CE Financial Support on Participation
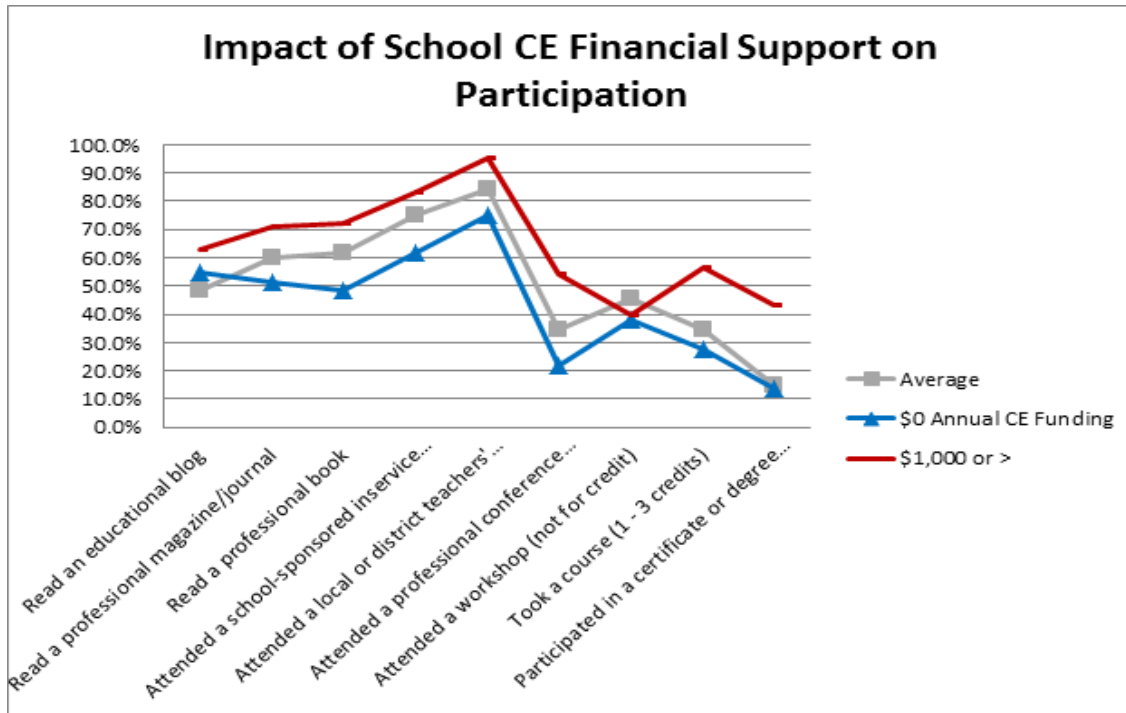
They participate in more continuing education events of all types each year.

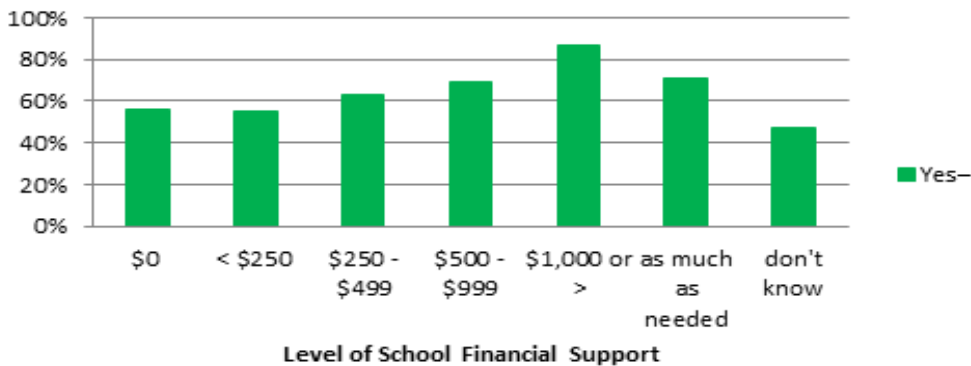**Average Number of CE Events by Level of School**

