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EDUCATION EVANGELISM:
SIXTEEN BEST PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL OUTREACH

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EDUCATION EVANGELISM:
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Abstract

Students from non-Christian homes are coming in unprecedented numbers to Christian schools in the Milwaukee area due to the unique school voucher program begun in 2001. Each of the Christian schools in the voucher program, including the one where this writer serves, is searching for the best evangelism tactics. This new frontier can learn from the outreach efforts of Milwaukee's Lutheran voucher schools.

Pioneering experience, articles and interviews will reveal the history and practice of ministry in the voucher program and look toward the future. Surveys of ministry leaders will explain the results of different strategies. Surveys and interviews of current school families and graduates will identify how many families entered these schools considering themselves Christians and what became of their spiritual situation after graduation. Best ministry practices will be suggested based on this research.

Abstract length: 135 words.

Dedication

I dedicate my thesis to my wife Rebecca, who daily is an evangelist at St. Marcus Lutheran School, and without whom I would follow Jesus so much less closely.

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Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The People in Need

A woman in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, loved her children but did not love her children's school. She searched for a new one.¹ She had heard many stories from her friends and had personal experience in Milwaukee Public Schools that led her to look elsewhere, but the unique medical needs of one of her children made her wonder whether any non-public school would have the necessary resources. She searched. She talked to her friends. She finally took a school tour. As a result she enrolled her children in a school that was part of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. Without the voucher that she qualifies to receive, she would not have been close to being able to pay the tuition for her four children to enroll in the private Christian school she now had her heart set on.

This mother was not disappointed as her family made the transition to a new school. There were concerns. The academics were a step up. She had to find just the right uniforms. At first her children received more notes of discipline than she was used to. Her children noticed right away the added load of homework and the immediate accountability for missing or incomplete work. Slowly, yet surely the family realized the academic change that was taking place.

Just as surely a spiritual change was taking place. These children were not only getting reading and writing but also Moses and Jesus. Each day her children learned a Bible story and as part of their homework or just because they could not contain it, they shared that story with their parents. Each week the students learned another catchy song about Jesus that they could not help

¹ _____, _____, interviewed by author, Milwaukee, WI, November 12, 2013.

but sing in the car or hum in the living room. Each day a happy mom saw a spiritual growth happening in her children as they became more and more motivated to learn because of what they knew Jesus had done for them.

Then the Holy Spirit's work really exploded in this family. Toward the end of that first year, this woman's children were all asking to be baptized. They had learned about it in their classroom as they listened to the story of Jesus' baptism. They saw one of their fellow students baptized in chapel and wanted to be next. This hesitant mom followed her children's wishes and contacted the school's pastor. After a short conversation her mind was at ease. The pastor explained the steps and met with her and scheduled a time to meet in person. Soon her four children were baptized and she was a proud mother who was now more certain than ever that her chosen school would be a blessing.

Even though this mom was overjoyed at what God had done for her children, it took one more year for her to see that this same Jesus and same church could also be the same blessing for her. This mother called that same school pastor and again asked to schedule a baptism, but this time it was for her. During the visit and instruction for the baptism, the school pastor lined up another pastor who would do in-home Bible study with her and her husband. The first in-home visit was initially scary not only for this mom and her husband but also for their instructor, the newly semi-retired pastor who just moved to the city.² But after a few minutes the three of them felt like a family and began a walk through God's word that would last 19 weeks. This relationship would culminate in both parents standing in front of church, confessing their faith with their entire family and becoming members of the congregation.

² Kurt Grunewald, interviewed by author, Milwaukee, WI, November 11, 2013.

That was only the start. This mother became a force of evangelism and enrollment at the school. She invited her coworkers, friends, family members and neighbors to try out the school and the church. She eventually was hired to serve as the school ministry assistant where she worked full time making connections for Jesus to school families.

She reached out to a particular mom who had a broken past of addiction and being abused. She had advised this mom to experience what she had at St. Marcus. Her voice was not enough to win her over. But when other friends and neighbors told her the same thing and she even heard about the school on the TV news, she decided to give it a try. But she was not interested in the “church” part of the school.³ At least she was not interested until the Holy Spirit did his work.

This woman’s daughter enrolled in kindergarten and faithfully brought home a Bible story every week and sang many catchy Jesus songs. The child talked about going to chapel and learning how to pray and that she was going to heaven when she died. This daughter kept on bringing “church” home to her mom whether she wanted it or not. But this mom loved her daughter so much that everything her daughter was excited about was worth listening to.

The first time that her daughter’s class was scheduled to sing at a Sunday church service arrived. This seemed like a cheap trick. It was not fair. Her daughter’s teacher made cute little hats out of construction paper that each student wore on their head that read, “Listen to me sing in church this Sunday at 10:30!” When that Sunday came, the mom planned to sleep in but her daughter got up extra early and reminded her that she was supposed to sing her song. Not because she wanted to but because it was easier to just give in, this mom brought her child to sing that Sunday morning. She dropped her off and headed back to the car. She only headed into

³ _____, interviewed by author, Milwaukee, WI, November 13, 2013.

church as the service began hoping that people would not notice her. This mom did sneak in and wave at her daughter as she sang the song her mom had heard at least 20 times already at home. That day after church nothing drastic happened but a spiritual door had been opened.

Over the course of the next few years, each teacher and educational assistant who interacted with this family gave them a little more Jesus and took away a few more fears. The sacrifice and care of the staff was just above and beyond what she expected and powerfully witnessed to the difference Jesus makes. Each time she came to hear her daughter sing in church, she felt a little more comfortable. Then her daughter wanted to be baptized. After that this mom surprised herself by listening to the school Dean's suggestion of taking a Bible class. Everything looked great! But after six classes she suddenly stopped her discipleship plan. Nothing seemed to reach her. Was she reverting back to past problems?

The next year when this mom dropped off her daughter, she discovered a new space. A building expansion project had added a school ministry suite. She found coffee and some treats but more importantly she found the chance to reconnect with the mom who advised her to come to this school and now worked in this office. They carried on many conversations. Weeks passed. Finally she was ready and restarted her Bible classes with the school pastor with whom she felt much more comfortable.

When it was announced to the staff that this mom was being confirmed as a member of the congregation several months later, jaws dropped and a few tears of joy were shed. The transformation was miraculous. The day of her confirmation she stood in front of the church. Many on staff made a special point to be there and hear her confess her faith and before the entire congregation tell her story of how the school and many adults in it had made all the

difference. This story is one of many that God has written already. This story is also only a glimpse of the future stories that could be all around the city of Milwaukee.

The Opportunity

The real start of education evangelism goes back many years in Milwaukee. This city has a strong history of Christian schools, especially Lutheran and Catholic. These schools have a good reputation in the community and have emotional ties for multiple generations. As the Milwaukee public schools continued to suffer from an ever worsening reputation, parents increasingly desired to get their children into one of these “better” private schools. But just as the desire for private religious schools rose, so did the cost of tuition. For many of the most broken families, the hope of sending their children to anything but a public school was non-existent. Even though parents preferred these private religious schools, these schools’ enrollment numbers continued to shrink.

Then in 1991, a school voucher program began in Milwaukee that allowed private non-religious schools to accept a voucher to fund the attendance of low-income students. It was one of the first of its kind in America and controversial. The Wisconsin State Supreme Court surprised its observers in 1998 when it ruled by a 5 to 4 decision that private religious schools could also participate in this program. Milwaukee’s religious schools wrestled with this idea and did not know whether they should participate or not. Most at first chose not to get into the program fearing government control, the quality of students they would attract, or what to do with un-churched students and families that would enter the program. But a few religious schools jumped into the program and opened their doors to more low-income students.

That first year, four religious schools were in the program with only 136 total voucher students. Ten years later that number ballooned to 3,456. The voucher program itself has

extended to all Milwaukee county residents and Racine and now in a limited way is in the entire state. Though it is very controversial, the voice of the people blessed by the program has expanded the program despite the protests of the public school teachers union and strong political forces.

The educational opportunity in Milwaukee is large and growing. The families of Milwaukee have lost confidence in Milwaukee Public Schools and are actively looking for alternatives. Charter schools and choice schools are seen by many as the only viable option for parents who want good education for their children. Only a few hold out optimism that Milwaukee Public Schools can be turned into the desired school of parents and children. This opportunity can be demonstrated by the full enrollments and waiting lists of dozens of choice schools and the move by most of those schools to look to expand to full capacity on their current campus, look for new campuses, and to expand even further.⁴

The funding opportunity is large and looks to be growing. Before the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program there were many private Christian schools making differences in the lives of students. Many of those schools were operating and turning out well-educated graduates spending less than \$3000 per student.⁵ The voucher amount more than doubles that amount and still is less than half of the cost of sending a child to a Milwaukee public school. Although the choice voucher increase was 0% for the past seven years, Wisconsin's Governor Scott Walker has proposed in his latest budget a 9% increase that would help catch up the amount to where it might have been with an inflationary increase each of the past years. The number of voucher students allowed by the state has continued to rise. The success of the voucher program and the

⁴ "Vision," Schools that Can, December 5, 2013, accessed December 5, 2013, <http://stcmilwaukee.org>.

⁵ LeDell D. Plath, "Who Will Pay for Our Elementary Schools?" *Forward in Christ*, January 1990, accessed July 18, 2013, <http://www.wels.net/news-events/forward-in-christ/archive>.

overall savings to the state makes this likely to continue. In the most recent Wisconsin state budget, the number of voucher students received no cap, including up to 500 outside of Milwaukee and Racine and the voucher amount will be increased for the first time in seven years. There will be a 9% increase in 2014-15 and after that the voucher amount will be automatically increased proportionally with the public school funding amount.⁶

The spiritual opportunity is even greater than the funding and educational opportunities. Milwaukee has many churches in the city but still has a high rate of un-churched and under-churched persons. Most Christian choice schools report that only one third of their school families identify themselves as being active in a Christian church. Even if all the students in Milwaukee were Christian, the huge opportunity would remain to disciple them the way a five day a week, eight hour per day program can. The spiritual opportunities are truly unlimited.

The Challenges

The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program offers so many opportunities for Christian schools about which many other Christian schools and ministries can only dream. But there still are real obstacles to launching a Christian choice school and effectively doing ministry in and through the school.

The first challenge is simply the fear of change. When a Christian school has operated in a certain way for over 100 years, like many of Milwaukee's Christian schools, it is difficult to take a risk. Christian schools are often leery of entangling themselves with the government. There is a fear that the one who supplies the money will use that money as leverage to force the toning down of the Christian message and morals. There is a fear that once a school gets used to being funded by the government, it will never be able to sustain itself again if that huge money

⁶ Patrick Marley, "Republicans Outline Deal on School Vouchers," <http://www.jsonline.com/blogs/news/209491511.html>.

source is ever taken away. There is a fear that the spiritual, economic or ethnic background of the choice students will have a negative impact on the other students in the school and will ultimately undermine the school's quality, mission and spiritual tone.

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod schools are now one of the largest and most visible Christian school systems in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program.⁷ Yet, when the choice program first became eligible to be utilized by religious schools there was an article in that church body's official publication offering many reasons why no WELS school would ever enter the program.⁸ The first year, one WELS school did enter the program and felt the pushback from others in their church body. Over the course of the next years, many WELS schools in Milwaukee entered the program and the schools that did not, declined in enrollment and eventually closed.

Another challenge came as Christian schools entered the program. Sometimes the main motivation for the school leaders to enter the program was fear of their school closing. Schools that looked to the program to save their school instead of looking to save souls found it difficult to keep up the high level of motivation needed by staff and board members to do what was necessary to make a choice school successful. Occasionally a majority of the original students in the school left for other schools. Similarly many of the original staff left and the morale of school leaders dipped.

Entering the choice program often brought a sudden increase of enrollment and brought with it the need for more staff, classrooms and infrastructure. The most difficult for schools to

⁷ "Milwaukee Parental Choice Program – September MPCP Pupil Headcount History by School, 1990-91 through 2012-13" Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, July 17, 2013, accessed July 17, 2013, http://sms.dpi.wi.gov/sms_choice.

⁸ Daniel Schmeling "WELS Schools Opt Out of State Program," *Forward in Christ*, October 1998, accessed July 18, 2013, <http://www.wels.net/news-events/forward-in-christ/archive>.

grasp was the business infrastructure. More administration and business staff were needed to keep the financial choice paperwork and handle the relationships with the many new families that often needed more attention than the average family in the school before choice.

The final and most significant challenge was how to share God's word and take advantage of this opportunity. Before the choice program, most of Milwaukee's private Christian schools served mainly families of their own church body or congregation. Lutheran schools had mainly Lutheran families in them. Catholic schools had mainly Catholic families in them. The students who had no Christian background or actively attended a different type of church were the exception in those schools. The spiritual and physical needs of the average new student (and his family) entering a school through the choice program were significantly higher. These needs overwhelmed the ministry capacity of church staff and members as they scrambled just to handle the adjustments needed to make a larger school function.

The Limitations

Analyzing the blessing of the ministries involved in school choice has a number of limitations and challenges. First, it is always difficult to assess spiritual blessings since only God truly sees what is in a person's heart.⁹ Even the visible expressions of faith as a result of Christian choice schools are hard to measure. Most choice schools also have not kept good record of those spiritual blessings because of lack of staff. They all have great anecdotes of blessings experienced by individuals, but they are not sure how many students or family members came to faith or grew in faith. Some schools can identify how many school family members were baptized or joined their congregation, but they cannot get a good grasp on the spiritual blessings that may have occurred in other congregations. There also is not a control

⁹ 1 Samuel 16:7.

group to accurately measure against. The hard question is: would these families have spiritually grown through some other connection if the Christian choice school had not stepped in? Finally, spiritual blessings are eternal in nature and the ultimate spiritual impact to consider is how many new people end up in heaven because of the work God does through these choice schools. This number would include not only students and family members but also all of the people they might personally evangelize. Moreover the spiritual impact these students would have on their own children and through them each generation until the end of the world. It is also truly hard to get an accurate picture of a program that has only been around for 15 years. Any student that graduated from eighth grade that first year, attending a Christian Choice school one year, would only be 30 years old today and years before his greatest spiritual impact on others.

Each choice school is unique in its resources and opportunities. The analysis of raw data might be misleading because there are too many variables to take into account. Instead, it seems best to simply note what practices and strategies the Holy Spirit has blessed and is blessing in each school and identify noticeable patterns. This research can produce a recommended list of ministry ideas a school in the program should consider and try. This thesis will make a case from circumstantial evidence for these best practices and then measure them against the little spiritual results data available.

Theological Basis

These schools and the Christians who support and serve in these schools prayerfully look for best practices because of Christ's command to all Christians: "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."¹⁰ Not only does this command tell all

¹⁰ Matthew 28:18-20.

Christians to be busy getting others connected to Jesus, but it particularly hits home with those who have a heart and gifts for teaching and mentoring the next generation. It is in a school setting where students sit at the feet of Christian teachers who represent Jesus. It is in a school setting where students get a full dose of God's word both as something for their mind and heart to grasp but also for their lives to be engaged.

It is "all nations" that leads Christian schools and congregations who could have comfortably disciplined their own children for years to come, to open their classrooms and lives to more students. "All nations" drives schools to put choice students in every last seat and every last classroom on their campuses. It pushes Christian choice schools to build more classrooms and pursue additional campuses. It empowers leaders to envision a future where there are enough Christian choice seats in Milwaukee to let every parent who wants his child to sit in one, actually do it.

The verse that follows the great commission gives all those who serve in Christian choice schools comfort that they do not do this alone, but Jesus is there. Jesus is in each school and hallway and classroom. Jesus is in each Christian teacher and staff person. Jesus is in each student that the Holy Spirit works in. Jesus promises: "And surely I am with you always till the very end of the age."¹¹

Methodology

There are many people and institutions doing ministry in Milwaukee's Christian voucher schools but few of them know what the others are doing or the results of their efforts. This thesis' investigation focuses on schools that are or come from a Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) background. To discover what this group of God's people is doing, this author

¹¹ Matthew 28:20.

personally interviewed ministry leaders and key individuals involved in evangelism at those Christian schools. This author asked them for ministry tactics they have used in the past and their perception of their success. He sought any data they have that documents both opportunities and successes. This author asked for their vision of the future and what problems and proposals they are currently wrestling with. He also surveyed the ultimate students (those students in their final year, usually eighth grade) in a sampling of these schools to assess the students' perception of their spiritual growth while in those institutions. By comparing that data, the relative effectiveness of different tactics will be seen.

By putting all of that data together, a group of general best practices showed itself. This author shares practical advice gleaned from those interviewed on the subtleties of implementing those preferred techniques. The current implementation of these best practices will be compared to the measurable spiritual blessings to test the validity of those practices. This author advises assessment tools to help ministries in choice school assess and guide their planning as they look to the future. These findings and tools will be useful for ministries currently serving children and families in voucher schools and those ministries that might have the opportunity to start such a ministry. Finally, this author gives a vision of the future for ministry and blessings in Milwaukee's Christian voucher school movement.

Chapter 1 will review the history of school vouchers in the world, America and how it came to be centered and led in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. From the history and a look at the current educational and political landscape, the future of vouchers schools will be envisioned. This historical look will help understand how ministries took the shape they are in and will help motivate change to fit the future.

Chapter 2 looks at what Christian voucher schools in Milwaukee are currently doing to minister to its students and their families. A wide array of techniques, programs and strategies that are currently being used will be described and briefly analyzed. The blessings the Holy Spirit has given through these techniques will be shared both through statistical data when available and via anecdotal stories that will be representative of the many souls touched.

This large of number of different ministry techniques will be sorted out in chapter three. The ministry practices that bring the most consistent blessings in the most locations will be brought together in a recommended menu. Each best practice will be dissected and how to venture into such a practice will be detailed. Each practice will include reasons why or why not a particular ministry would be blessed. Each practice will highlight any ministries that are doing that practice exceptionally well.

