



# A Course for Lutheran Early Childhood Educators



[pswcic.org](http://pswcic.org)

Discussion Guide - Introduction



## Course Description

This course serves as a modified version of the Early Childhood Curriculum for Lutheran Teachers which grew out of needs expressed by congregations of the Pacific Southwest District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to inform and acculturate early childhood teachers with answers to the following questions: What is a Lutheran school, specifically, early childhood center? How are Lutheran schools unique? What do Lutherans believe? What is the heritage of the Lutheran schools? What are the characteristics of the Lutheran teacher? With the goal of training and equipping early childhood educators for careers in Lutheran early childhood centers this course will focus on the following critical areas: 1) Lutheran thought and teaching (theology); 2) Nurturing the faith (faith development); 3) A distinctively Lutheran education (history of Lutheran education); 4) Methods and materials for teaching the faith to the young child. We pray that our new version will accomplish these goals in a way that is accessible, attractive, affordable, applicable and authentic.





## Course Objectives

### Upon completion of this course students will:

1. affirm the power of God's Word to create, sustain, and strengthen saving faith by the power of the Holy Spirit;
2. identify what Scripture teaches about itself;
3. affirm salvation in Christ by God's grace through faith in Christ Jesus as the key teaching of the Christian church;
4. describe how the gift of God's saving faith in Christ Jesus is lived out in faithful obedience as a response to the Gospel in our daily lives;
5. properly distinguish Law and Gospel in teaching and living;
6. explain God's teaching on Holy Baptism, including infant Baptism;
7. identify the goals of effective Christian education;
8. explain the three-part outline helpful in the teaching of a Bible story;
9. recognize the vital role of the family in transferring the faith from one generation to the next and describe how the Lutheran school assists in this role;
10. describe a classroom in which all that occurs is rooted and centered in the Gospel;
11. appreciate the role of Lutheran schools as extensions of the ministry of the congregation to persons of all ages;
12. identify the important role of Christian educators;
13. describe the history and traditions of the LCMS particularly as they apply to Christian education;
14. compare the teaching in Lutheran schools to teaching in other educational settings;
15. identify the distinctive elements of a Lutheran approach to Christian education;
16. describe how God motivates, encourages, and equips His teachers of the faith;
17. identify how the task of integrating the Christian faith throughout the curriculum is accomplished; and
18. identify resources helpful in teaching God's Word.





## Introduction:

Congratulations on your position at your Lutheran Early Childhood Center. Our Lutheran Churches and Schools have a long historic tradition of excellent Christ-centered education, and your role is critical in nurturing a strong spiritual foundation for children and their families in a loving environment.

### Session Objectives:

2, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13

### Opening Prayer:

*Heavenly Father, we thank you for calling each of your children into various vocations. Please use us to serve our neighbor and in so doing, serve you. We ask for you to send your Holy Spirit to us now as we seek to be formed for service and deployed in the mission. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.*



## Lutheran History:

The focus of education has deep roots in the Lutheran Church. As Martin Luther visited churches and villages in the 1500s, he found that common people did not know Christian Doctrine and that the pastors were unskilled and incapable of teaching it. This led him to write his *Large Catechism* to be used by pastors and other clergy and his *Small Catechism* to be used in the home by fathers to teach to their children. At this time Bibles were scarce and could only be found within the walls of a church or university, not to mention they were not written in the language of the people. The word of God was not accessible to the people. Wanting all people to have access to God's Word Martin Luther translated the Bible into German. This was the first time that God's Word was able to be read by common people. With the invention of the printing press, God's Word spread.

Martin Luther saw the vocation of a parent as God's highest calling and could see that many parents were neglecting the responsibility to bring up their children in the knowledge of God's Word. He found that this was due to a number of factors. First, many parents lacked the decency to teach their children, second most were unfit for the task or lacked the time, opportunity or funds to do it. He believed that the Fourth Commandment (honoring your father and your mother) extended to schools in that teachers exercise a delegated authority to bring up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4).

When 12 pastors representing 14 congregations gathered in Chicago in 1847 to form what we know as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, one of their reasons for coming together as a synod was "the promotion of special church projects," which included school books. The first constitution of this new church body notes under the heading "Conditions under which a congregation may join Synod and remain a member" is the "provision of a Christian education for the children of the congregations" (Concordia Historical Quarterly 16:1, April 1943). Histories have been kept on 13 of our founding congregations, and each had a day school right from the start, demonstrating the importance of Christian education within these Lutheran communities.

Today more than 1,200 early childhood centers and preschools are operated by congregations and Christian day schools within the LCMS. More than 87,000



children, ranging in age from infant/toddler to 5 years of age, are involved in these programs.

The Pacific Southwest District (PSD), Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is one of 35 districts that make up the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in the United States. The PSD serves schools in and congregations in Arizona, the southern half of California, and Clark County, Nevada. We currently have 98 early childhood centers in our district.

Your Lutheran Preschool continues to be a ministry of the church in making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20) and you have a very important role serving as the beautiful feet who share the good news of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:15) with that same delegated authority to bring up children in the instruction of the Lord.

### Read:

- Matthew 19:13-15
- Deuteronomy 6:5-7
- Psalm 78:5-7
- 2 Timothy 3:14-17
- Ephesians 6:1-4
- 1 Peter 2:9

### Reflect:

- What example did Jesus set in His value of children?
- How did Martin Luther show he valued children?
- How did the predominant culture in Jesus' time, and Martin Luther's time value children?
- How does our culture value children now?
- As you look at the religious makeup of the families at your school, do you notice any similarities to Martin Luther's era of the 1500's?
- How does your church show that they value children?
- How do you show how you value the children and families in your care?
- Based on the Bible readings and historical background of the LCMS, what do you think are the goals of effective Lutheran education?
- What do you hope to gain from this course?



## Respond:

- Briefly state the mission statement of your church/school.
- Take some time and write down your personal statement of faith. You could begin with, "I believe..."
- In what ways can you share your faith with the children and families in your classroom/school to fulfill the Great Commission and the mission of your church/school?

\*Use the [respond introduction mission exercise pdf](#) to assist you in documenting your response.

## Closing Prayer:

*Heavenly Father, you have given us all an important task, that is to help others know you and your saving work done in Jesus Christ. Help us as we serve the children who come to our schools know that you dearly love them. Give us the words to share with them so that they may know your love and be with you forever in heaven. Amen.*

## Additional Resources:

The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod <https://www.lcms.org/>

The Pacific Southwest District School Ministries <http://www.pswcic.org>

Join our PSD LCMS Facebook Group "Making Jesus Real" to ask questions and join in on discussions regarding faith and faith development.





## General Resources:

### Devotions:

- Lutheran Hour Ministries <https://www.lhm.org/dailydevotions>
- Lutheran Church Charities  
<https://www.lutheranchurchcharities.org/devotions.html>