They are more likely to see continuing education as a year-round practice rather than a summer only option. Such a viewpoint is good since research shows continuing education to be most effective when job-embedded (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

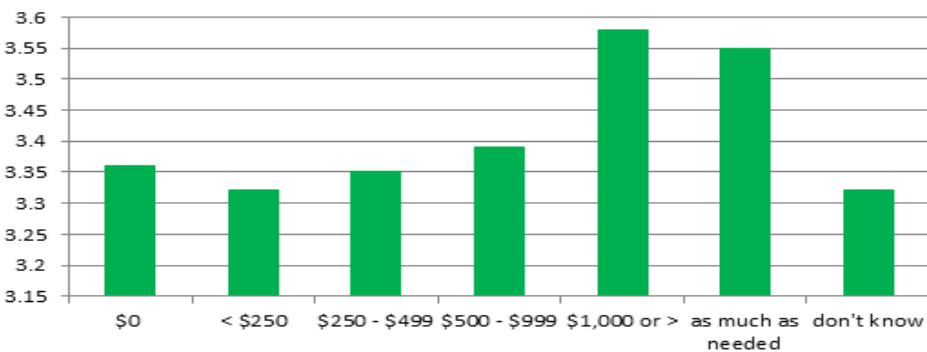## Preferred Time of Year for CE Based upon School CE Funding Level

Legend:
- — (×)
- $0 (*)
- <$250 (◆)
- $250 - $499 (▪, dashed)
- $500 - $999 (▲)
- $1,000 or > (● red)

X-axis: summer—, any time of year—
Y-axis: 0% to 70%

They participate in more online continuing education and rate it higher than others.

Q. 6: Have you ever tried online learning?

Legend: Yes—

X-axis (Level of School Financial Support): $0, < $250, $250 - $499, $500 - $999, $1,000 or >, as much as needed, don't know

Y-axis: 0% to 100%

Average Rating of Online Learning on a Scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high)

X-axis: $0, < $250, $250 - $499, $500 - $999, $1,000 or >, as much as needed, don't know

Y-axis: 3.15 to 3.6

There are WELS teachers and schools that have a culture of professional learning in which student achievement is a priority and regular reflection on student learning in formal settings is encouraged. In such cultures, all teachers regularly participate in inservices and teachers' conferences. Teachers read and share professional writings, and faculty meetings provide discussion time regarding student achievement and ways to improve it both individually and collectively. Such places do exist in the WELS and their financial commitment to continuing education is evidence of their professionalism.

V.   What Does This Mean?

Now we come to the crux of the matter. Motivated by God's spirit through faith in Christ, WELS teachers want to better serve the people whom God has entrusted to them. In part, dramatic shifts in American society in the last 25 years have left many WELS schools in jeopardy. If the legacy of WELS schools is going to be passed on to future generations, WELS schools and teachers need to reinvent themselves. But reinventing oneself is difficult work, and requires full commitment to organizational and personal learning. There are three simple things all schools and teachers can do right now to begin that transformation.

1. **Seek out professional development opportunities that impact student learning.**
   Books, journals, and blogs, are inexpensive ways to become aware of important issues and ideas. Conferences allow us to connect with other professionals and expand our thinking. But rigorous research has shown that learning that results in change and improved student achievement must be ongoing, intensive, embedded in practice, and accompanied by collaboration and feedback. We reviewed three models that work: a) A Coaching Model, b) A Professional Learning Community Model, and c) MLC's Teaching that Works Model. Other models are possible, and they all require a commitment of time and money.

2. **Ensure teachers have the time they need to learn and practice new ideas.**
   There are only 24 hours in a day, and your teaching days are already more than full. School budgets are stretched and hiring or calling additional people to help carry the load is out of the question. The solution is to rethink priorities.