Chapter 4 details how a school voucher ministry would annually proceed after trying to implement some best practices. Also, a proposal for Christian voucher schools to share ministry ideas in the future will be delineated so that these ministries will not stay silo-ed, or isolated, like they have in the past. The appendix will include assessments used in this thesis' research, a proposal for expansion of ministry, and some historical data.

Review of Literature

There is much literature today about voucher schools in general and their academic side. There are active websites and foundations doing research and publishing conclusions on both sides. There are also many authors and groups doing research and sharing best practices with teachers, instructing them how best to manage behavior and instruct children in an urban setting. There are also a number of books about running a Christian private school from an educational or administrative point of view and a few from a ministry point of view. But there are none that

look at the unique ministry that happens in a Christian voucher school where a large number of students, often the majority, come from non-Christian homes, broken families and a low-socio-economic status.

Christian Education: It is What Christians Do

Many Christian leaders and authors have identified Christian education as what each person and group of Christians is to do. It is the mission. Robert Pazmino shows how even though Christian education has always been at the core of what Christians do, the methods have continued to change with each generation.¹² There are changing factors and new types of distractions with each passing year. The advent of the voucher school is just another new factor that leads a Christian and his church to ask an old question, “How do I best teach someone about Jesus?”

Jack Seymour shows how each congregation must take an approach to Christian education. Whether intentionally or not, a congregation’s reason and desired outcome of Christian education will change what they do and how they do it. Churches that have ventured into a school ministry that invites many from a different racial background and socio-economic status find there needs to be a shift of approach for best success. Seymour very well explains the approach that seems to fit best in those circumstances, seeing education as social transformation.

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In the collection of articles entitled, “Christian Education: Foundations for the Future” many experienced authors share their perspective on how education needs to fit in with a

¹² Robert W. Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: an Introduction in Evangelical Perspective*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

¹³ Editor and Jack L. Seymour, *Mapping Christian Education: Approaches to Congregational Learning* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997).

congregation's entire ministry.¹⁴ Many anecdotes and perspectives are shared in different situations. Many congregations with voucher schools find that their school grows and quickly becomes the biggest ministry in their church. This can happen so quickly that it is tough for a congregation to adjust and keep the school in perspective and keep their congregation healthy overall. The collection of articles helps leaders of such ministries be proactive and reactive knowing that this is a normal but necessary part of church management.

Christian Schools as Evangelism

Many Christian churches and organizations that operate schools see their school mainly as training the next generation of Christians. They assume that their students will come from Christian homes already discipling their children for Christ. Those involved in voucher school ministry cannot assume this or they will fail. The collection of articles entitled, "Perspectives on Christian Teaching: Foundations of Christian School Education" contains many articles that help a voucher school leader check himself and what he and his school are doing.¹⁵ In particular, Daniel Egeler's insights into understanding cultural context are a valuable resource to remind those involved in voucher education that their students probably come from and live in a culture different from their own. Vernard Gant also highlights the unique differences of an urban school in its methods and its outcomes.

Lutherans have long seen education as part of what they do well. This extends from elementary schools to high schools to colleges and seminaries. But Lutherans have not often seen evangelism as a part of the education that they did. Norma Cook Everist brought together a

¹⁴ Robert E Clark, Lin Johnson, and Allyn K Sloat, eds., *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*(Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1991)

¹⁵ Various, *Foundations of Christian School Education*, ed. James Braley, Jack Layman, and Ray White (Colorado Springs, CO: Purposeful Design Publications, 2003).

number of authors, mainly professors, to share their insights into this “new” emphasis for Lutherans in education. This collection shows not only the outlook of those training the next generation, but it shows the struggles that many life-long Christians may have in seeing a Christian school in a new way. There is excitement in the many stories about some Lutherans doing what many have struggled and continue to struggle to do – reach out through education. None of the settings included in this work go to the extreme situation of an inner city voucher elementary school. This thesis stretches what these authors have said and brings it to a new level.

Christian Education Evangelism is Nothing New

The concept of Christian education as evangelism is really nothing new. Those Christians leading in the school voucher movement can trace the core of what they are now doing throughout their history. The Lutherans in Milwaukee who operate many voucher schools can look back to their founding namesake, Martin Luther. They can see Luther’s love for educating the next generation and reaching them in their social context, adjusting worship and learning based upon what they needed. Ewald Plass shows in his character study of Martin Luther that as a church leader and later as a father he had a heart for education, in particular the Christian education of children.¹⁶ That heritage has continued and shown itself again when Lutherans in Milwaukee seized the voucher school opportunity.

Both classic Lutheran documents, such as Luther’s Small Catechism, and modern Lutheran ministry reflections, such as in the Book of Reports and Memorials, show that giving Christian education through schools is a major theme of Lutheran ministry. That theme runs solidly through many congregations that have ventured into the voucher school world. E.C. Fredrich, in his history of the Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, shares the passion for Christian

¹⁶ Ewald M Plass, *This Is Luther: a Character Study* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1948).

schools that Lutherans have had and also the rise into the “glory years” for those schools and the beginning of the fall.¹⁷ Enrollment in many Lutheran elementary schools has diminished in the past 20 years and has caused many schools to struggle financially, lose their mission or even close. The voucher school movement is one of the few growing spots in Lutheran education and has become in many ways the hidden leader of Lutheran education.

Historical documents from one of the oldest Lutheran schools and a current leader in the school voucher movement, St. Marcus Lutheran Church, show as an example how this church struggled with the new concept of a voucher school with many more “outsiders” attending and the growth it would bring. Congregational minutes, communications and building project documents all show the big and difficult change that voucher evangelism has brought. This change is still a challenge to St. Marcus and its sister churches.

Mission Education Around the World

For those in Milwaukee, Christian voucher education is still a relatively new concept, only being around since 1998. E. J. Brill’s dissertation: *Mission School in Batakland (Indonesia), 1861-1940*, gives a long term picture of the struggles, success and impacts that a system of Christian schools focused on outreach can bring to a community and nation.¹⁸ Those in the Milwaukee school voucher program speak of transforming a city and how a system of schools can change a community that many see as struggling. Brill shows how over the course of years amazing things can happen and that the key to that is development of workers and leaders from the group being reached. It is this project that gives tools for the big hope and dream to the

¹⁷ Edward C. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans: a History of the Single Synod, Federation, and Merger* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Pub House, 1992).

¹⁸ Jan S. Aritonang, *Mission Schools in Batakland (Indonesia), 1861-1940* (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 1994).

many voucher schools that they are not just changing one life and eternity at a time, but they are forever changing a community and building a system of training future generations of eternity and life changers.

David Salisbury and James Tooley assembled a number of articles that help Americans involved in voucher schools, or school choice, to see their situation with international perspective.¹⁹ Although these articles don't touch on Christian schools, they do show the transformative power of schools and that the current American paradigm for choice schools is not the only one that works. By looking outside, Christian voucher school leaders can more confidently understand the reason for what they do and proactively plan for the future.

Through personal interviews and a two week visit to mission schools in Zambia, this author gained additional thoughts and perspectives that shed light on how schools and settings can differ, but the core mission and principles of Christian schools are the same across borders and cultures. Kuunika Community School in Matero, an urban section of Lusaka, Zambia, opened its doors in 2010 to the urban poor and opened its doors recently to this author and five companions. In a week of student and teacher conversations and observations, some best practices were seen. The pastors of the churches connected with these schools struggled to understand their role with these schools and the opportunities present. This demonstrates that making a school a Christian mission school is not an easy feat and research and advised best practices can help a church maximize its opportunities. M. J. Kelly brought together a book with

¹⁹ David Salisbury and James Tooley, eds., *What America Can Learn from School Choice in Other Countries* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2005).

historical notes and insights looking at a Zambian education that puts the current work of these mission schools in perspective.²⁰

Voucher Schools – Political Movement and Public Opinion

The growth of voucher schools did not come easily. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel documented the unique growth of this movement. It has grown from a small concession to a substantial help for a broken education system. It has become a large movement with thousands of students and a perceived threat to public education and the teachers union. Wisconsin's Governor, Scott Walker, has been a champion of voucher schools but has also been a target of many different groups. Strong opinions and facts that are difficult to verify and understand have continued to be published. Long term studies on the success of voucher schools seem to have different conclusions based upon the reporter's political opinions. Key websites that point out the perceived negatives of the voucher system are One Wisconsin Now²¹ and the National Educational Association.²²

Trying to counter and give out their perspective on the success of school choice are a number of organizations and websites, including School Choice Wisconsin²³ and the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice.²⁴ Most of these releases, articles and documents seem to contradict what comes out in the newspapers and what is promoted on television. The voucher

²⁰ Devised and prepared by M.J. Kelly, *The Origins and Development of Education in Zambia: from Pre-Colonial Times to 1996: a Book of Notes and Readings*, ed. Michael J. Kelly (Lusaka, Zambia: Image Publishers Ltd, 2004).

²¹ One Wisconsin Now, July 17, 2013, accessed July 17, 2013, <http://onewisconsinnow.org>.

²² "The Case Against Vouchers," National Educational Association, July 17, 2013, accessed July 17, 2013, <http://www.nea.org/home/19133.htm>.

²³ School Choice Wisconsin, accessed July 17, 2013, <http://schoolchoicewi.org>.

²⁴ Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, July 17, 2013, accessed July 17, 2013, <http://edchoice.org>.

schools are benefitting from these organizations but must deliberate about how much they want to be connected with them, especially on the political front. It is beneficial to see the “facts” and data from both sides and wrestle with what it means personally. The best source for official facts are from Wisconsin’s government website which offers enrollment and test score data since the program’s inception.²⁵

Together these current sources paint an unclear picture of voucher schools in the future. It seems that it would be difficult to shut down all the Christian voucher schools in Milwaukee, but there also seems to be a creeping intrusion into their schools with new mandates and requirements annually. Much of the future depends on whether the state elects voucher-friendly political leaders or not. In a state that has some of the most liberal and the most conservative politicians serving at the same time, it is hard for anyone to predict the future.

Educational Tactics in Voucher Schools

Currently many books are available and many more coming out each year that offer strategies for teachers, especially strategies for those teaching in urban settings. It is the necessity and prevalence of these tactics that can be the biggest obstacle for an experienced teacher who moves into voucher urban ministry. Jim Fay is one author who has been followed by many voucher schools with his technique of student management called “Love and Logic.” This strategy sets forth a technique of giving children choices and working them out of an attitude of entitlement.^{26,27}

²⁵ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, July 17, 2013, accessed July 17, 2013, http://sms.dpi.wi.gov/sms_choice.

²⁶ Jim Fay and David Funk, *Teaching with Love and Logic: Taking Control of the Classroom* (Golden, CO: Love and Logic Press, 1995).

²⁷ Jim Fay and Dawn L. Billings, *From Innocence to Entitlement: a Love and Logic Cure for the Tragedy of Entitlement* (Golden, CO: Love and Logic Press, 2010).

Many urban schools also feel the need to supply an extra dose of character education, as Deb Austin Brown hits on in *Growing Character*.²⁸ But the Christian voucher school has the greatest tool not allowed to be used openly in public schools. It is the tool of the Gospel. This tool not only builds character and motivates behavior, but it changes people eternally.

In the voucher setting, there are different organizations that promote school improvement. Currently in the Milwaukee arena, *Schools That Can* is the biggest mover and shaker. Not only do they work with school leaders to improve schools, but they provide a number of workshops and seminars for school staff. In a lecture, experienced school voucher leader Kole Knueppel shared a number of insights on how a Christian school has a distinct advantage over every other school. He pointed out that only a Christian school has the real solution to every person's pain and problems and only a Christian school has the real motivation for doing well in school and life. The main strategy he had for impacting a broken urban child was to "confuse them with love."²⁹

Voucher Schools Bring A Diversity and Race Struggle

One thing that voucher schools have often brought about is an additional strain of one group of people, often different economically or racially or both, reaching out to a second group. For example the staff of a voucher school is 95% white and middle class, but the student body is only 5% white and in poverty. The congregations that operate the schools and reach out to the school families usually have this same sort of contrast. This makes for stress and difficult decisions.

²⁸ Deb Austin Brown, *Growing Character: 99 Successful Strategies for the Elementary Classroom* (Chapel Hill, NC: Character Development Publishing, 2003).

²⁹ Kole Knueppel, "Gospel Motivation" (lecture, St. Marcus School, Milwaukee, August 14, 2011).

Those who are in voucher ministry need to learn about and experience the culture and church life the students and their parents and grandparents have come from. Along with personally visiting and listening, reading cultural and church observations like the ones compiled by Emmanuel L. McCall in *Black Church Lifestyles*³⁰ can be eye opening and guidance giving. The author of each of the essays shares a different reason why the black church has evolved differently from other churches in the United States. The fight for civil rights, the closeness of the families, poverty and the lack of fathers are the main contributors. Without appreciating this history, someone evangelizing school families would make many more mistakes.

Sunday morning is still the most segregated time of the week around America. Finding a truly diverse congregation is difficult, yet that is what most churches running voucher schools are attempting to do. Many authors have attempted to give church leaders insight in to a successful diverse church, but Mark Deymaz and Harry Li offer the best experienced look with *Ethnic Blends: Mixing Diversity into Your Local Church*.³¹ In order to be successful, the authors point out that a congregation first needs to know what true diversity is and then take many intentional steps to get there. The authors spend much time making the case that a congregation's core beliefs and philosophies must be compatible with a diverse church, for without that, any attempt at true diversity will fail.

Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton offer a very practical guide to working on race in a school setting with *Courageous Conversations About Race*.³² This book poses many difficult

³⁰ Compiled by Emmanuel L. McCall, *Black Church Lifestyles: Rediscovering the Black Christian Experience* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1986).

³¹ Mark Deymaz and Harry Li, *Ethnic Blends: Mixing Diversity Into Your Local Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010).

³² Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton, *Courageous Conversations About Race: a Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin, 2006).

questions and gives tools for schools and families to come up with difficult answers. Too often race is something that everyone knows is a big issue, but it is so big and scary that no one wants to talk about it out of fear that one comment or word will ruin a person's reputation and label him as a racist forever. As the authors point out, if an issue is never dealt with it will never be dealt with well.

A Voucher School Means a Change in Ministry

Most Christian voucher schools have become a bigger ministry than the church that runs them. The schools are bigger in the number of staff, size of the budget, number of people directly and indirectly touching, the amount of square feet they occupy in the building and the amount of attention they need. This can lead a congregation and its infrastructure to struggle, freeze or collapse. This can also lead a congregation to reevaluate all of its ministries and philosophies.

Andy Stanley's *7 Practices of Effective Ministry* is a guide for a church in voucher ministry to look at what it is doing. The growth of a voucher school probably means that other ministries need to stop or be drastically changed. Stanley argues a church needs to narrow its focus instead of trying to do everything. A church that runs a voucher school probably needs to narrowly focus on ministries and techniques that touch that school audience.

Good to Great by Jim Collins is a standard text on how to take an organization and bring it to the next level.³³ Jim Collins points out a number of things that are key for a congregation with a voucher school to act upon. He calls for identifying and eliminating activities that are not core to the mission. He emphasizes finding the right "Level 5 Leader" and staff for "the bus." He

³³ Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap--and Others Don't* (New York, NY: HarperBusiness, 2001).

encourages focusing on what an organization can do better than anyone else and casting a vision to do that. All those techniques are great advice for a voucher school's congregation.

Churches struggle to know what staff is necessary for ministry and fail to staff proactively. Gary McIntosh³⁴ does the best job of helping a congregation know how much ministry a staff person and a support staff person can do. It is difficult for congregations with a voucher school to compare themselves to other ministry situations, but it is a starting point for church leaders that usually suggests boldness and having more staff sooner. With a large staff that comes with growing voucher schools, tools are needed to connect the staff together with each other and to the staff of the church. The staff members need to appreciate what the others do and be set up to support each other. Tom Rath's *StrengthsFinder 2.0* and *Leading with their Strengths* are useful tools that many schools and institutions that train urban teachers use to help build team and put people in the best positions for success.³⁵

Gino Wickman's *Traction* can help leaders manage the mass of humanity and actions that a voucher school does.³⁶ This book gives simple instructions on how each person can be supervised and helped to move forward in an organized and accountable way. It also gives advice on how to make the many meetings that need to happen in voucher schools and voucher ministries the best and productive.

Voucher Schools and Long Term Ministry Success

There has been no detailed long-term study because students that started in Kindergarten at the beginning of the program would be graduating college in 2014. The real test of the impact

³⁴ Gary L. McIntosh, *Staff Your Church for Growth: Building Team Ministry in the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000).

³⁵ Tom Rath, *Strengthsfinder 2.0* (New York: Gallup Press, 2007).

³⁶ Gino Wickman, *Traction: Get a Grip On Your Business*, Expanded ed. (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, 2012).

made by voucher schools will be to look at former students when they are in their forties and see the impact they make on their families, church and communities. That would be a great study in about 18 years. The closest study available is the first person stories of the first graduating class of an all-voucher high school. In *HOPE School 2008: Our Stories... Our Words* students share who they were when they started in the voucher high school and who they are now.³⁷ They detail the differences made in just four years. These stories are raw and powerful, but only the beginning. These same graduates need someone to again tell their story now that many have graduated from college and are impacting their communities.

The Theology of Voucher Schools

Many have written about what the Bible says about areas of ministry in voucher schools, but nowhere have all of the unique parts been put together. This thesis strives to do this and uses resources that provide some of the parts to build the whole voucher school evangelism strategy. David Valleskey in *We Believe – Therefore We Speak* ties together how having a solid biblical confession leads to the drive to evangelize.³⁸ This is seen in the Christian voucher schools. The stronger a church is on believing and confessing the truth of the Bible the more they seem to be driven to have their voucher school not simply be a school, or a great community resource, but instead to be a tool that changes eternities. Particularly useful is his discussion of what it means to “steal sheep” and take Christians intentionally from one congregation to another.³⁹ He explains that seeking to grab sheep from another shepherd violates several biblical principles.

³⁷ Dr. Peter Fraser, *Our Stories... Our Words* (Milwaukee, WI: Patent Chemistry, 2008).

³⁸ David J. Valleskey, *We Believe, Therefore We Speak: the Theology and Practice of Evangelism* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Publishing House, 1995).

³⁹ David J. Valleskey, *We Believe, Therefore We Speak: the Theology and Practice of Evangelism*, page 140, (Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Publishing House, 1995).

Along with understanding the theology of what a congregation must do with the gospel, a voucher school ministry needs to understand the theology of children, which Laurie Biedenbender shares in *Children on Loan from God*.⁴⁰ She reminds everyone including parents, teachers, congregations and schools that children are given to parents, especially to the father to take care of and bring up. A voucher school has to be careful, even in the name of evangelism, to not rush across that biblical line. Instead it needs to seek ways to build up the family that is the primary place of nurturing for children.

One large task that voucher schools encounter is training children how to worship when they do not have active family examples or even observe worship regularly. Schools do this through classroom devotions, chapel services and inviting children to worship services of the congregation. Often the difficulty of this is increased because of the contrasting worship cultures of the families of the students and the host congregation. Kathleen Chapman, in *Teaching Kids Authentic Worship*, explains the important reasons for training children to worship and shares 52 practical ways to accomplish this. Ms. Chapman explains that training children how to worship authentically, regardless of the setting and style, pays the biggest and most long-term spiritual dividends.⁴¹

Lutherans, the core spiritual tribe of this study, see a particular importance of training children from little on in the two basic messages of the Bible: Law and Gospel. The law condemns everyone and tells all people to do God's will. Simultaneously it proclaims that people have not done God's will and will never be able to do it in the future. The law tells the world the

⁴⁰ Laurie F. Biedenbender, *Children on Loan from God* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2003).

⁴¹ Kathleen Chapman, *Teaching Kids Authentic Worship: How to Keep Them Close to God for Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003).

bad news that its people are losers that are lost. The gospel is just as true but tells us the opposite message that God has done everything necessary for the world to be saved in Jesus. The gospel is the good news that Christians are God's children and not only are saved but commissioned to work on God's team. It is about applying this law and gospel in a classroom setting that William Fischer writes in *Teaching Law and Gospel*⁴² and Lawrence Richards spends half of *A Theology of Christian Education*⁴³ talking about. It is this particular interest in law and gospel that distinguishes Christian voucher schools from charter schools and even Lutheran voucher schools from their Christian voucher peers.

Biblical Foundations of Voucher Evangelism

God, through the Bible, says much to leaders and staff of Christian Voucher schools. God highlights the unique place children have in his heart and the unique ministry opportunities which children present.

In Proverbs, God says: "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it."⁴⁴ This verse gives a promise of good returns on initial investments and leads a congregation to aim more of its ministries at young children than at other ages. When God's word is used to train children it is a blessing for them for many years. If a Christian teacher cannot see the impact she has made, God's words in Isaiah assures her that God's word always works:

As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

⁴² William E. Fischer, *Teaching Law and Gospel* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Pub House, 1996).

⁴³ Lawrence O. Richards, *A Theology of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1980).

⁴⁴ Proverbs 22:6.

As the rain and the snow
 come down from heaven,
 and do not return to it
 without watering the earth
 and making it bud and flourish,
 so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
 so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
 It will not return to me empty,
 but will accomplish what I desire
 and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.⁴⁵

As a school ministry trains children, it still needs to remember that they are not the primary ones to whom God has given this task. A Christian school is only an assistant to a child's family. God reminds parents and schools this: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother'"—which is the first commandment with a promise— "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."⁴⁶

There are times though when people get in the way and stop children from coming to Jesus. Sometimes this may even include the parents. Jesus very clearly wants no one to stop children from coming to him and he wants his disciples to make it easy for families to come to him.

People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Isaiah 55:9-11.

⁴⁶ Ephesians 6:1-4.

⁴⁷ Mark 10:13-15.

It also is not that children are welcome to come in as the lowest people or as beggars, but they are seen by Jesus as owners, believers and examples in God's kingdom. Children show the adults the core of being a disciple of Jesus. With this understanding, those who minister to children in voucher schools witness great faith every day and have confidence that the children bring their faith home often to families who might be without Jesus. These children minister to their families every day and perhaps are the most powerful evangelists on the planet.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. "If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."⁴⁸

Voucher school ministry can sometimes be frustrating because a teacher does not always see the blessings of what he has taught. Many times the only stories a teacher hears about alumni are the bad stories where a former student is now a pregnant teen, in jail or living a reckless life away from Jesus. Jesus' parable of the sower and the seed assured his disciples that their job was not a success only if all the people they ministered to listened and lived as followers of Jesus. The disciples' only job was to be faithful sowing the seed of God's word. They should not be surprised that often nothing good grows. They should instead rejoice that when God's word does grow it produces a bountiful blessing that is well worth the effort.

Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time.

⁴⁸ Matthew 18:1-6.

When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.⁴⁹

In an ideal world, it is parents that are the main Christian teachers of their children, but even if they are not, God's word cannot be put inside a 45 minute class period or treated mainly as just another academic subject. God's word needs to be discussed and applied in everyday situations throughout the day. Voucher school ministries therefore need to use God's word in how students are disciplined, how they eat lunch and how they play basketball. This truth also gives fire to these ministries to find ways to disciple and train the parents so they might apply God's word at home themselves in every situation. God's instruction for his Old Testament people still instructs us:

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.⁵⁰

One of the most internally controversial aspects of running a Christian voucher school is that tithes and offerings are not the major funders of God's people. At the beginning, many Christians who learned of the voucher program announced, "We will not do this because we don't accept money from non-Christians or non-Christian organizations." The book of Ezra though gives us an example of how God used the ungodly king Cyrus not just to authorize God's

⁴⁹ Matthew 13:18-23.

⁵⁰ Deuteronomy 11:18-21.

people to go back to Israel, but he funded it as well. In the same way, modern Christians can take funds from institutions as long as they use it in accordance with the purpose given and they do not compromise their ministry or what they can proclaim.⁵¹

Finally, why would a Christian teacher or pastor venture into voucher school ministry when he could more easily have stayed in a more traditional setting? He could have stayed in a school that serves members of his congregation or at least students with fewer needs. Certainly, his ministry would have less stress and take fewer hours. The only reason someone would choose this ministry is because he is following the model of the Apostle Paul and stepping outside of his comfort zone and trying to not just reach but engage a different culture. Voucher school staff minister to get the gospel out or as Paul says it: “To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”⁵² It was this word of God that led the first schools and congregations to seize this opportunity.

⁵¹ Ezra 3:7.

⁵² 1 Corinthians 9:22-23.

Chapter I: Social and Cultural Factors

Each city has its own history and reason for existing. Each complicated and multi-layered story of urban growth can never be fully understood, even by historical experts who spend their lives looking at and researching one city. But God understands it. He is the one who orchestrated the movement of the people, the economic and social factors and everything else that brought people together. Each city is part of his plan – his plan to save his people. It is a plan that sinful humans cannot comprehend, but they might get a glimpse of it if they prayerfully look and faithfully know that it is there. It is in faith and trust that today God’s story can be seen in how about 20,000 students in Milwaukee are hearing God’s word every day in Christian schools that probably would not exist without unique and difficult turns of history. As always, God thought ahead.

Historical Factors

Milwaukee became a city and grew quickly because of a resource God provided – “the best natural harbor on the western shore of Lake Michigan.”¹ This divine set up let Milwaukee become the leader of wheat shipping in the 1860s and become a processing and manufacturing giant. This prosperity lured many different peoples to the city and set up future struggles and blessings of a city with ethnic diversity. “German families – a majority of Milwaukee’s population as early as 1860 – remained most numerous, but they were joined by Irish, Polish, Italian, Greek, Jewish and other immigrants. In the 1920s, continued industrial expansion attracted large number of African Americans and Latinos as well.”² The first group of these

¹ "Milwaukee's History." Making of Milwaukee. July 17, 2013. Accessed July 17, 2013. <http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com/history/index.cfm>.

² "Milwaukee's History." Making of Milwaukee. July 17, 2013. Accessed July 17, 2013. <http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com/history/index.cfm>.

immigrants ended up blending well, but the later groups of Latinos and African Americans remained and still remain more separate. Civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson and many others identify Milwaukee today as the most segregated city in America.³

God knew the struggles of these minorities in the city. God loved them and heard the prayers of his children as severe racial unrest and riots occurred in the 1960s. God saw the struggle of his children as neighborhoods changed and many moved to the suburbs and took their churches and ministries with them. He witnessed the decline of Christian schools in the city and heard the prayer of many that were sacrificing so much to keep those schools alive in difficult times. Even the most faithful and optimistic of those who kept those schools going in the 1960s – 1990s could not have imagined what would happen and how their schools would have changed and grown.

God made it happen but he used brokenness in the city to bring it about. In the 1980s people readily recognized that not everyone was getting a good education in Milwaukee and the difference was based upon racial and economic lines. Daniel Grego, a principal in the Milwaukee Public School system asked in a speech, “Are we getting what we want from schools in Milwaukee?” and he answered, “Unless you are white and economically well-off, the answer in most cases is no.”⁴

Though many agreed what the problem was, there was disagreement on the solution. Some thought the solution was allocating more money for education that would allow for more teachers and administrators and lower the teacher to student ratio. Some proposed that parental

³ “Rev. Jesse Jackson Leads Milwaukee to Early Vote,” Rainbow Push, December 5, 2013, accessed December 5, 2013, http://rainbowpush.org/news/single/rev._jesse_jackson_leads_milwaukee_to_early_vote.

⁴ Daniel Grego, “Choice, Autonomy Key to Education,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 7, 1988.

choice and autonomy were the keys to better education.⁵ While this public and private debate was rumbling in Milwaukee, it was also occurring in other parts of the country including California, often a trendsetting state for the nation. School vouchers were put forth as an experiment and backed by presidential candidates Pete Wilson and Jack Kemp,⁶ but money was poured into the fight particularly by teachers unions. This led to the movement becoming publicly unpopular. Ultimately Proposition 174, which started a voucher program, was defeated because of the allegations that giving parents the choice to use their tax dollars in private schools would “destroy the public school system, bankrupt the state, create a host of fly-by-night private schools unaccountable to anyone and underwrite fundamentalist religious schooling with public funds.”⁷ The unions not only got the bill defeated by scaring voters but they also used bullying tactics including threatening to boycott a fast-food chain which had executives that spoke out in favor of vouchers.⁸ Over the years teachers unions have continued to use the same strategies and tactics with mixed results.

Political Factors

Wisconsin and particularly Milwaukee have always been a unique political landscape and have done things that others have not. From “Fighting Bob” LaFollette who served as Wisconsin Governor around 1900 and later a Senator, who fought old school politics, to Joseph McCarthy whose strong fear mongering of communism scared a nation – Wisconsin has been a place for extremes and being unique. Milwaukee too has the unique record of being the “only major city to

⁵ Daniel Grego, "Choice, Autonomy Key to Education," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 7, 1988.

⁶ Jack Germond, "Voucher Schools On California's," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 30, 1993.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

turn its government over to Socialists,”⁹ which happened from 1916-1960. The Lord controlled all this political past and set up Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as a place that would do what others would not.

1990-91 was the first school year that Milwaukee ventured into the voucher program. It was small with five non-religious schools and 341 students.¹⁰ Over the next four years the program grew to 802 students.¹¹ The controversy continued to brew in Milwaukee with each side expressing their strong opinions and what they felt was evidence to support their points. The biggest battle frothed forth in 1994 when choice supporters pushed to have the cap on the number of students go above 1,000 and to open up the program to private, religious schools.¹²

Those against choice expansion, such as WEAC the largest of the state’s teachers unions, argued that “studies on the Choice program have shown no significant improvements in the performance of Choice students” and that “public schools are being shortchanged now ... We ought not to take more money away from them.”¹³ As far as letting religious schools into the program, the union argued, “mixing church and state is bad public policy.”¹⁴ Even the Jewish community, who had schools that could benefit from the program, was against religious schools

⁹ "Milwaukee's History," Making of Milwaukee, July 17, 2013, accessed July 17, 2013, <http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com/history/index.cfm>.

¹⁰ "Milwaukee Parental Choice Program – September MPCP Pupil Headcount History by School, 1990-91 through 2012-13" Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, July 17, 2013, accessed July 17, 2013, http://sms.dpi.wi.gov/sms_choice.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "Choice Supporters Seek to Add Religious Schools," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 17, 1994.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

getting vouchers. They said they knew they were “voting against [their] pocketbook” but felt “religion is best served by keeping a high wall separating it from government.”¹⁵

Those who argued in favor of Choice Schools were represented by Landmark Legal Foundation of Kansas City, Mo. Landmark had a history defending the legality of school voucher programs. They argued:

That the Choice program’s exclusion of religious schools constitutes purposeful discrimination against the plaintiffs and families like them who are entitled to the same government benefit given to other parents, “but are denied their choice of schools because of their personal religious beliefs.” ... [and] that the program violates the free exercise clause of the First amendment of the U.S. Constitution, and the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment.¹⁶

The Supreme Court of the United States chose not to hear these arguments on this case and not make a decision. This left both sides feeling uneasy about their situation and left many private religious school leaders wondering whether they should do all of the work necessary to enter a program that could quickly disappear with just one court’s ruling. For the time being, the 1998 ruling of Wisconsin’s top court allowed vouchers to be used by religious schools. Leading and adventurous religious schools that entered the program after that decision brought the number of choice students from 1,545 to 6,085.

When the U.S. Supreme Court in 2002 weighed in on vouchers going to religious schools, the decision and opinions reflected the nation’s feelings. By the closest margin possible, 5-4, the Supreme Court upheld the use of vouchers for tuition at private religious schools.¹⁷ The majority did not “see much difference between vouchers and tax exemptions for religious

¹⁵ Ernst-Ulrich Franzen, "School Choice Dispute Moves to Federal Court," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 15, 1994.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "A Victory for School Choice," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 28, 2002.

organizations.” The opposition said, “The illogic is patent.”¹⁸ Just as there has never seemed to be middle ground among the people or politicians, there was no middle ground in the legal system. It is this 5-4 decision that is the basis for Christian voucher schools and the opportunity for Christian schools in Milwaukee to teach Jesus to more children on a daily basis than ever before. With the landmark Supreme Court decision easing some minds and hearts, more Christian schools entered the program and those already in the program continued to expand. From 2001-2 to the 2004-5 school year, the number of students in the voucher program soared from 10,882 to 15,035.¹⁹ This author feels this growth was mainly due to the feeling of stability that the Supreme Court decision gave to schools leaders and parents.

Even though the legality of the program had been declared, individual states still needed to decide if and how they would implement the program. Often these decisions in Wisconsin were argued along party lines. Democrats, supported and fueled by teachers unions, strongly opposed expansion of choice and increasing the voucher amount. Republicans, believing competition makes schools better and monopolies do the reverse,²⁰ worked to expand the program and make it easier to use. An irony that has been noticed by many is “that Republicans are the staunchest backers of school choice when the beneficiaries are primarily minority children whose parents mostly vote for Democrats.”²¹

Because School Choice is controlled by the state in Wisconsin, the health and outlook of the program have changed rapidly based upon which party is in control of the legislature or the

¹⁸ "A Victory for School Choice," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 28, 2002.

¹⁹ "Milwaukee Parental Choice Program – September MPCP Pupil Headcount History by School, 1990-91 through 2012-13" Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, July 17, 2013, accessed July 17, 2013, http://sms.dpi.wi.gov/sms_choice.

²⁰ "School Vouchers Continue to Grow," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 9, 2003.

²¹ *Ibid.*

governorship. Jim Doyle, a democrat, served as Wisconsin's governor from 2003 to 2011. He followed a Republican Governor, Tommy Thompson, who presided as the voucher program became established. Before the end of his first year, Governor Doyle vetoed bills that supported School Choice and told the legislature: "The focus of state resources should be on strengthening public schools throughout the state."²² During those years, School Choice still slowly expanded but felt the pressure of having its voucher dollar amount stop growing and having a few policies adopted that made it more difficult for voucher schools to operate. A big victory for Choice Schools did come during those years, but not without a fight. The number of voucher seats had been capped at 15% of the enrollment at Milwaukee Public Schools.²³ With the growing happiness of parents and the expansion of the capacity of the schools in the program, many realized that cap number would soon be hit just because of natural matriculation of the students. Governor Doyle twice vetoed bills to raise the cap on the program and Republicans proclaimed, "most Democrats in the Legislature have ill-served their low-income constituents who benefit from school choice."²⁴ The American Civil Liberties Union joined with the public unions to fight again, hoping to have vouchers used at Christian schools seen as establishing religion. The funding of religious choice schools was paused until the case could be decided. Many poor students would have had to leave their current schools and schools of choice except that the "Bradley Foundation and sympathetic individuals met the tuition needs of most of them."²⁵

²² Sarah Carr, "Doyle Vetoes Schools Choice Bill," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 27, 2003.

²³ "Voucher Cap Could Hurt," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 21, 2004.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ George Will, "Look Who's Impeding Choice in Education," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 11, 1995.

Finally the cap was raised and those in the school choice program included almost 21,000 students.²⁶

In 2011, a new Republican Governor, Scott Walker, was elected. He came into office publicly promoting choice schools and stating he wanted to expand them in Milwaukee and around the state.²⁷ For this position and others, Governor Walker received some of the most intense opposition ever experienced as he entered office, including an unsuccessful recall election. Choice schools have continued to increase enrollment and finally have the dollar amount of the voucher increasing in 2014-15. It will increase from \$6442 (what it has been since 2006) to \$7050²⁸. This is still about half of the \$14,038 spent by Milwaukee Public Schools in 2011-12, the fourth highest of the top 50 cities in the nation.²⁹ Governor Walker also helped schools vouchers expand to Racine in 2011 and in a limited way around the state in 2013.³⁰

Citizens are beginning to see more and more that the schools of their nation are not just suffering because of the problems in families and society, but schools themselves are often perpetuating the problems. Sometimes schools are even the root cause of the problem. Often the problems of a school are ignored because of the desire to protect an institution or a group a

²⁶ "Milwaukee Parental Choice Program – September MPCP Pupil Headcount History by School, 1990-91 through 2012-13" Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, July 17, 2013, accessed July 17, 2013, http://sms.dpi.wi.gov/sms_choice.