   The way a person uses time is a choice. Those choices reflect what one believes to be important. Greatest importance should be placed on that which will ensure the long-time future of a church's educational ministry to children. Professional growth needs to come off of the bottom of the list of priorities and get to the top. Some things that are currently at the top will need to be moved down the list.

   When professional growth is a high priority, here are some choices a school might make.
   1. *The called worker's role of teacher will be most important.*
      The Lutheran teacher needs to be allowed to focus on her students and ways to improve her teaching. Too often congregations and schools seek to maximize their financial investment in their called workers and add as many additional duties to the position as possible. The called worker, in eagerness to be found

faithful, burns the candle on both ends, mistaking busyness and number of tasks for faithfulness. But the congregation who wants its school to succeed and the called worker who is truly faithful are the ones that recognizes that the role of teacher is the number one priority. Therefore they maximize the amount of time the teacher can devote to teaching and improving her craft.

The additional tasks added to a person's call can often be carried out by others, and it's ok if they are not done as well. If no volunteers come forward for a program, it needs to be dropped. By adding organ, VBS, choir directing, coaching, or Sunday school to a teacher's called responsibilities, three tragedies occur.
a) We deny congregation members the opportunity to offer their gifts of time and talents as a thank offering.
b) Called workers view these additional responsibilities as duties rather than an offering of faith. It is better to remove the duties from the call and allow the called worker to express them as a fruit of faith.
c) We lessen the quality of classroom instruction. Called workers cannot devote the time needed to teach well and to grow professionally.

2. *Older teachers can volunteer for additional school responsibilities to allow younger teachers the time for continuing education.*
   In general, our teaching culture accepts the following premises.
    a. Teachers with the most seniority have fewer school responsibilities outside the classroom, while the rookie teachers get assigned the most.

Time as a Barrier by Teacher Age
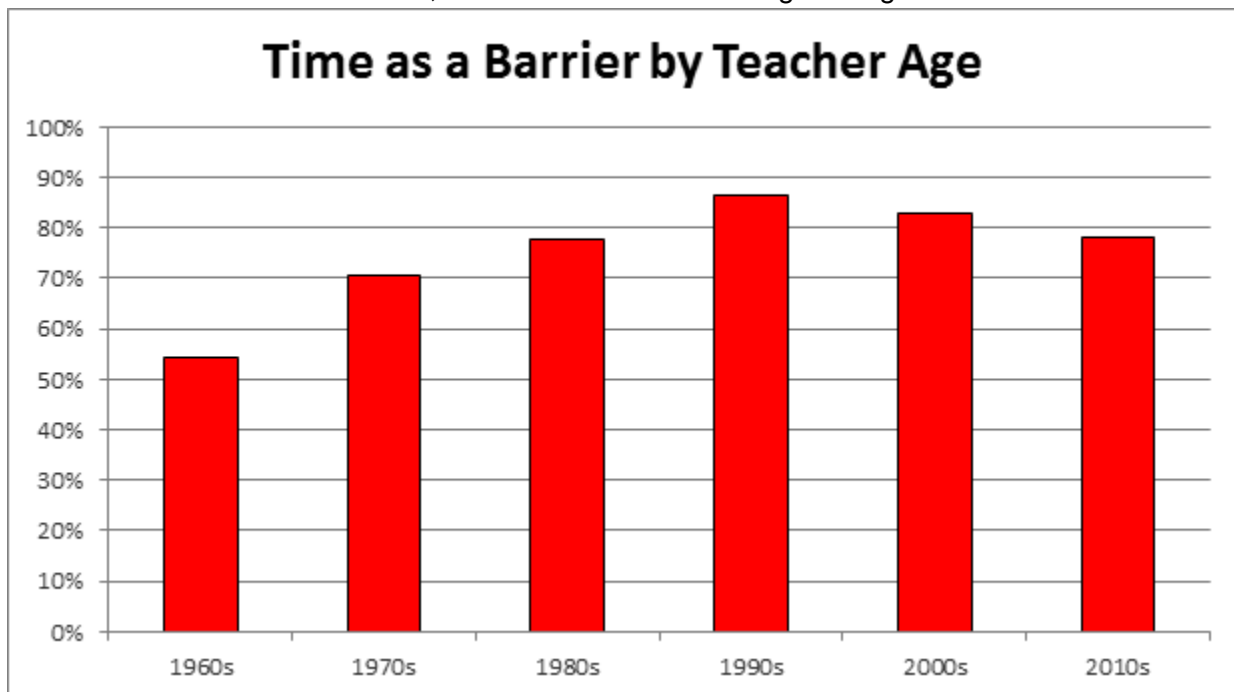
b. The closer a teacher gets to retirement, the less he is expected to grow professionally.