²⁷ Patrick McIlheran, "Scott Walker and the Case for School Choice," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 3, 2011.

²⁸ "Voucher FAQ," Wisconsin Association of School Boards, July 18, 2013, accessed July 18, 2013, http://wasb.org/websites/advoc_gov_relations/File/vouchers/vouchers_faq.pdf.

²⁹ "MPS Per-Pupil Spending Fourth Highest Among 50 Largest Districts in Nation," JS Online, June 21, 2012, accessed July 18, 2013, <http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/mps-perpupil-spending-4th-highest-in-us-lu5rurq-159889555.html>.

³⁰ ³⁰ "Voucher FAQ," Wisconsin Association of School Boards, July 18, 2013, accessed July 18, 2013, http://wasb.org/websites/advoc_gov_relations/File/vouchers/vouchers_faq.pdf.

people. Everything often goes back to money and control. Milwaukee Public School's handling of its surplus buildings recently exposed this problem.

Educational Factors

St. Marcus Lutheran School, even with its new building addition, had reached its capacity at 600 students in 2012, but the parental waiting list was in the hundreds. Many more parents wanted to have their kids enroll but did not sign up for the waiting list because the paperwork was not worth the low chance of successful enrollment. St. Marcus Superintendent, Henry Tyson, and congregational and school leadership determined to expand the enrollment by looking for a place to start a second campus. In the fall of 2013, St. Marcus enrolled 752 students that included 4 expansion classrooms that were started with the plan of embedding them in a new campus in the future. St. Marcus congregation had already approved the second campus and Henry Tyson had already talked with Gregory Thornton, the chairman of Milwaukee Public Schools about the many vacant school buildings in Milwaukee. Mr. Tyson explained St. Marcus' situation and the waiting list and its desire to purchase a school building. Mr. Thornton instructed Henry to write a formal request to Milwaukee Public Schools since it controls the vacant school buildings that are owned by the city and it is MPS that makes the recommendations to the city whether to sell a building.

There are approximately 25 empty school buildings around Milwaukee with many being small or needing a lot of money and work to be ready for students. All of these buildings are making no money for the city, not being used for their intended purpose and are taking taxpayers' money to maintain them minimally. After looking at the list, St. Marcus had the vision of requesting to purchase the Malcolm X Academy building, a former middle school that had been vacant for five years, closing after parents no longer wanted to send their children

there. Malcolm X was ideal because it was vacant, located in a neighborhood in desperate need of God and good education and it was located exactly four blocks north of St. Marcus' current campus, making sharing of resources and staff easier. The vision of St. Marcus was to open a comparable 600 child Christian voucher elementary school, a 300 student early childhood center and have community partners set up programs in the rest of the space to bless the community. Some of the community partners stepped forward with proposals for home ownership help or home maintenance and job training, community gardening and a medical clinic and housing. St. Marcus canvassed the neighborhood and already knew many people in the neighborhood. Along with this school ministry, a ministry hub was envisioned that would include weekly worship in the auditorium and many church events on campus.

When Milwaukee Public Schools received the request to sell Malcolm X, it simply responded that it would not be accepting any offer from St. Marcus, and gave no reason or alternate plan for the building. The leaders of St. Marcus did not accept this answer and pushed forward looking for answers. St. Marcus assumed that MPS' refusal to consider their request must simply be because it came from a voucher school. It appeared to them that MPS would rather have an empty block and cash drain in the middle of a troubled neighborhood than a high performing voucher school working to change the community. It was the matter of market share that was never stated directly by MPS, but seemed to drive all of its actions.

St. Marcus planned to draw attention to the situation and gain the heart of the community in order to gain the ear of the city aldermen. St. Marcus held a march on a day of its early release. Several hundred children, parents, community and congregation members walked the four blocks from St. Marcus holding up signs that read: "Children First – Support St. Marcus at Malcolm X." This captured the eye of the news and the attention of Milwaukee Public Schools.

Immediately MPS claimed that they had been working on a plan for this building for a year. Later at a public board meeting, MPS chairman said they had been working on this plan for two years. MPS stated at first the building was to become the Bronzeville Community Center. The building, however, is not actually in Bronzeville and earlier reports had Garfield School in Bronzeville turning into that community center. MPS' plan continued to change even as no paperwork from the past could be found to back up MPS' claims. St. Marcus had gotten the attention of MPS but still had not gotten an invitation to make an offer.

While these actions were going on, politicians in Madison, Wisconsin's capitol city, were working on the problem a different way. Legislation was introduced that would take the control of vacant school buildings out of the hands of the school systems and place it back in the hands of the city. The legislators in favor of the bill picked up on St. Marcus' efforts and used it as an example of why this bill was needed. Milwaukee Public Schools felt the pressure of St. Marcus' request and the possible legislation that would take control away from them and they quickly decided to act.

A holdings company, JCP Holdings, was quickly formed and asked by MPS to make an offer on the building. JCP did and an MPS meeting was held for the single purpose of recommending to the city's common council that they sell the Malcolm X property to JCP. The meeting did not allow any public input but still almost 200 individuals, including many St. Marcus friends and alumni, came to witness the meeting and hold up their "Children First" signs. The proposal was introduced and with very little discussion passed 8-0 by the school board. Following the passing of the measure a few short comments were made by the chairman and a board member that spoke negatively about St. Marcus. At that moment many at St. Marcus thought the fight was over, but the struggle was only in the middle.

News stations had shown up and highlighted the meeting on television and in the newspaper. The big news was the details of the JCP deal. Even though it was not mentioned at all at the meeting, MPS was proposing that JCP buy the property for 2.1 million dollars but were also guaranteeing JCP that MPS would be leasing a part of the building back for one million dollars each of the next four years. JCP would also be paid for remodeling that part of the building and be able to lease out the other parts of the building and keep that income. MPS then had an option to buy the building back after four years for \$1. None of the media outlets could figure out how this was not a super money making deal for JCP and how it was not done out of spite for St. Marcus. After a couple of weeks in the media and on talk radio, the common council weighed in and flatly rejected the proposal. They asked for it to be reworked and brought forth.³¹ In the meantime, St. Marcus officially made an offer of 1.2 million dollars or “fair market value as determined by a third party” to MPS. This offer was never considered and after adjustments and safeguards, JCP Holding’s offer was accepted, and the new plan for the Malcolm X property is a public baccalaureate high school and housing. MPS spent all of its efforts to make sure that a proven high performing school would not easily expand and that empty buildings would stay underutilized and take up taxpayer dollars. The legislation in Madison was never made into a law and MPS is continuing its same strategy with St. Lucas Lutheran School, which is trying to get Dover Street School. This same strategy would be used with any other school that would take away MPS’ market share.

St. Marcus and other high performing voucher schools will continue to push for expansion and giving providing seats to children whose parents want them. It will not be easy and it will most certainly be in places that were not built as schools or through expensive new

³¹ Erin Richards, “Malcolm X Building Sale Vote Is Delayed,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 30, 2013, www.JSOnline.com/milwaukee.

construction. There are a few unused private schools that are being sought after and groups like former congressman Marc Neumann's Shining Star School are buying them.

The future of Christian voucher schools is still somewhat volatile, but it is in the hands of a consistent God. The broken situation in Milwaukee's schools led to the choice movement taking hold and the continued poor performance has allowed Christian choice schools to open their doors, fill their classrooms and look to add campuses. Those opposed are standing their ground and doing everything they can to slow school choice expansion including choosing to let vacant MPS schools be maintained at taxpayer expense instead of selling them to high performing voucher schools who offer market value. But as long as headlines read: "Black-white student achievement gap still wide in the state³²" and "New reading results put MPS near bottom among urban districts³³" and "MPS students score lower³⁴" there will be a brokenness God can use to give children in Milwaukee his message of love and salvation and a better than average education.

America needs to see the value of giving parents control of their child's education. America needs to see that schools that are dropout factories produce nothing good – only violence, incarceration and abuse. Throwing money at the struggling zip code areas in Milwaukee will never help – only education and God can change this around permanently. School vouchers as a means to rescue failing school systems is growing in states other than Wisconsin and in Wisconsin the program has become statewide on a limited basis. Already,

³² Amy Hetzner, "Black-White Student Achievement Gap Still Wide in State," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 14, 2009.

³³ Erin Richards, "New Reading Results Put MPS Near Bottom Among Urban Districts," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 20, 2010.

³⁴ Erin Richards, "MPS Students Score Lower Than Most Urban Peers On National Test," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, December 7, 2011.

private schools from around the state are contacting their friends in urban areas who have operated with vouchers and asking for information, advice and strategies. The world too is seeing this, as different countries have experimented with voucher schools and using public funds to finance private schools.³⁵

Organic Factors

The expansion and success of voucher schools may require the right factors being present in a city and school district. Milwaukee seemed to have the perfect storm for voucher schools because it had a history of success with private and religious schools, a school district with a bad reputation, a state with a pioneering attitude and the right training ground for staffing these schools.

Milwaukee was built by and dominated by Germans for many years. These Germans brought with them their culture that included beer, organization and Lutheran and Catholic churches.³⁶ These Lutherans and Catholics both loved education and founded many religious schools. Historically any Lutheran or Catholic church of size in Milwaukee was founded with or at one time had a school as part of its ministry. These private Christian schools predated the public schools and have always had a good reputation with the community, even among non-Lutherans and Catholics or even non-Christians. These schools were operated well and managed on very tight budgets and frugal tuition for over 100 years. Mainly due to financial reasons, these schools were slowly shrinking. This left empty seats in schools and sad hearts in those who remembered the “glory days” of their institutions. When the spark of school vouchers appeared

³⁵ David Salisbury and James Tooley, eds., *What America Can Learn from School Choice in Other Countries* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2005), page 78.

³⁶ "Milwaukee's History," Making of Milwaukee, July 17, 2013, accessed July 17, 2013, <http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com/history/index.cfm>.

able to be applied to private religious schools everything was set for these schools to enter the program and succeed. In a city without such a base and history of Christian private schools, vouchers may not be as successful. Historic schools have usually been successful as voucher schools, but schools that came into existence by seizing upon the program often failed both their investors and their students.

Milwaukee Public Schools has had a bad reputation in its city and an even worse one around the state. Small town northern Wisconsin residents do not think much is good in the “big city” of Milwaukee and quickly believe and remember any bad stories they hear about the biggest school district in their state. These residents and their state representatives needed to be convinced that MPS could not fix its problems with the same old remedies. Since education and funding for it is controlled statewide, the entire state needed to realize there was a problem that needed a unique solution such as vouchers. Many of the same politicians who eagerly supported Milwaukee’s program were much more hesitant to go along with the statewide ideas of Governor Scott Walker this past year. A state without such a view of its urban areas may never be politically ready to embrace vouchers.

Wisconsin, even though it is in the Midwest, has demonstrated a pioneering attitude that was essential for going ahead with school vouchers. Wisconsin’s historical progressivism, as demonstrated and encouraged by its Governor Robert LaFollette, Sr. in the 1920s, is an ideal attitude for embracing vouchers. The state is still known for its political uniqueness. Wisconsin has elected measurably the most liberal of politicians and conservative of politicians at the same time. It is a place that likes extreme ideas and is willing to go “Forward” as its state slogan proclaims. A state without such a history and unique view may not be able to come up with the drive to start and grow a voucher program.

Training Factors

Wisconsin also has a unique blessing in its capability to train and continue to grow competent staff for voucher schools. Across the country there are different training places for teachers that want to make a difference, like Teach for America. These programs are making a difference around the United States, but what has been especially helpful to Milwaukee's voucher schools are two organizations that bless teachers and school leaders. The Center For Urban Teaching (CFUT) is one of those and has kept a supply of urban teachers coming so that school leaders can plan for expansion and spend less time dealing with struggling staff. School leaders agree CFUT's contribution is great:

Working with the Center is a tremendous advantage when identifying individuals for urban teaching - it personally saves me dozens, if not hundreds of hours in "finding" individuals who would be a good fit. The Center has access to graduating students that is impossible to obtain as a principal. This year we had three teachers come through the Center and they all have had a not-typical first year of teaching. Their classrooms compared to other non-Center teachers are well run, orderly, positive, and productive. We have a few first year teachers who are "non-Center" products and they require at least five times the support requiring more time and resources directed to their classrooms. – Principal Jon Boche, St. Marcus [Lutheran School]³⁷

There is no doubt that the retention of teachers in urban areas is higher through the Center's work. Teaching in urban areas is extremely challenging. Many first and second year teachers regularly evaluate if it is for them. However when they see success and have "experts" outside of the school to support them they often stick through it. – Principal Shaun Luehring, Atonement [Lutheran School]³⁸

With this high-power training partner in the same city, working in close partnership with Wisconsin Lutheran College and other Milwaukee colleges as well as Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota, the number of urban teaching candidates has risen even as the demand

³⁷ "Referrals," Center for Urban Teaching, December 5, 2013, accessed December 5, 2013, http://www.urbanteaching.info/site/cpage.asp?cpage_id=180047580&sec_id=180002450.

³⁸ Ibid.

has. A classroom rises and falls with its leader, the teacher, and without excellent teacher training the voucher movement in Wisconsin would not have been successful or have the optimism it has now.

Schools That Can Milwaukee (STCM) is the second organization that has blessed the voucher movement in Wisconsin. Schools That Can is a national organization but Milwaukee's branch seems especially able to make an impact. Schools That Can has a vision of 20,000 students in high performing schools in Milwaukee by 2020. This vision is not limited to voucher schools but includes all school: public, charter and voucher schools. The most fertile ground that STCM found is among the voucher schools They will work with these schools as long as they have leadership in place that is willing to do what it takes. The three-fold goal of STCM is to: 1. Support expansion and replication of high performing schools, 2. Identify and share best practices to help schools be high performing and 3. Recruit high performing school models and leaders to Milwaukee.³⁹ STCM holds seminars and helps connect school leaders and teachers with others and is almost essential for the voucher movement to go forward. What is particularly strong is STCM's work across types, sizes and groups of schools. Without such an outside organization, the voucher movement would have a much more difficult time growing at the rate it is.

Wisconsin is a unique spot that the Lord has uniquely set up for this ministry. Whether other states can have the needed factors to make it work so dramatically is yet to be seen. But what is undeniable is that God's children in Milwaukee can thank God for their open window of opportunity both for making a lasting impact on society through quality education and for

³⁹ "Vision," Schools That Can, December 5, 2013, accessed December 5, 2013, <http://stcmilwaukee.org/>.

making an eternal impact through these Christian schools for generations to come. God set up the situation and then used his children to jump into Christian voucher schools, something new

Chapter II: Christian Response

In the United States many private Christian schools are in decline. The increased cost of healthcare has made the largest part of a school's operating budget, the personnel, swell while the number of students and church members has gone down. The amount that a Christian school in most situations can charge for tuition does not cover the cost of education. Some schools have closed and others have slashed budgets and deferred building maintenance in order to put off what seems like an inevitable death.

The elementary schools in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the church body of most of the Christian voucher schools studied in the thesis, are example that grew in the past but are now declining in numbers. "From 1970 to 1985 the number of [WELS] Lutheran elementary schools increased from 244 to 378... [and] total enrollment ... grew from 26,070 to 30,585."¹ At that time there were more first grade students in the system than eighth grade students, giving WELS schools a feeling of optimism,² but the feeling didn't last and instead led to denial and something that might be called a death spiral of decline. The peak of WELS schools was 1990, when nearly 32,000 students filled the church schools. The students were mostly children of members of those congregations. A little over 20 years later there are now over 50 fewer schools and almost 8,000 fewer students. That figure includes the fast growing voucher schools, without which the statistics would be even bleaker. Currently the enrollment

¹ Plath, LeDell D. "School Trends Upward." *Forward in Christ*, January 1986. Accessed July 18, 2013. <http://www.wels.net/news-events/forward-in-christ/archive>.

² Ibid.

decline outside of the voucher program “averages 400 students per year. At this rate, those 253 [remaining] WELS schools will disappear in 2051.”³

An outsider might jump to a wrong conclusion about school leaders who see their school in steady decline and with tight budgets and Christian schools all around shrinking. He might think that it is always an easy “no-brainer” decision to enter into a voucher program and receive \$6442 per pupil, possibly more than 4 times the amount a school currently receives in tuition from families. An outsider might think that the mission that Jesus gave his people to make disciples and teach them everything would lead to an automatic and unanimous decision to open a Christian school’s doors to everyone. But there are always strings attached to money handed out and there are always fears to get over. Churches, especially old, established churches turn like a barge and not like a speedboat. It takes time for them to turn; it is hard even to notice the beginning of a turn.

Among the WELS schools in Milwaukee, it was a difficult decision. Many people could remember the glory days of their schools being full and now their schools had space in the classrooms or were empty. The schools were surviving but they were struggling in morale and finances. The two big questions they had to wrestle with were about funding and ministry.

New Funding

Funding a WELS Lutheran elementary school traditionally had been done through a congregation’s budget. It was the way things always were done. It was because the school was a ministry of the whole congregation that passed God’s word to the next generation. Everyone shared this responsibility. Those congregations that operated schools “steadfastly maintained that

³ John Meyer. "Is It Too Late for WELS Schools?" *Issues in Lutheran Education* (blog), May 15, 2013. Accessed July 18, 2013. <http://blogs.mlc-wels.edu/wels-educator/2013/05/15/is-it-too-late-for-wels-schools/>.

all members should support the school.”⁴ As class sizes got smaller and health insurance and other personnel expenses grew, many congregations’ membership, and thus their ability to support a school, shrank. Schools began not to charge tuition of members but to charge “fees” instead. Sometimes this was seen as a necessary circumvention of the rules because some congregations had even put into their constitutions that “no school tuition shall be charged of member families attending the congregation’s Lutheran elementary school.”

Milwaukee’s schools faced the same struggles as the rest of the WELS schools but there struggles were more acute. Many churches had large church and school buildings that were not as filled as they used to be. City people moved more often than small town people, making it harder to keep children and grow a school. It was also difficult to recruit teachers, who needed to be WELS members and therefore probably came from a small town in the Midwest and struggled with the idea of living in and ministering to an urban area. Race also entered as a factor, as WELS schools typically had almost a completely white church and school staff, but non-whites now occupied the neighborhoods of these churches and schools.

Accepting vouchers would be a huge financial game changer. These schools operated on 1/3 of what the voucher amount would be. With the addition of voucher students, staff pay could be brought up to standard levels, maintenance that had been deferred too long could be done and the congregation might be able to better fund other ministries they were doing or even consider doing new ones.

Questions remained that no one knew the answer to. Would this new funding be given for a few years and then with a new court ruling or law, be taken back? If that were to happen, the schools and congregations might be left in a difficult place especially if they expanded their

⁴ LeDell D. Plath, "Who Will Pay for Our Elementary Schools?" *Forward in Christ*, January 1990, accessed July 18, 2013, <http://www.wels.net/news-events/forward-in-christ/archive>.

facilities. Perhaps then the school that the congregation had been keeping alive would be forced to close. Many thought it might be safer to just continue the way they had operated in the past. Would this new funding come at first with no strings (as promised) but then each year the government would add new restrictions and slowly cross the line to interfere with the school's mission? Would this new funding source lead the school and church not to be as tied together? Would members continue to see that it is their job to support and provide Christian education to the next generation? Members, who for many years generously gave to the congregation to support the school, might see that their gifts are no longer needed or at the most a drop in the bucket and decrease their personal stewardship.

Focus on Mission

Funding is one issue, but not the most important. The bigger question that the Milwaukee schools had to wrestle with was whether they could carry out their ministry with the addition of more children through the voucher program. The WELS school paradigm had always been to have the vast majority of students be from families that were members of the congregation or another WELS congregation in the area. Students coming in through the voucher program would be anyone who wanted to attend that school and their presence might undermine the message and mission of the school. Some figured that if the majority of students in the school were un-churched, the un-churched culture and presence of those students would win the day and make the school culture less Christian and make ministry harder.

Another factor considered was that the families who would seek to attend a voucher school were also seeking to leave their former school. They might be leaving because of discipline problems and disliking the way their former school handled it. They might be leaving because their children were not receiving the education they needed and as a result their children

were grade levels behind in reading or math. Both of these situations make more work for the teachers and administration and could distract from ministry.

Teachers in general like order and consistency and WELS Christian teachers probably naturally even more so. Most WELS staff had been raised in a WELS church and went to a WELS Lutheran elementary school filled with congregational family children located in a small or medium sized town. Opening up a school to voucher children was seen as drastically changing what teachers did and how they did it. If a school opened up to voucher children, would the current staff fail to make the change or would they flee to teach in more traditional WELS schools? Each WELS school board and congregation had to ask these questions, and each found different circumstances and answers.

Of the twelve WELS Lutheran Elementary schools that eventually entered the program, only one entered in the first year of eligibility. That was St. Marcus, with 64 of their students in the program. Senior Pastor Mark Jeske recalls how that decision was made and played out:

As I recall, the Wisconsin Supreme Court reached its verdict in June of 1998, allowing religious schools to participate in Choice. Our congregation's school board at the time was three guys, plus the principal. Two of the three board members did not like Choice, and the principal didn't either.

But I wanted to try it out and wanted the idea aired out at Church Council. The rest of the Council guys were for it and so we planned a congregation-wide forum. Almost 100 people showed up for the information presentation and Q & A. We took a straw poll vote and it was 90 to 3 in favor--the same three guys still did not like it, but everybody else was on board.

School registration was only a few days later, and we were ecstatic that we could say Yes to more low-income families.

The other WELS schools just looked at us mutely, in shock, but nobody in the city gave us much grief. They just refused to join us. Everybody knew St. Marcus was in Milwaukee's poorest neighborhood and that we did things differently because I was crazy. I did not care because we had nothing to lose. If it turned out badly for our mission or operations, we would just bail.

One WELS city principal was quoted in a national education magazine that his school would go into Choice only over his dead body. The synod's national magazine actually had an article that summer laying out the reasons why WELS schools were not going to participate.

In 2000 GH was the second WELS school to join. I have the distinct recollection that their entry into the program was hastened by an operating funds crisis.⁵

That entrance created debate and discussion and some stress in the WELS Urban conference of congregations and at St. Marcus school. It even created debate and discussion in the church body at large leading to an article in the church body's magazine, which summarized the questions:

The Wisconsin ruling presents a challenge to WELS schools in Milwaukee. Parental choice has the potential to give hundreds of low-income youth a Christian education by providing tuition vouchers to parents equal to the congregation's cost of operation. Wisconsin's law mandates that a private school may not require a pupil attending the private school under this section to participate in any religious activity. It further requires a school to determine "which pupils to accept on a random basis." These legal requirements may undermine the school's ability to: 1. Carry out its mission to make disciples for Jesus by basing all of the school's activities for all of its students upon God's Word; and 2. Enroll those students whose spiritual, emotional, academic, and physical needs are able to be met within the scope of the school's program.⁶

Beautiful Savior Lutheran School and Siloah Lutheran Schools both had locations advantageous enough to enter the program, but school leaders expressed reasons why they were not ready to jump in:

Forty-nine of our 70 students are eligible for tuition vouchers through the Milwaukee Parental Choice program. If our school participates, we could have over 100 students. If we don't, we might have less than 50," says Ray Kimbrough, pastor at St. Philip... In principle, these efforts [to help parents choose a school] support the scriptural principle of parents' responsibility for children's education. In practice, however, these proposals might undermine our school's mission and

⁵ Mark Jeske, emailed to author, July 19, 2013.

⁶ Daniel Schmeling "WELS Schools Opt Out of State Program," *Forward in Christ*, October 1998, accessed July 18, 2013, <http://www.wels.net/news-events/forward-in-christ/archive>.

purpose. . . . Tim McNeil, principal of Siloah, expressed leaders' commitment to provide a Lutheran education for the community's children: "We have found ways to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. We will find a way to do it here also." They look to their members and to those throughout the synod for prayers and financial support.⁷

Small Initial Steps

That first year, the majority of WELS schools chose not to participate "at great cost to their future enrollment."⁸ As the years went forward and the program did not bring about the concerns some leaders had, schools entered the program including both schools mentioned in the above article. Schools waited until the teachers were ready, the congregation was ready and the community was ready. Entering the voucher program was not the automatically right ministry move for everyone at the same time or a "silver bullet," but it was a new option. With retooling, most ministries saw this new option as one that could be useful.

WELS schools that entered the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program all entered with mixed feelings and motivations. No matter how brave a congregation was, there were fears and worries. No matter how ready some leaders thought they were, there were those caught by surprise. No matter how unified a congregation appeared, there were those who were expecting a failure. As the following table shows, schools steadily entered the program regardless of size or situation.

⁷ Daniel Schmeling "WELS Schools Opt Out of State Program," *Forward in Christ*, October 1998, accessed July 18, 2013, <http://www.wels.net/news-events/forward-in-christ/archive>.

⁸ Ibid.

School	Year Entered MPCP	Starting # in MPCP	# in MPCP 2012-13
St. Marcus	1998	64	596
St. Philip/ Beautiful Savior	1999	55	118
Christ/ St. Peter	2000	27	209
Siloah	2000	20	211
Garden Homes	2000	49	233
Atonement	2001	33	234
Mt. Lebanon	2001	15	207
Wisconsin Lutheran High School	2001	6	350
Risen Savior	2003	48	228
Fairview	2004	8	Closed (43 in 2008)
Word of Life	2004	3	76
St. Johns	2005	6	69
St. Lucas	2007	25	113
Salem	2012	74	74

Table 1 : WELS Schools MPCP History⁹

The reason for a congregation to enter the program was also all mixed. Some wanted to save their school and welcomed the MPCP as a way to do so. They no longer wanted to see their school struggling and dying. It was love - either love for a particular institution or Christian education in general - that moved many to be for their school entering the program. For others,

⁹ "Milwaukee Parental Choice Program – September MPCP Pupil Headcount History by School, 1990-91 through 2012-13" Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, July 17, 2013, accessed July 17, 2013, http://sms.dpi.wi.gov/sms_choice.

the MPCP was welcomed because of the income it would bring. They saw it as a way to take off the financial stress. The schools and staff often had been underfunded for decades, and a congregation was forced to put all of its resources in its “school basket.” For others, it was all about the mission and MPCP meant more children would be learning about Jesus every day and be trained for him. MPCP meant that children that were not baptized and did not know what Jesus had done for them would be in word of God class every day, chapel every week and learn songs about Jesus and be invited to sing them in worship. It was a mix of these motivations both expressed by people and internally inside people that led congregations to enter into the program. It seems that when the mission was the most common and dominant reason for a school to enter the program, the easier it was for a congregation to jump in and adjust to this new form of ministry. Regardless of motivations, God used many factors to lead his people to seize this new opportunity and try to carry out ministry through it.

New Type of School

While congregations with schools were wrestling with this new opportunity, WELS laymen and others saw MPCP as a way to do something the WELS had never experienced before, a “stand-alone” Christian school. These Christians met together and formed a board and outside of a congregation started a Christian Voucher school with WELS staff and in fellowship with the WELS. Just as the MPCP program caused debate and stress among WELS people, so did this new form of ministry. WELS people questioned whether it was proper to run a school without a congregation connected to it or without a WELS pastor in charge. Regardless of what some thought, three HOPE schools were founded in short order with virtually every student

participating in the voucher program.¹⁰ In 2012, the HOPE schools officially pulled out of the WELS system. By doing so they allowed themselves to operate in different ways, especially by not having to operate within the WELS accepted practices for adding staff. This move allowed continued growth as shown in the following table:

School	Year Entered MPCP	Starting # in MPCP	# in MPCP 2012-13
HOPE Prima	2002	49	536
HOPE High	2004	96	220
HOPE Fortis	2005	69	306
HOPE Semper	2012	171	171

Table 2 : Growth of MPCP Program¹¹

These HOPE Schools have taught many children God's word and supplied them with a much better education than they would have probably received otherwise. They have determined that they will supply the best Christian urban education they can and let church and worship be done by others. Whether one thinks that the HOPE schools continue to be an amazing blessing and tool in God's kingdom and Milwaukee or if one thinks HOPE schools have now showed themselves as a failed experiment that was doomed to fail is subject to much opinion and debate in the WELS.

¹⁰ *Forward in Christ*, Two New WELS High Schools Open, November 2004, accessed July 19, 2013, <http://www.wels.net/news-events/forward-in-christ/november-2004/two-new-wels-high-schools-open>.

¹¹ "Milwaukee Parental Choice Program – September MPCP Pupil Headcount History by School, 1990-91 through 2012-13" Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, July 17, 2013, accessed July 17, 2013, http://sms.dpi.wi.gov/sms_choice.

Even though being part of the MPCP is now the norm for Milwaukee's WELS schools, controversy and debate have continued to occur especially outside of Milwaukee. There are still those who feel uneasy about this way of doing ministry and warn those that do. One WELS pastor in the Milwaukee area who has seen the program up close cites reasons against the voucher participation of his fellow WELS churches and high school:

First of all, I do think we have to be sure that we understand that this program is a discriminatory welfare program that, at its heart, does not have the best interests of children in mind but the breaking of the Milwaukee teachers union. I do not think there is much argument if one lists Choice as another welfare program. We are doling out money, by taxation, from one group of people and redistributing it to another. It is a welfare program that leads to greater dependency on the government and does not build responsibility in the individual. ...It should be noted, that Choice has a real potential to bring the public schools down even lower. It will skim off the students whose parents will at least take the time and expend the energy to register their children for Choice. It will leave the public system with those who are least motivated or cared for. This will make the public system appear to be failing even more. Will we really be serving our community if, by participating in Choice, we allow the majority in the community to suffer even more?¹²

The question of whether to participate or not in MPCP or a similar program is difficult for any congregation or school. It certainly is more difficult of a question for a ministry to ask once it is already in the program and the circumstances change. In recent years, there have been a number of changes in the MPCP program, mostly ones that require more standards for choice schools. Now voucher schools need to have any teacher who is alone with children have a four year degree. Now schools need to take the WKCE standardized test to be more easily compared

¹² James Hoogervorst, "Is School Choice the Right Choice for WELS?" (master's thesis, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2004), page 9, accessed July 19, 2013, <http://www.wlsessays.net/files/HoogervorstSchoolChoiceWELS.pdf>.

with public school test scores and schools need to maintain accreditation.¹³ WELS voucher school leaders have so far welcomed these new requirements. They feel they help get rid of poor choice schools and raise the reputation of voucher schools as a whole. These changes also remind everyone in the program that new changes may enter the program that may be more problematic and hindering to the Christian mission. Will school leaders be able to make the tough decision to leave the program if necessary? That question will hopefully never have to be answered.

Kole Knueppel, a former Principal of St. Marcus, key person in the HOPE schools and now Co-founder and managing director of Schools That Can Milwaukee, has always seen the power and potential of Christian voucher schools.¹⁴ His vision is that the school's job is to be as excellent as possible and attract people to the school simply because of excellence, if for no other reason. Children and families that may have no other connection to a congregation or Jesus would line up and sign up for a good education alone. Then the child and parents in school would experience an amazing Christian teacher who shows them Jesus Christ by what they say and do. The teacher goes above and beyond in help and encouragement and being available. When the student or parent is the worst, the teacher would "confuse them with love"¹⁵ and love them even more. This confusion or being surprised by the love of the teacher would win the most stubborn of people over and lead them to look for why the teacher was so loving and see Christ. The congregation or ministry's job is to reach out to these families and offer them the word of God and connection in a Christian family. The outline is simple: Attract, Confuse, and Share!

¹³ Alan J. Borsuk, "New State Budget Continues to Support Some Bad Voucher Schools," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 22, 2013, accessed July 19, 2013, <http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/new-state-budget-continues-to-support-some-bad-voucher-schools-b9939296z1-212630641.html>.

¹⁴ Kole Knueppel, interviewed by author, Milwaukee, WI, November 9, 2013.

¹⁵ Ibid.

But not everyone agrees on who should do this ministry and how it should be done. Knueppel, in his observations, has been disappointed that more spiritual blessings have not come out of the Christian voucher schools. This author also feels that there is much more potential for ministry than is being produced. This inefficiency is due to several factors that are not unique to this ministry but come out in Christian voucher schools in a unique way.

The ultimate cause of missed spiritual blessings is Satan. As much as God “wants all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth,”¹⁶ Satan wants no one to be saved and never to learn the truth. Satan has realized quickly how these Christian voucher schools can be used against him and his vision of the world and he is acting with urgency. He certainly does not want anyone coming to faith by hearing God’s word and he certainly does not want young individuals, especially males to be equipped with a powerful education to share Jesus with the next generation. Satan knows that the most powerful tool for changing the next generation is education. At first apprehensions kept some Christians from diving into the voucher program, but since Christians have jumped in, Satan has tried new strategies to slow down God’s mission.

Satan’s Response

Satan has distracted God’s people with improper motivation. Some have only opened their doors to voucher students in order to keep their institution and their jobs in place. They believed (but did not openly state) that the students were necessary to be there to keep the blessings going for everyone else. Schools and churches tried to jump into the voucher program (and still operate today in it) without changing anything. School ministries have been hesitant and wary of changing classroom methods, training of teachers, curriculum and dress code. Church ministries have been hesitant to change their worship styles, their staff and job

¹⁶ 1 Timothy 2:4.

descriptions and their image in the community. Even though most of the churches involved have their largest audience for their ministry being school families, these congregations do not openly state that or operate like it is true. Almost every Christian would agree that the mission Jesus sent them on is to “disciple people,”¹⁷ but most want that discipling to come in the form of the outsiders adapting to those already inside a congregation.

A second strategy employed by Satan is confusing people on whose job it is to evangelize the students in vouchers schools. The schools and its staff can argue that their job, and it is a huge one, is to educate the students, teach them God’s word in a class, and share the contact information with the church. They feel that they are swamped with teaching duties and it is the church and the pastor’s job to be calling on the families and inviting them to church and teaching them Bible classes because that is what a congregation and pastor does. The church and its pastors can argue that they were already fully busy without the school and are already doing a number of things that school families could attend, including worship and Bible classes. They can assert that the teachers are the ones who have the relationships with the kids and parents. The teachers are the ones who best can invite them to spiritual activities. Teachers are the ones who can make the difference. In the end, it can be that both the school and church with its teachers and pastors can feel sad that more outreach is not done, but they both see the other group as the one who dropped the ball. They can quietly blame each other and still do no ministry. This author strongly feels that everyone in the church and school needs to be involved in outreach, but that the leadership and chief responsibility for that outreach resides with the church ministries and the pastors to make it happen.