Those teachers most interested in growing professionally have the least amount of time, while those least interested in growing professionally have the most amount of time to do so. For the sake of our schools' futures, we need to adopt a new mentality. Those who have lost their zeal to learn and grow should offer to take additional duties to free up those who are most eager to grow can learn more.

Projected CE Participation by Age
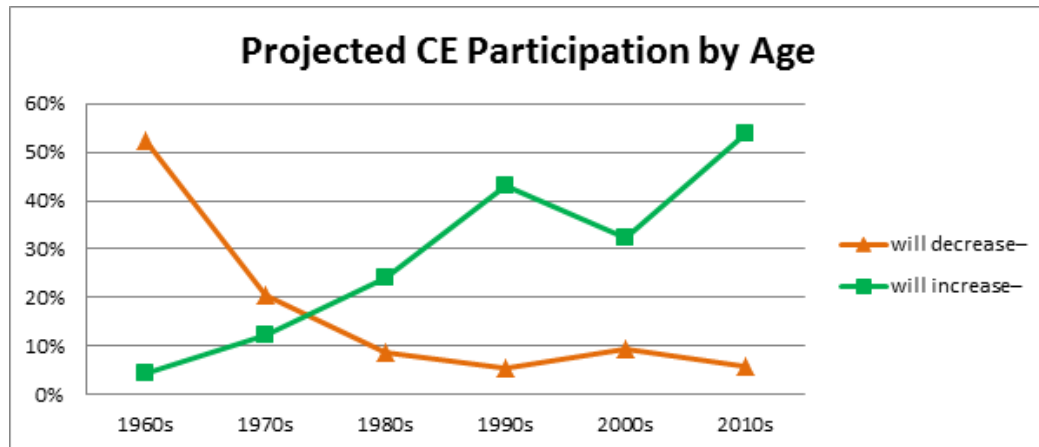
3. *Maximize already scheduled inservice days for high-impact professional development.*
    Public schools figured out a while ago that building professional development time into the regular school day works. I must confess that when I was a Lutheran school principal, I did not value these opportunities for faculty development. My priorities were
    a. Student learning. I noticed that student learning was disrupted when the district scheduled a half-day or full-day off in a week. I wanted to keep as many full weeks of school as possible.
    b. Parent convenience. Parents struggled to find care and transportation for students during half days, or they had to take time off from work.
    c. Teacher comfort. The teachers appreciated a day off to get caught up on school work or home life.
    d. Principal sanity. I did not want to organize professional learning activities on top of my already busy schedule.

    A school with a culture in which professional learning is the priority will make use of the already embedded time in the district school calendar to help its faculty and school improve.

4. *Every principal needs to have the administrative release time necessary to guide faculty and personal growth.*
    Central to school improvement is providing the principal with appropriate Administrative Release Time (ART). The Commission on Lutheran Schools has developed, and the 2013 synod convention has adopted, the model of 1 hour of

ART per week per every 7.5 students in the school. So the principal of a 75 student school should have 10 hours each week (2 hours / day) of time away from teaching to lead the school. The more people involved in the school (students, parents, faculty, staff) the more principal time is needed.

Most agree that every WELS school should follow the release time formula, but few WELS principals and members believe it is possible in their situation for financial reasons. ART is not a time issue. It's money issue, and most budgets are too tight. If the money was available, most schools would provide ART.