One of the saddest observances that this author made in his interviews and visits was that in many locations there is a real struggle of relationship and mission understanding between the

¹⁷ Matthew 28:19.

pastor and the principal. The relationship between these two is key in any ministry but especially in an outreach oriented urban voucher situation. Too much is at stake to not get along for Christ and to work together for Christ. Some principals felt very much like their pastor was too disconnected from the school ministry and did not really embrace it like he should. The principals were disheartened by the perceived apathy of the pastor to make significant changes or to strive to reach out to the families the school brought into ministry vicinity. They felt as though their pastor was not interested in their ministry and that it was up to the principal to make it work. On the other hand, some pastors felt as though the principal should be interested and engaged in the whole ministry of the congregation, but the principal seemed only to care about the school and protecting his staff, space and time. Occasionally there was some budget jealousy as the pastor noticed that the budget was always tighter on the church side of things. For example, the teachers would be equipped with Smartphones and iPads, but the pastor had to use his own flip-phone and an old laptop. In some situations, the principal was pushing hard to expand and reach more students and the pastor was pulling back the reins. In other situations, the pastor was looking to expand and the principal was throwing out the penalty flag and putting on the brakes. In all of these situations, it was obvious that both men were men of God and wanted the same thing. They just had not grown together in their view of the situation and mission. This author sees the need for these two top staff people to spend more time together and grow their relationship, whether it is currently bad or good right now.

A final struggle in which Satan delights is that congregations and schools, pastors and principals and teachers, simply often do not know what to do. They knew their mission and how they carried it out in the past, but they struggle to come up with tactics for ministry in this new situation. In recent years the principals and teachers have received a lot of help and training on

educational tactics in the classroom, but they have not received much help on how to do ministry inside and outside of that same classroom. Pastors for the most part did not receive a set of tactics in their seminary training that fits their situation with voucher schools. They have tried their best to make it up as they go along, but have struggled to learn what is best in this new field. They have had little time to share and work with their brothers on best practices.

This author has felt that same struggle for methods and tactics and what is the best use of his time and staff. This author has searched the urban community and found some wonderful tactics that have gone unnoticed or at least unshared. It is these best practices that can help defeat the plans of Satan to thwart the blessings of a Christian voucher school. It is these best practices that need to be focused on and implemented to get the most out of the blessing of a Christian voucher school.

Chapter III: Sixteen Best Practices for Outreach

Ministries that have answered positively after wrestling with the question of whether entering the MPCP program fits into their mission and vision, still need to figure out how best to do this ministry. One big part of this ministry is urban education and academics. These schools have lengthened school days, changed discipline policies, picked new curriculums and have employed new guidance techniques. Those schools in the program for more than 10 years have transformed their schools in many ways. A more difficult challenge was determining how to do ministry and reach out in this new setting to the new numbers of un-churched and under-churched students and their families. There has been some sharing of strategies and blessings, but there has never been a consensus of best practices for congregations to consider implementing. This chapter is an attempt to prove and describe what seem to be the best practices for congregations in the MPCP program. Congregations currently in Milwaukee that are in the program and congregations elsewhere where school voucher systems open up will have to dialogue with their teams to determine whether they are currently doing these best practices. They will need figure out if they can implement any of them that they are not doing and when and how to do that.

A “best practice” in this thesis is a ministry activity that seems to consistently bring the most spiritual blessings using the least amount of resources. This author identified the best practices based upon observation, opinion and looking at available spiritual blessing statistics. When a practice leads to individuals being baptized it is significant. It is significant because God promises to work on people being baptized and that is part of the Church’s mission,¹ but it is also significant because a person who chose to have themselves or a family member be baptized in a church probably does not have a different church that they have a strong relationship with. If

¹ Matthew 28:29-20.

they did have a relationship or if they call a place “their church,” the family would normally have requested baptism there. There is even more significance when an adult gets baptized, especially in a school that serves mainly the African-American community which has a Baptist background. Children who are 10 years old may have been connected to a Baptist church and would not have been baptized at that their age, but now that they have connected with Lutherans, they will be. But if an adult was part of a Baptist church, he would have been baptized. So with every adult baptism, a ministry is typically witnessing an adult’s first real steps of discipling. Confirmation, the rite of joining the Lutheran church, is also significant. On occasion a confirmation is simply a person switching from an active relationship in a different church to a new one. However, a confirmation usually represents the first formal commitment by an adult to be an active part of a Christian community. Also significant is that a confirmation is a sign of a significant Bible study, usually 16 to 32 hours.

The best practices below are practices that some but not all of Milwaukee’s voucher schools do. It is assumed that all of the WELS voucher schools do common practices of Lutheran schools such as chapel, word of God classes, memorizing passages, learning Christian music, catechism class, prayers at meals and other times of the day and Christian signs and decorations. It is also assumed that all schools are encouraging staff to grow as Christians by attending worship, being in personal and group Bible study and active in prayer. It is also assumed that as a group, faculty pray together about ministry. Often staff members begin each day in joint prayer. If a Christian voucher school did these things and nothing more, God’s work would be happening and the church would be carrying out its mission. In a voucher school setting, the congregation can rejoice that if they did not open their doors to the program, many of their students would be spending their days not hearing God’s word in a public school. The following

best practices are observations of how schools have gone beyond the classroom and typical WELS school practices to reach more families more often for Jesus.

This author will describe these best practices, why they are significant and give some examples of those who carry it out exceptionally. They are listed in order from most significant to least significant:

Best Practice #1: Learn and Mark Students' Spiritual Situation

A school with this best practice makes learning a family's spiritual situation part of a home visit. It requires parents to fill out detailed information when they register at the beginning of the year. This information will include whether a student has been baptized and whether he and his family have a church home they regularly attend. This could be recorded on a paper form or digitally in a database as part of a larger information keeping system. Ideally this system includes a compilation of all spiritual calls and ministry actions as they accumulate through the school years. The key is that this information is not just simply recorded but is able to be accessed when desired and is daily kept in front of the classroom teachers' eyes, particularly marking those that have no church home. This might be part of the seating chart or attendance form or even by hidden color scheme of the nametag on a student's desk.

This seems to be important because it consciously and subconsciously helps guide the teacher to invest the most time and energy in building relationships and visibly keeps spiritual evangelism urgency before the classroom leader. Without this information visible, a teacher can easily forget what the spiritual situation that students go home to may be, and may invest time and energy in students and families that are more inviting but already have a growing relationship with Jesus. This information will also be useful for any others who may be involved in reaching families whether that is a pastor, staff minister or outreach team. Each year or even

more often, this information needs to be gathered and compared as families often leave churches. It is also a good practice for teachers and ministers to not assume that just because a person marks that they have a church home, that he actually attends church or knows the way of salvation. A few questions such as, “Who’s the pastor there?” or “When are the church services?” or “What was last Sunday’s worship about?” that are answered weakly might give the hint that a family is actually not actively part of a Christian community.

Garden Homes Lutheran School does exceptionally with this practice, having a clear labeling process at enrollment into five categories: Garden Homes Member, Other WELS, Another Christian Church (indicate which one), Other Church and No Church Affiliation. They also had their teachers take weekly worship attendance for every student, keeping the teachers very aware of the church practice of their children.

Best Practice #2: One Person Drives School Outreach

When it is everyone’s job, no one does it. That can be true when it comes to outreach and evangelism in voucher schools. Even though it is true that everyone connected to a Christian voucher school needs to be in the outreach business, it is best practice to have one person responsible who manages the contacts, answers for lack of effort or results and keeps pushing evangelism into every part of the school and from every part of the congregation. In many voucher schools when asked who is the leader of school outreach, it was answered, “We all are,” and in others there was hesitation or confusion. It is best practice to have everyone know exactly who that person is and for the school board or other board to look to that person for reports and accountability. It is also best to have one board member dedicated to outreach and work closely with that chief staff person.

Depending on the size and set up of the school and congregation, this position can vary. Garden Homes has a staff minister dedicated to school ministry and outreach and he is the clear leader. St. Marcus has a dedicated pastor of school ministry who leads outreach and has a team of four others full and part time working with him. Other places have a pastor or teacher or staff minister that may be involved in ministry outside of the school but still has in their job description, “Leader of school outreach.” This person not only needs the title but also the time and support to carry out his task.

This leader needs to watch the “measurables” of school outreach and keep them before the school, board, and church. He needs to know, share and pray about the spiritual data mentioned in the first best practice. He needs to know how many outreach calls are made each month, how many school families are in Bible study and where each unchurched family is on the continuum of outreach: Have they visited church, expressed interest in baptism or Bible study? How many outreach visits have they had? He needs to share this information with the congregation and staff to keep everyone excited about the blessings that God is bringing in, for without communication many may lose their fire for outreach. This author suggests a monthly SOUL newsletter (School Outreach Update Letter), which goes to the congregation and with even more detail goes to the school staff.

Best Practice #3: Students Sing in Worship Services

Traditionally, Lutheran elementary schools have always trained and had their students sing in worship services. It was assumed that almost all parents were members of the congregation and would be excited about this opportunity and make sure their students were at the correct service and well-dressed to sing. Even though parents were members, it was still a strategy used by congregations to get parents, especially fathers, who did not come to church

regularly to attend. In a Christian voucher school, school singing morphs just a bit. It is still a great way to train children how to praise Jesus publicly and another reason to teach song that brings God's word into their hearts and comes out of their mouths at home to their parents. In the voucher setting, the expectation of parents bringing their children to sing and strategies to get that to happen change. First, according to voucher laws, parents cannot be required to come to a worship service. Secondly, about 1/3 of the students are active in their own congregation and may have their own church service at that same time. As a result, some WELS voucher schools report low singing attendance and many do not see this as a very useful tool for them to get unchurched families to attend. Other schools report success and singing in church as their number one tool.

The difference may just be the school culture regarding singing, which is difficult to turn around quickly. This however is worth the effort. Many voucher schools employ a number of strategies to get students excited about singing. These students then recruit their parents or others to bring them. Some schools redundantly communicate about the singing schedule. It is included in the home visit packet and highlighted during a teacher visit in July or August. Weeks in advance it is noted in a classroom note that the teacher makes and in the school newsletter and a sign will be put up on the classroom door on the inside and outside. Teachers send home daily notes the week before singing sometimes looking for signatures from parents whether they will be there or not. Finally on Friday, students go home with neon signs or younger children go home with hats made out of paper announcing the need to be at church at 10 am this Sunday to sing. Staff will also make a point of personally mentioning it to parents when they see them in the days leading to singing at drop off or pick up. Some teachers even make phone calls or texts on Saturday or Sunday morning for those who need extra encouragement.

In coordination with those announcements, many schools have come up with events that go along with singing that help get parents and children excited about coming on Sunday. This might be an event tied to a holiday like Mother's Day or Christmas, or it might be an event made to go with singing like Moms and Muffins or Dads and Donuts. These are events where parents are invited an hour before worship starts for breakfast with their kids. The students write cute invitations and put pressure on parents to come and see their classroom and enjoy breakfast. Or there might be an event scheduled after the worship service, such as Movie Madness where families can watch a movie in the gym and eat popcorn, or an Art Show where parents can view what the students have made and eat light snacks in the classroom. The event just needs to be something that the student is excited about and will share that excitement with her parents. This is related to best practice #10.

Some teachers will give rewards to students who sang in worship or give a reward to the class if a high enough percentage comes to sing. This reward most often is a special snack or slice of pizza with a big personal thanks. The difficulty with rewards is that a teacher does not want to have a student feel punished because they have their own church that their parents needed to participate at or their parents said no or did not have transportation. It is a careful balance that an experienced teacher finesses.

Bigger than the paper communication or rewarding event, is the joy of the teacher for singing in worship. If the teacher is excited about the song and genuinely thinks this is going to be great, even though it is one more task for the teacher to do, students will follow this leadership and be excited too. It is also important to keep the joy by choosing a song that children are excited about singing. This might be easier in the lower grades where kids can get excited about

any song, but especially in middle school, students need to love the song they are singing or they are not going to want anyone to watch them sing it.

A teacher can record which students come to sing throughout the year. With the teacher knowing the spiritual situation of each child (Best Practice #1), he can make special efforts to help an un-churched family who has not made it all year come at the end. He may decide to offer to pick up one family he has chosen to go out of his way for (Best Practice #12) or to give a special reward to a child who finally makes it to sing.

Ideally, classrooms will be invited about every six weeks to sing in Sunday worship at to special events like Christmas. A larger school may even have some special choirs or smaller groups that may take weeks on the schedule. Singing as many weeks as possible helps a congregation remember and appreciate their school mission and carry out that outreach out by interacting with school families on Sundays. Schools will have to look at their size and their average turnout to determine how many classrooms they should invite to sing to make sure that there are enough students to make the song sing-able but not too many for the service and teachers to handle. Inviting 120 kids to sing often takes away the urgency and ability to reach out to families to come. Inviting only 30 kids to sing may result in too few children (especially if the strong singers have a history of not coming) for the song to be heard and perceived as high quality by the parents that do come. These are strategies that each school must yearly wrestle with, but they are worth figuring out.

Different congregations choose different times during the worship service for the students to sing. Some prefer to have the students gather in the lobby and sing at the very beginning of the service and then go and sit with their families. An unwanted side effect of this strategy may be that parents who are just minutes late will miss it, or that those that don't feel that comfortable

with church will seize the easy opportunity and leave after the singing. Other schools choose to have students sit with the teachers and then sing much later in the service, perhaps during the offering. This does get parents who want to hear their children sing to sit and listen to the message from the pastor and the rest of the service, but they do miss out on sitting with their child for worship. This practice also adds to the workload of the teacher who is put in the unfair position of publicly having to handle 20 children in a church service. It seems to be best practice to combine these two practices and sing sometime between these two common options, perhaps after a lesson. The students sit with their teachers in the very front for the beginning of the service, but the teacher only needs to handle them for the first 12 minutes, allowing some late comers to join them and encouraging parents to sit down in church and not just hover in the back for a quick get away. Then after singing up front (where parents can more easily see them) students sit with their families. Those who are determined to not stay in worship or those with obligations in another church who still wanted their children to sing can still leave if they wish, but hopefully more children will be able to sing and unchurched families will have experienced more of worship, if not the whole service.

There will be those students whose parents never bring them to worship. It can be disappointing for the student and frustrating for the teacher that this student works so hard on the song but never gets to share the song publicly. A great partial solution to that issue implemented by many WELS voucher schools is to have the classes which will sing on Sunday also sing at the weekly chapel service. Often after singing for chapel, those classes that will sing take the opportunity and practice in the worship space right after chapel, noting what parts of the song they need to work on. It allows children to practice blessing others with their gifts and also functions almost as a dress rehearsal. The difficulty might be that classes scheduled to sing on

Sunday might not be ready if chapel is on Wednesday or even earlier in the week. But having to sing in chapel might help everyone work ahead on singing leading to a better end result on Sunday.

Best Practice #4: Worship Connects with School Families

Unchurched families will come to worship because their child is singing. They might accept an invitation from others they have met who think the church's worship is worth going to. They may even attend out of curiosity after seeing the worship times redundantly communicated on signs posted in the school and on school newsletters and classroom notes. Every school family should know all the worship times of the church so that on any Sunday they might be able to feel confident about coming to church. Regardless of why a school family comes to church, they need to experience a worship service that is comfortable and welcoming to them. It is difficult to define what a school-family-friendly service is. The best way to find out is to ask school families. It may even be wise to pay an outside school family to visit worship and describe their experience for school outreach and worship leaders. There are some practices though that many voucher schools employ that get the job done.

The hardest to get but the most important part of school family-friendly-worship is having people who are friendly to school families. This obviously includes the "professionals" such as pastors, greeters and ushers and the like. More important however are the "satisfied customers" who sit next to them, smile and introduce themselves. Especially powerful are families that have similar age children and have entered the church with their first contact being the school. Pastors need to inform such families of their power in outreach and encourage them to see this as their ministry. Some congregations may have a formal time during the worship service for people to greet one another, which is a great reminder to everyone about what they

are supposed to do. Often this formal greeting is so quick, though, it does not allow for a real connection. Pastors who choose to employ that method of greeting need to give several minutes of greeting time for it to be effective. They personally need to wander into the congregation and meet some new people as well. Still the most important greetings take place unscheduled before or after the worship service.

There also needs to be a feeling of space for the visitor. Many that have studied the growth of churches say that a church will never grow past 80% full in the parking lot or pews. With many churches with vouchers schools growing quickly, the members may love it when children sing and the pews are full, but un-churched visitors may be making a subliminal note that there is not enough space for them to come regularly (even if there is space on weeks when children do not sing.) Congregations will need to look at adding an additional worship service, adding more seating or even a new and larger worship space if needed. Many of the urban voucher schools are connected to churches with a past history of a large congregation and have space in the sanctuary, but they need space also in the lobby or for parking.

Restrooms need to be clean, easy to find and friendly for families with babies. Having a nice advertised retreat spot for nursing mothers or families that need to “escape” the sanctuary but where they can still hear and see the worship service is a powerful message: “We thought you would want to be here, so we prepared for you.” Before and after worship having coffee and snacks available in a place that is family friendly allows for connection and informal evangelism to take place. St. Marcus has utilized bounce houses (inflatable recreation areas for kids) before and after worship as reasons for children to make their parents stay. Many parents standing next to each other watching their children play in the bounce houses results in an unforced and natural time for parent connection. It is also important for families with the school as their only

connection to the church to see the school represented in the bulletin, posters and in other ways. They need to see that they are really already part of the church's family by their school connection.

A congregation cannot change its message, but it does need to adjust its style to match the people it wants to connect to. This does not mean abandoning anything automatically, but it does mean thinking about everything in worship and how a first time visiting school family would see it and navigate through it. The best source for insight is school families who have been there and done this. Many churches with voucher schools have integrated styles of music that had never been heard in their church in the past, whether that is Spanish music or Gospel music. Others have added a service in Spanish or had parts of the services be bilingual. Some have changed or no longer use the liturgical order for some of their services or have adjusted the sermons to be more interactive. The most important change of the sermon is not the style but that the word of God is applied in a way that school families can see it applies to them. If a young single mother of three from the inner city comes in and mainly hears about being a better steward of her money by giving generously to church but also stashing cash in her retirement fund and probably still having enough for that 30th wedding anniversary cruise, she will be certain that the pew she sat in was there for someone else. The pastor who speaks does not have to be the one who does everything in the school but he does need to be known by face and name by the children (Best Practice #7) and understand the real life situation of the school families. He needs to know this by constantly talking with people and listening to them. This speaking pastor also needs to be given enough time in his week to prepare a quality, powerful and challenging message – something that may be difficult in a church with a growing school voucher ministry.