Providing the money may be possible. It requires that each child be assessed an additional Administrative Release Time annual fee of $200 (20 per month). A school of 75 students would collect $15,000 - enough to pay a teacher for 10 hours per week of release time. The congregation must agree that this money will be set aside expressly for the purpose of release time and will not be absorbed into the existing budget.

The allotted Administrative Release Time will enable the following principal functions:
   a. Improved communication with families, faculty, and congregation
   b. Instructional supervision of faculty
   c. Curriculum planning and oversight
   d. Long-range planning and school improvement
   e. Faculty development

When parents consider the cost of a tank of gas, a monthly cell phone, cable, gym membership, or private music or athletic lesson cost, most parents may be willing to pay $20 per month for improved school services for their children.

3. **Guarantee that each called worker receives at least $1,000 of annual continuing education support.**
Funding professional development for all teachers equally at this level demonstrates a commitment to professional learning. Likely, this amount will represent about 1.5% of the schools annual budget. If a school balks at the amount as extravagant, the school's culture of professional learning is likely poor. $1,000 annually is not extravagant. This amount would not even pay for a three credit graduate course at institutions besides MLC.

Each teacher and school can do the following:
   a. *Know how much continuing education financial support your school provides.* 18% of WELS teachers say they don't know how much their school provides, and those numbers are greatest among the oldest, the youngest, and female teachers. Not knowing how much your school provides may indicate an apathy for continuing education.

b. *Make sure that women get the same financial support as men.*
WELS women teachers report receiving less continuing education financial support than men at the elementary and high school levels. Given that women are twice as likely to not know what their school provides, this phenomenon may be a matter of faulty reporting. If, however, congregations provide less funding to women, this is problematic for two reasons. 1) It is a clear example of an unprofessional culture, and 2) it hinders WELS schools from improving since women make up 59% of the WELS teaching force.

Continuing Education Financial Support for WELS Men & Women Elementary Teachers
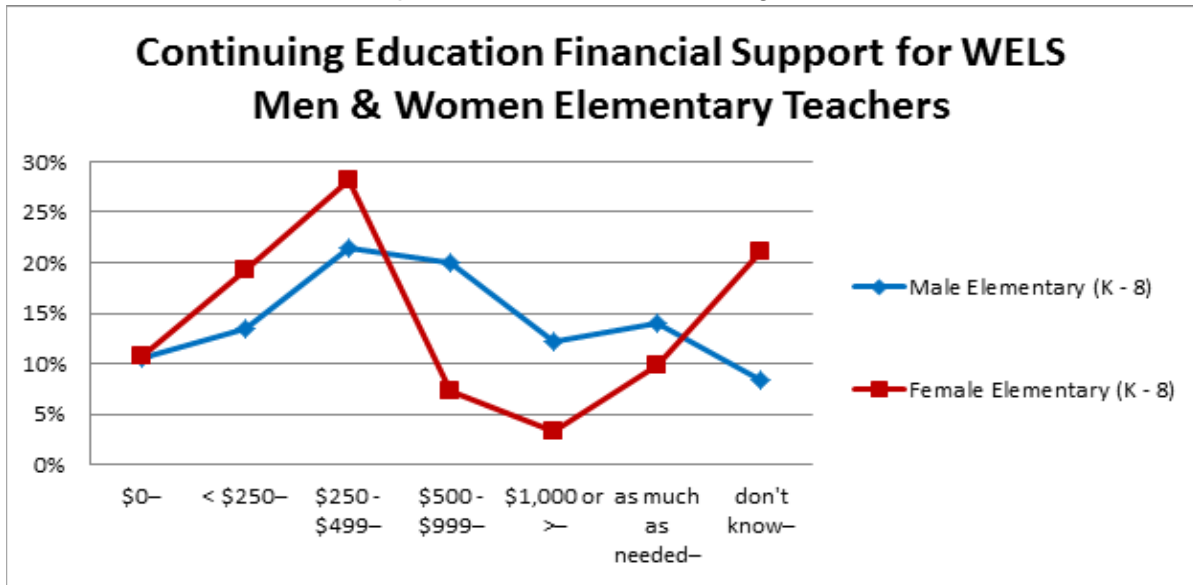
c. *Raise the continuing education financial support for early childhood teachers.*
Early childhood teachers report receiving less continuing education funding that other WELS teachers. 75% of our early childhood teachers have an elementary degree with little early childhood training. Early childhood is different from elementary, and early childhood teachers need to be growing in developmentally appropriate early childhood instruction.