Something that many other church bodies may take for granted, but that the Lutherans in the WELS urban school congregations may not think of, is that each service needs to have an invitation to discipleship. The people who visit need to be given a clear and easy way to request ministry, whether that is prayers or baptisms or Bible classes. This can be accomplished by a piece of paper or tear-off part of the bulletin or by an oral announcement directing those interested to meet in certain places and with certain people to learn. It is best if both practices happen. For the pastor and members this may seem redundant and disappointing when no one signs up that day for Bible classes, but for the visitor who was just touched by Holy Spirit and by the people he met, this might be the one time he will say yes to an invitation, but he most certainly will say nothing if he does not think he is invited.

St. Phillip's Lutheran Church and Siloah Lutheran Church seem to be the best examples of school family friendly worship. Both have worship services that are easy to enjoy the first time, are at prime late morning times and are filled with friendly people who either are a part of or appreciate the culture of the school's students and families.

Best Practice #5: Teach Beginning Discipleship Individually

When a school family responds to some invitation to discipleship, whether personal or in a worship service, the congregation needs to respond quickly and in a way that allows this plan to become reality. Traditionally, among WELS congregations, this basic Bible study is referred to as a Bible Information Class or BIC class. That is not the best marketing name to use in most settings. "Information" makes it sound like the content will be theoretical and dry and "class" makes it sound like a lecture or that the one taking it will be graded. There are many different names that pastors have used to make this discipleship sound more appealing and less scary that all accomplish the same thing. This thesis recommends calling it, "Beginning Discipleship,"

because “Beginning” is unthreatening. This course leads a person to personally know the plan of salvation, how to use the Bible and the basic teachings of the Scriptures and sets him up for continuing discipleship.

Regardless of what this is called, the key practice is offering this Beginning Discipleship individually or by family. Traditionally many WELS churches have tried to bring a number of interested individuals and prospects together for a once a week class that meets every week, probably a weekday evening, for 16-20 weeks starting on a set date each season. This serves some situations well, but is not the best in voucher evangelism settings. Telling people who are right now interested in discipleship to wait only allows them to forget and lose their motivation. A set time, especially a weekday evening, is often very difficult for school parents who may have very young children, may be single or may need to work at that time. A set weekly schedule that progresses each week can encourage a parent who misses a week for whatever reason to stop coming altogether. An individual session will encourage a parent to feel accountable to show up or at least excuse (sometimes) if he cannot attend.

The biggest reason to have Beginning Discipleship individually is because the individual parents in the school voucher sessions come with such varied backgrounds, skills and personal issues. As a result of this, a group class will not allow each session to go where it needs to go to reach the hearts and lives of the attenders. One parent may have a college degree and have grown up in a Baptist church and attended a Bible college. The next parent may struggle to read and have attended a charismatic Seventh Day Adventist church. The third parent may have never opened a Bible and has many personally destructive habits that she wants to find help for but will not share them with everyone. A fourth parent attended a WELS school as a child and received a lot of Bible knowledge and instruction then but never did anything with it after 8th grade. These

four parents will more likely get what they need if they do not meet together. The group class may seem easier to the teacher because no one talks too much or asks any questions, but it is what is not brought up that is the problem. It is the best practice to have a person who owns Beginning Discipleship process and lines up and tracks individual classes with himself and any others who can teach the course.

It is not enough to just advertise that a congregation offers Beginning Discipleship and wait for people to contact those who will lead it. Instead, as contacts are made, that information needs to be given to the one lining up the sessions who aggressively calls, follows up and tracks attendance and completion. Many voucher school families have phone numbers that change, phones that do not work or get shut off, or have struggles with organization and remembering appointments and following through. Some may have thought that starting Beginning Discipleship was a great idea, but now are having second thoughts and are hesitant to respond. A persistent, loving, continual contact scheme will help some overcome those barriers.

There is a number of excellent curricula available for use in Beginning Discipleship, and many pastors have written their own that they prefer to use. There is no right one, but it seems best practice in most school voucher situations to use a curriculum that utilizes a lot of Bible history, since that is what the school students will be learning, and also does not assume any Bible background or high educational level. Courses that many have mentioned effective in voucher schools settings are *The Wonderful Works of God* by Professor Paul Eickmann and *Saved by Grace* by an urban WELS pastor, Rolfe Westendorf. There is also an unpublished course that walks through the life of Jesus from Luke entitled *Meet Jesus* by this author that has been useful.

Putting the parents first also demands that the Beginning Discipleship sessions are taught at times most convenient for them. This may be any time and it may be a time that switches weekly as their life switches. This may also mean a break for personal reasons or according to the school schedule. Some ministries have found that it may be necessary to have someone not tied to a lot of school day activities to be the main teacher to accommodate peoples' schedules. This might be a staff minister, lightly school involved pastor or a semi-retired pastor. Congregations with someone like that report a much higher number of adult confirmations. The favorite times for school parents to take Beginning Discipleship are right after the school day begins when they drop off their children or right before school ends so they can finish the session and go home. In each situation parents make just one trip.

If necessary, the Beginning Discipleship sessions could take place in a family's home to accommodate a family's situation, but the church setting is preferable for liability concerns and for getting the family more comfortable with the church building. It is also nice for church and school staff to be able to see the instruction going on through a window to encourage them and let them know that ministry is going on that builds upon their classroom ministry.

When a parent enters Beginning Discipleship, it is important that this is communicated to the staff for their own encouragement but also so they can encourage that parent when the opportunity arises. When that parent finishes and plans to be confirmed and join the congregation, everyone needs to know. Staff can send invitations by e-mail to everyone, with a picture if possible, so staff may attend/or congratulate a parent.

Christ-St. Peter's Lutheran Church, St. Marcus Lutheran Church and Garden Homes Lutheran Church are doing this practice exceptionally well. Each of these ministries has people

who persist and have time to meet with people individually and give them the complete basic training that they need when they need it.

Best Practice #6: Visit Families for Spiritual Orientation

When a parent finally gets the news that they have a seat in a school that they chose, it is a magic time and one that those involved in voucher evangelism need to take advantage of with a personal ministry visit. Teachers will also make an in-home visit and share spiritual thoughts as they share the nuts and bolts of the classroom the child will be in. There is however a huge blessing in having someone visit just to listen and build a relationship and share the core mission of the school. This is also one way to learn deeper spiritual information about a new family (Best Practice #1).

Ideally, this visit is done in a home setting that underscores that this visit is all about the family and that the church is willing to come to them. Often, however, families request the visit be at school or a public setting. This visit is also best completed early in the summer when enrollment lists firm up but before a teacher's home visit so that the purposes of the visits do not get confused. Those that enroll after this time should receive a home visit the end of September after the craziness of a new school has died down and the conversation can stay more spiritual instead of creeping toward school logistics and rules. A pastor, staff minister or a member of the evangelism team can make this visit, but having the person be friendly and non-intimidating is key. Ideally, this visitor would be a person who still is a parent of a school child and matches the gender and background of the parent being visited. This ideal visitor would have also gone through Beginning Discipleship, was baptized, joined the congregation and has since been trained for this ministry.

Another way to do this is to have spiritual training orientations where parents are invited to come and learn the spiritual core of the school's message. This takes tenacious and persistent calling and inviting, but when a family first enters a school is the easiest. Garden Homes' staff minister Paul Marquardt has the best example of a system that has brought many blessings to their ministry.

Along with learning the basic spiritual information and background of a family, this meeting time is one to share all that the school and church have to offer spiritually to school families without them having to become members first. Prayer requests can be asked for and prayers said at that meeting, with an invitation to bring more requests whenever needed. Baptisms, Beginning Discipleship, hospital visits, counseling, homebound visits for relatives, the food pantry or other mercy ministries the congregation has or is connected to can all be shared. The one who made the visits needs to record the information right away and pass it on to everyone who needs to know it, such as classroom teachers or those who can engage the family in the ministries needed.

Best Practice #7: Pastor(s) Serve Visibly in School

A congregation's pastor or pastors always serve as a sort of logo, mascot and branding of a congregation. In many people's minds, what the pastor is and does and is involved in is what the congregation does and thinks is important. In the cultures of many of the students served in Milwaukee's vouchers schools, whether Latino or African American, there is more respect for and power in the position of a pastor than a pastor used to small town or suburban white ministry probably realizes. With all of this, it is very important that all of the pastors of a congregation have some visibility in the school to maximize outreach. A litmus test for this is to show students in various classrooms a picture of a pastor and ask a student if he knows this person's name and

what he does. Ideally, every student would know his last name and that he is a pastor. Even better is if the students say something like, “He is very nice, works with the teens and he tells us about Jesus.”

This visibility of a pastor can be achieved in different ways that match a congregation and school’s set up. A pastor can locate his office within the vicinity of school classrooms, allowing students to know where the office is, seeing him during transitions and casually. This also encourages interaction between the pastor and other staff. It is also useful if the pastor lives close to the school or in the same neighborhood as many of the students, so he can point out where he lives and be seen as family person who is a blessing to the neighborhood.

A pastor also needs to make sure to walk through the school and observe what is going on and have casual interaction with students, as long as it fits in with the teacher’s classroom discipline procedures. This can be part of a pastor’s routine to walk through or he can make sure to go on the second floor to get to where he is going even though it is a longer route. The pastor can also position himself in places where school families will be, such as at drop off and pick times or at any school events such as sports or musical events. A pastor might also be helpful by wearing a name badge to help those parents who have not met him yet or have not interacted with him in a while to know he is a pastor and to know his name. If only every school family would do the same to help the pastor!

A pastor is often involved in formal activities where students see him such as chapel, classroom visits or by making morning announcements over the PA system. Some teachers of lower grades place a picture of the pastor by the letter “P” on their wall cards and use it to teach the letter and who this person is. Some teachers also come up with events and situations to invite a pastor into the classroom. It might be to teach a part of a Bible lesson that the pastor might be

an expert on, such as showing his ram's horn he brought back as a souvenir from his Holy Land tour, or to talk about baptism when a student in the room plans to be baptized. The pastor might visit when the teacher is teaching the letter "P" to her class and invites the pastor to share pancakes and peaches with them for snack time.

Best Practice #8: An Individual Focuses on Alumni

Traditionally, many WELS congregations have dedicated many staff and a large percentage of the budget to elementary school aged children and have had little left for teen ministry. This is also true in the urban WELS voucher schools. But in this setting it is even more important to build upon what happened in 8th grade because unlike in the typical WELS school, most of the students do not have parents that are going to engage them in a teen ministry in church or even just take them to worship. Even if there is a team to do teen ministry, it is best practice to have one person lead ministry to alumni and track their spiritual situation.

The first part of this is to make sure that students and parents choose a high school with Jesus in mind. Unlike in small towns, Milwaukee has many different high schools to choose from and many of the private ones participate in MPCP. This makes choosing between high schools virtually financially equal, but academically and spiritually challenging. This alumni minister works with the parents to see all the factors that are important and stresses the spiritual factors. He works with the parents and student to come up with a spiritual plan whether they choose a Christian high school or not. He can make it an assignment for catechism class to write down their spiritual plan and follow up on their statements in the future.

The second part of an alumni ministry is to make personal contacts and create events for all the graduates, but especially for those without a church home. He will visit students in their schools and ask them about their spiritual health and contact parents when needed. He will plan

fun activities, open gym and Bible studies as needed to help alumni without a place to grow. In a smaller school this task might be just part of what someone does; in a larger setting it would be a full time position.

Many schools have someone part time helping students pick a good Christian high school, but only St. Marcus has a position that specifically follows up with students after they leave the school, an Alumni Minister. This position is designed to work with the congregation and the Christian high school a student attends to help the high school student progress spiritually and takes steps such as baptism or confirmation that the student was not ready for yet in 8th grade.

Best Practice #9: Celebrate Baptism Events

Baptism is a tool God uses to bless souls. By practice, it is also one of the first key ministries that an un-churched school family may be open to. The invitation for baptism needs to be in many places from registration, to visits, to chapel and newsletters. When a family indicates an interest in baptism, a pastor or staff minister should meet with the family and explain the law and gospel of baptism and explain the rite. Like with Beginning Discipleship, it is best practice to make the time and place of baptism fit the family first. It is beneficial thought to encourage the family to consider being baptized in a worship service or school chapel where others will be encouraged and be able to celebrate.

One practice that seems to help families on the edge of considering a baptism is to have a baptism event – or a special service where many people are baptized and the service is built around this great blessing. St. Philip's seems to have great success with one special baptism service in the beginning of each year including the baptism of not only students but also many family members. This one-time event lets the congregation see the blessings of the school and be

able to love the families. Other ministries have chosen other times to especially invite for baptisms such as the second Sunday of every month at one of multiple worship services with cake to follow, or the final chapel service of the year, when a particular class is singing in church or Easter. Whatever the time, it helps a school family make a decision and choose a date to have the event instead of just lingering on the waiting list.

Best Practice #10: Engage Families with Connecting Events

Whenever unchurched families are gathering with active Christians, especially members of the congregation, good things happen. A formal outreach presentation is not needed, just an opportunity for church members to spend time getting to know, talking to and hearing from those that need to be reached out to. One type of event might be a teaching one. Some ministries have used evenings or Saturday mornings to hold a workshop on helping with homework, understanding a progress report, parenting techniques or teaching Faith Stepping Stones, which trains parents how to pray, bless and have a Christian home.

Good things happen at events that are mainly aimed at having fun such as an Eighth Grade formal banquet, Harvest Costume Party, talent show, open gym, Advent Family Night or cake baking extravaganza, just to name a few of the events attempted by voucher school ministries. “Thankful Thursday” is one such program that gives St. Marcus many spiritual connections. This event happens Thursday morning for one classroom each week. The parents receive invitations, often personally made by students, to come for breakfast on Thursday and to listen to their class show off chants, songs or other skills or maybe play an intergenerational game. The pastor of school ministry and his team run it and interact with the parents before and after the event and personally invite these families to request ministry including baptisms and Bible studies.

A key strategy is to have school parents who are members of the congregation see these events as their ministry events. They need to make sure not to stay close to the other families that are members of the congregation that they know better. Instead they need to look for families that are new and are staying to themselves and engage in conversation with them. A way to help train them is to have a Member School Parent Group that meets semi-regularly to focus on the spiritual mission and blessings of the school. The trainer and staff leader of this group would be the position mentioned in Best Practice #1 working with a member leader, ideally someone who came from outside the congregation and is now a member.

Risen Savior Lutheran Church and Mount Lebanon are two voucher school ministries that have a number of quality family-connecting events. Risen Savior has a youth center, a teen center, vacation Bible school, and a health clinic that offer consistent ways for people to interact. Mount Lebanon invites families to a yearly corn roast, family picnic, “Got-Talent” night and a Thanksgiving dinner.

Best Practice #11: Staff Members Love the Congregation

The power of a student coming to church for the first time with his family and being welcomed by his teacher cannot be overestimated. A teacher who is also in the know and very excited about her congregation will more naturally be able to invite a school family into ministry. Ideally, every staff person from teacher to teaching assistant, from cook to janitor and IT person would be an active member in the congregation who not only attends worship each week but also is in a small group Bible study and serves in some non-school ministry capacity. There is no school that has all their staff like this, but its a best practice to encourage and grow staff in this direction and for them to know their power in outreach goes up the more they are plugged into God and their local ministry.

Different WELS voucher schools have different written requirements of staff. Some require all staff that work with children to be WELS, but not necessarily be members of their congregation. Some require only the called staff to be WELS while others require them to be members of the school's congregation. Different congregations have different ways of dealing with it, but the best practice is not to legislate or threaten teachers to be active Christians by using the Bible's teaching of the law. Instead school leaders need to set the example and encourage and train teachers on their roles as called workers and to have one-on-one conversations with those that struggle with congregational participation.

Best Practice #12: Staff Members Personally Target One Family

What sometimes gets in the way of outreach is that the task seems too big and impossible to do. A teacher looks at his classroom and knows there are 20 students and families who are in desperate need of Jesus and someone to connect them to him. That teacher tries to do things to make that connection but just feels like he is treading water and in the end he sees no measurable results and gets frustrated and stops.

Instead, the best practice is for teachers to just choose one unchurched student's family, probably coordinated with the other teachers who may also have a student from that family. It is that family that the teacher mentions by name in her daily prayers. It is a picture of that student or family the teacher has as the wallpaper on her phone or computer. It is that family that the teacher calls an extra time or offers to pick up for singing in church. It is that student or family that the teacher invites to a special outing. It is that student's dance recital outside of school that the teacher chooses to attend. If something happens such as a unique connection with a different family or that family joins the church, the teacher can certainly switch, but aiming at one student at a time is the key.

To implement this practice, choosing a family might be done in a beginning of the year faculty meeting with names given to the person responsible for school outreach. He will follow up and ask for a report on what things have been done to target the family throughout the year and report on the summary of results to the staff or invite them to share “wins” involving their targeted family.

This practice was not done formally by any of the voucher schools in this study, so it is difficult to measure the impact it could have. This still is the best way to do outreach in any situation: focusing not on the crowd but on one. This author feels that any voucher school that can step into this practice would feel the impact immediately.

Best Practice #13: Prioritize Space for Families to Gather Informally

As mentioned in Best Practice #10, good things happen when events are held where unchurched family and member families can connect. Good things also happen when these connections can happen regularly during the school day in gathering spaces. This might take place in a parking lot after drop off or pick up, in the office or lobby area, or more ideally in a café or parent room where good coffee and treats are stationed. If a staff person or parent volunteer can always be in there and make sure good literature and ministry information are available, it is even better. St. Marcus even has public computers available for parents to use.