Continuing Education Financial Support by Grade Level Taught
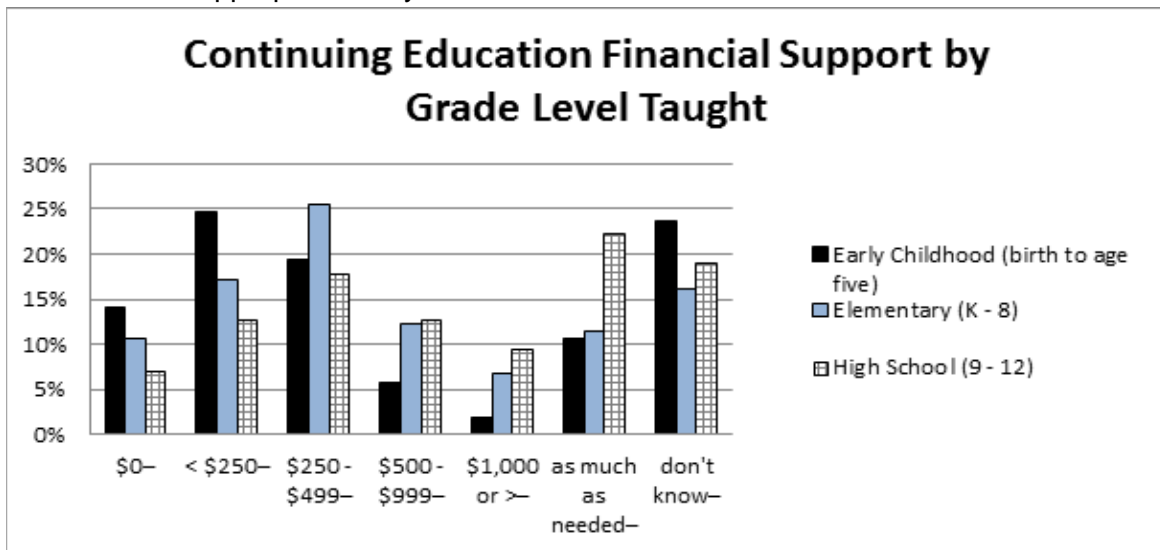
Conclusion

What WELS called teachers do today impacts the future trajectory of WELS education. Changing that trajectory requires everyone's cooperation. The 2009 synod in convention passed a resolution that stated, "that all called workers be encouraged to participate in current and future programs of continuing education, and that all WELS congregations be encouraged to support their called workers in these endeavors" (WELS Proceedings, 2009, p. 79). Since then, there has been a 27% increase in teacher continuing education participation.

The 2013 convention passed a resolution that all congregations provide at least $1,000 annually per called worker for continuing education. Only about 6.5% of our schools do. When I suggested my own congregation follow the synod guideline, I was told, "Well, we don't always do everything the synod tells us."

Every called worker needs to take personal responsibility to grow in ways that serve students and families better. If we respond by ignoring our synod's requests about continuing education, we will not make the kinds of transformations necessary to ensure that we can pass WELS schools to the next generation.

Our generation inherited a strong school system from our predecessors. Through WELS schools our faith was nurtured and God called us to ministry. On our watch these precious tools have faltered. Yet God called us to serve at this exact time and in our exact location. It is up to us to set WELS schools on a better path by learning how to teach all children in our day the truth of God's Word. I encourage each of you to turn your zeal to better serve God's people into action by learning ways to teach more of today's children.

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