What is difficult is that most of the urban voucher schools are using up most of their available space for classrooms that are overfilled with students. Every available space is being used for education and even the entry areas, because of expansion and remodeling, are not ideal for gathering. But as some of these ministries grow and look to build, it would be best practice to consider a space that would let parents know they are welcome here where they can be connected with personal and paper evangelism.

Best Practice #14: Lay Outreach Team Makes Calls at Designated Times

Often a school voucher ministry has so many possible prospects to reach out to that it can seem overwhelming to those responsible for outreach. The key is to set aside a static, consistent date and time to make those outreach calls and to be accountable to someone. One pastor might schedule each Monday from 1 to 3 pm to make follow up calls on all those school families who visited church this past weekend based up the attendance pads. The staff minister might make calls each Thursday afternoon from 2 to 3 pm to those who marked interested in that morning's Thankful Thursday event (see Best Practice #10).

Along with the dedicated time for outreach, to get all the calls done and to do them more effectively, a team of congregational members needs to be trained and utilized. This group may be anyone but is especially blessed to have school parents who were once un-churched and since have been ministered to and have joined the congregation. This team will train, but will spend more time actually making phone calls and home visits than talking about it. Atonement Lutheran Church does this practice best out of those studied. Their six member team make calls on Tuesdays predominantly to school families.

Best Practice #15: Designate a Percentage of Voucher Amount for Ministry

With some of the voucher schools growing quickly and being larger in operations than the church ministry, it is often difficult to stay ahead of the ministry needs with staffing. It is best practice to proactively add staff² but is difficult to use standard measuring tools to know how many staff to have. Gary McIntosh suggests that for every 100 in worship, a congregation should staff one full time position and a half time position. How does that translate to a congregation

² Gary L. McIntosh, *Staff Your Church for Growth: Building Team Ministry in the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000).

that has 200 in worship, 300 members but has an additional 190 non-member students in school that have families that total 420 people? With all the outreach possibilities and higher level of large needs, what level of staffing is needed to do what should be done? Clearly, no matter how many ministry staff persons are added, they would not run out of things to do for quite a while. A reasonable estimate is that for every 200 non-members schools kids, one full time and one half time support person is best. That is on top of the recommended staff needed for the regular church ministry.

This staffing level can be secured by allocating a certain percentage of the voucher amount that comes in for each child. With the benefits and extras, the one and a half positions would require about \$100,000 to fund. 8% of the current voucher amount of \$6442 would cover that amount of staff with a little left over for other ministry activities. With this percentage in place, as a voucher school grows, so would its staffing and funding for ministry to those children.

Surprisingly to this author, there was no consistent use of voucher funds for positions that included ministry. Gardens Homes funds its pastor and staff minister 100% through the congregation's budget, whereas St. Marcus funds 100% of its school pastor and his team by the voucher amount in the school's budget. Most congregations have 10% or 25% of their ministry staff funded by the school budget based upon the amount of school-associated work each position does.

Best Practice #16: Physically Connect Church and School

One subliminal way that Christian voucher schools can connect kids and families to a congregation is through architecture, by having the church building be visible and in a place that students and parents often see. Ideally, the church building sits centrally in the church/ school

campus and is a place that all grades pass by at least once a day. It might be on the way to lunch or on the way to gym. Teachers can also use the sanctuary for singing practice or other activities that match that space. Garden Homes has the church visible as parents enter and is an easy to find location.

Outreach is more difficult when the church building (especially if it also is the location of the pastor's office) is separate and especially when it is on a different piece of property. Mt. Lebanon has two campuses and has a different congregation connected to the middle school campus. They have placed the Kindergarten, usually the class with the richest outreach potential, in the basement of the church. This is convenient for pick up and drop off, but it is also ideal at getting children and parents to know where the church is and how to enter it. Voucher schools with sanctuaries separate from the schools need to find intentional ways for students and parents to visit that sanctuary and if possible look for ways through construction to join the two together.

Statistics and Data Backing Up Best Practices

It is this author's thesis that the more and better a school and congregation implement the above listed best practices, the more they are opening doors for God's blessings. Studying and researching this is not an exact science and many spiritual blessings are difficult to measure, but it is important to try. First, in interviews and visits and finally a survey, outreach leaders from each of the schools reported whether they already were utilizing these best practices. Based on their self-reporting and observation, this author identified whether the school fully did the best practice (Y), did it somewhat or sometimes (S), or not all (N). Ministries that this author felt were exceptional at any one practice were given a "Y+." These determinations were put on the following chart labeled "Self-Reported Best Practices." Weight was given to these practices based upon the author's thesis ranging from a weight of 2.5 for Best Practice #1 to a weight of

1.0 for best practice #16. The findings are charted on the following table:

Best Prac- tice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Wght.	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.1	2	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.1	1
Atone	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	S	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	N	N	Y+	N	Y
Ch/SP	Y	N	Y	S	Y+	S	Y	S	N	N	Y	N	N	N	S	S
GH	Y+	Y+	Y	Y	Y+	S	Y	S	S	Y	Y	S	S	Y	N	Y+
ML	Y	N	Y	S	S	Y	Y	S	Y	Y+	Y	S	S	S	S	S
RS	N	N	Y	N	S	S	Y	N	N	Y+	N	N	N	N	N	Y
Sal	Y	N	Y	Y	S	Y	Y	N	S	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
SLuc	Y	N	Y+	Y	Y	S	Y	N	N	Y	Y	S	Y	N	N	S
SMarc	S	Y+	Y+	S	Y+	Y	S	Y+	Y	Y	S	S	Y	N	Y+	Y+
SPhil	Y	S	Y	Y+	Y	N	Y	S	Y+	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y
Siloah	Y	N	Y	Y+	S	S	Y	N	N	Y	S	N	S	Y	N	Y
Total	8.5	3.5	10	6.5	8	7	9.5	4	5	9	7.5	2	3.5	4.5	3	8.5

Table 3: Self reporting of Best Practices:

Key: Y-es, S-ometimes or S-omewhat, N-o; + indicates a school does this practice exceptionally

The total weighted best practice score was then computed for each school and each school was ranked based upon this measurement. Then, the total ministry acts of those ministries for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012 were identified and checked with the pastors of those ministries who also gave a percentage of these ministries that they believed were school related. This percentage of the total acts was put in the chart “Ministry Actions and Metrics of Voucher School Congregations” and was used to compute the total ministry actions. This author weighted these ministry actions giving a child baptisms the weight of one, adult baptisms a weight of two and adult confirmations (which also means a person joins the congregation) the weight of three. This author chose these weights considering the long-term impact and work involved in each ministry act.

A truer measurement of overall effectiveness factors in size measurements of the ministry with the voucher school. First, the number of voucher students a school had in 2011 was used to divide the ministry acts and give a Ministry Act Per Voucher Student ratio. Secondly, the size of the congregation based upon communicant (adult) members, was factored in due to the variation in resources and people a ministry has to do outreach. The total weighted ministry actions divided by this membership number gives a second metric or the ministry per membership. The following table shows all of these metrics, raw and weighted.

School	Total weighted BP Score (Rank)	Child Bapt- Wt. 1	Adult Bapt- Wt. 2	Adult Conf- Wt. 3	Weighted Ministry Actions Total	Vouch Students in 2011	Min/ Voucher Student	Comm. Members In 2011	Min/ Members
Atone	20.25 (3)	87	12	22	177	234	.756	775	.228
Ch/SP	14.35 (8)	21	6	10	63	209	.301	435	.144
GH	22.8 (1)	90	14	22	174	233	.746	303	.574
ML	19.55 (5)	28	5	6	56	207	.270	453	.124
RS	8.85 (9)	18	3	10	64	228	.281	296	.216
Salem	18 (N/A)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SLuc	18.1 (6)	62	3	13	107	113	.947	1221	.088
SMarc	22.2 (2)	160	15	52	342	596	.574	867	.394
SPhil	20.1 (4)	93	34	7	184	118	1.56	191	.963
Siloah	16.15 (7)	10	2	4	28	211	.133	384	.073
Total/ Ave.	18.04	569	94	146	1195	2149	.556	4925	.243
WELS total		6449	708	3791	11373 x 3			303,130	.189

Table 4: Ministry Actions and Metrics of Voucher School Congregations for 2010-2012

Finally, these metrics were ranked and listed on the “Best Practice Score Comparison to Student and Member Ministry Ratio” along with the reported percentage of ministry acts that a congregation reported were directly related to the school ministry. The following table lists these

ministries according to the Best Practice Score and lists their weighted ministry measurables.

This table validates the value of the best practices and this thesis.

School	Total weighted BP Score (Rank)	% of Min. Actions from school	Weighted Ministry Actions Total	Vouch Students in 2011	Min/ Voucher Student (Rank)	Comm. Members In 2011	Min/ Members (Rank)
GH	22.8 (1)	90	174	233	.746 (4)	303	.574 (2)
SMarc	22.2 (2)	80	342	596	.574 (5)	867	.394 (3)
Atone	20.25 (3)	75	177	234	.756 (3)	775	.228 (4)
SPhil	20.1 (4)	85	184	118	1.56 (1)	191	.963 (1)
ML	19.55 (5)	80	56	207	.270 (8)	453	.124 (7)
SLuc	18.1 (6)	60	107	113	.947 (2)	1221	.088 (8)
Siloah	16.15 (7)	25	28	211	.133 (9)	384	.073 (9)
Ch/SP	14.35 (8)	50	63	209	.301 (6)	435	.144 (6)
RS	8.85 (9)	18	64	228	.281 (7)	296	.216 (5)
Salem	18 (N/A)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 5: Best Practice Score Comparison to Student and Member Ministry Ratio

The schools and congregations that were implementing these best practices were blessed with more ministry actions than others who were not, especially when school and congregation size are factored in. The four ministries with the top weighted best practice scores were the top four ministries with ministry actions for their size.

What was not predicted was that the number four best practice-rated school, St. Phillip's Lutheran School, would have the highest ministry per student and ministry per member ratios. This may be due to the two best practices that St. Phillip's did exceptionally well, the family friendly worship and the baptism events. The way they carry out these best practices may be above and beyond the rest and have increased their ministry outcome. Also, St. Phillip's has a pastor who is unique in two ways among the WELS congregations with voucher schools. First he has been in his position of leadership for a long time at St. Phillip's and long-term leadership has powerful effects on any ministry. Secondly, St. Phillip's pastor is the only African-American pastor among the pastors in the study. Racial factors were mentioned only by some in this study, but the strong performance of St. Philip's may suggest that having the race of the pastor match the group he is reaching out to is very significant.

Best Practices Conclusion and Exceptions

There is no single ministry that can carry out all of these best practices and in each congregation some of the proposed practices may not be possible or advisable. Each ministry needs to dialogue the options and learn from the experience of the group. As a ministry wrestles with what practices to implement, it is best to choose one practice at a time to either improve or begin.

The size of a congregation and the school it operates will also determine the funding and the staff available to implement these best practices. The sweet spot for size maximizing funding and staff seems to be about 600 students or a school with two average classrooms of each grade, K3 – 8th grade. Following Best Practice #15's funding plan, four full time ministry positions and four half time support positions could be funded. This would supply a full time pastor, two staff ministers, one alumni minister and four support staff that could be executive assistants, database

experts, community program specialists or other unique position to match the unique setting of the congregation. As a school would get bigger than that, it would make it more difficult for relationships to be built. A secondary sweet spot would be at 300 students, supplying two full time and two part time positions.

Voucher High School Practices

Voucher high schools such as Wisconsin Lutheran High School have unique financial challenges as well as ministry challenges. Since high school students are often very influenced by peers and students are the culture drivers, a high school has to be more mindful of how many un-churched students attend. HOPE High School found that the tipping point for them was when those without Christian school background became more than 50%. When that happened, keeping a Christian education culture was difficult. This was one of the factors that led to HOPE school decreasing their enrollment from a high of 326 to just 213 two years later.³ If they are able to get more freshmen who are interested in attending that come from quality Christian grade schools, they will consider growing their school back to their previous size and beyond. Wisconsin Lutheran High School also needs to watch the balance of kids to keep their school doing maximum ministry.

Unlike the voucher elementary schools, Wisconsin Lutheran High School does not have a congregation attached to it. Instead they are owned and operated by an association of many Lutheran congregations, some with voucher schools and others with traditional schools or no schools. The high school called a campus minister for the first time to be the one responsible for ministry and outreach to students (Best Practice #2). In a high school, many of the best practices

³ "Milwaukee Parental Choice Program – September MPCP Pupil Headcount History by School, 1990-91 through 2012-13" Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, July 17, 2013, accessed July 17, 2013, http://sms.dpi.wi.gov/sms_choice.

do not apply or are less effective. Instead, the high school has the added challenge of partnering with many congregations based upon which ones would be natural relationships for students due to history, location or strategy. As much as possible WLHS needs to equally partner with all of its member congregations, but when it comes to outreach, it simply is not practical. The campus pastor needs to work more closely with a few key congregations that are eager and equipped to reach out to the unchurched students who do not have an obvious connection to a member congregation.

Schools Without Congregations

The HOPE schools started as part of the WELS school system, but never had a congregation connected to any of them. Therefore they have never been able to implement many of these best practices to evangelize parents and other family members. They are still sharing God's word and training children and through those children giving God's word to families. As HOPE has declared, it is not a church and it does not have family outreach as part of their direct vision. They do realize, however, that if the parents of their children are blessed spiritually, the students will be blessed. Therefore, the HOPE schools' best strategy would be to find a partner congregation that would work with their students and families and supply the "church ministry" they cannot and carry out some of the best practices. The struggle comes financially as the HOPE schools use their entire budget on the Christian education of their students. A congregation wanting to venture into this ministry would need to bring its own finances or find a grant perhaps from a current HOPE supporter and then create revenue generating ministry like a worship service as soon as possible. It is the hope and prayer of this author that the HOPE Schools are open to this idea, a WELS congregation is willing to step forward and that a

financial partner is ready. The HOPE Schools will grow to at least a 2000 student school system in the future and is too big of a harvest field with “low hanging fruit” to ignore.

Chapter IV: Growing Forward: Assessing and Progressing

Forward with a Partner High School Aimed at Evangelizing Voucher Students

In the interviews and visits made with WELS urban Christian voucher schools that train students up to 8th grade, there were many comments and ideas and wishes regarding their students when they graduate. Some of these concerns were covered by the best practices that schools employed including having someone help direct students to a quality Christian school. In and around these comments, this author discovered a theme and idea that many had but few had openly spoken about. This hidden idea is the founding of a new Christian high school in Milwaukee to be an additional partner with these Christian voucher schools.

Already these elementary schools feel they have good partners in high school education. These grade schools most commonly speak about their key partners being Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee Lutheran High School, and the HOPE High School. These three were all seen as valued partners by most, but yet the school leaders feel that there are 8th grade graduates that either cannot get into or do not fit perfectly into any of these schools. There is a sense that there is a need for another school, which this author will refer to generically as New WELS High School.

The elementary schools in this study sent the largest group of their graduates to Wisconsin Lutheran High School. WLHS is a direct partner with the WELS schools and is controlled by a federation that includes these urban schools and other churches. It is a high performing, comprehensive school that prepares students not only for college but also technical schools and the work place. WLHS has diversity similar to what a student might experience at a college or in the world and accepts a set number of choice vouchers. WLHS also has its own

campus pastor, something unique among Milwaukee high schools, who actively works with congregations on ministry with its students.

But there are some reasons that WLHS may not be a good fit for all voucher school graduates. The first and biggest issue is that all voucher school graduates do not fit into the number of maximum vouchers established by WLHS to keep its ideal balance. WLHS wants to keep this balance of tuition and voucher students for financial reasons as well as culture reasons. This author finds no fault in the rationale for the limited number of vouchers. The struggle is that last year a number of graduates of voucher WELS elementary schools that had WLHS as their preferred high school and applied were not accepted and randomly landed too far down the waiting list for any hope. With the booming growth of WELS urban grade schools, soon there will be more and more graduates. St. Marcus graduates 50 students this year and 60 the next and 90 or more in 4 years. Atonement School and others are looking to expand their classrooms and double their size. Mark Neumann is looking to start up Shining Star schools and add 20-40 yearly graduates. With all of that growth in mind, this author's guess is that 350 8th grade students will be graduating from WELS urban grade schools by 2020. If there are only 150 yearly choice voucher seats available at WLHS, another preferred partner is needed for space alone. A second reason for considering another campus is a number of freshmen that had been successful at WELS voucher grade schools, struggle with the culture shock of a more diverse and suburban style school. A third barrier for attending WLHS may simply be its location on the other side of the city from many of the WELS voucher schools.

Milwaukee Lutheran High School is a Missouri Synod Lutheran School. Although this school teaches God's word and is an outstanding school, its lack of church body affiliation means it is not an ideal partner for WELS schools. The WELS urban school leaders would

always prefer to hand off their graduates to a school that believes and teaches the same things they do. They also would prefer a partner they have regular contact with through church body conferences and get-togethers. Milwaukee Lutheran High School has more of an urban flavor than WLHS, mainly due to the Missouri Synod having two other schools that draw much of their suburban audience. Lance Meyer, the alumni minister at St. Marcus, has observed with St. Marcus graduates that they have fewer problems with culture shock attending Milwaukee Lutheran High School than they do at WLHS. Milwaukee Lutheran High School also has an enrollment cap and does not have a campus pastor or anyone that specifically looks to do evangelism directly among their students. MLHS' principal stated that his school simply did not have the resources to work on the goal of direct evangelism of its students and instead relied upon the religion classes, devotions and chapel services to share the word of God. Finally, the location of Milwaukee Lutheran High School is problematic for many of the WELS voucher grade school students, as it is on the far corner of the city.

The HOPE High School was formed in 2004 and after undergoing a major transformation has solidified its vision under leader Zach Verriden. HOPE High school is a college prep high school that gets students accepted to a 4-year college. In fact, a student is not allowed to graduate unless they do get accepted and for the last 2 years, 100% of HOPE seniors did just that. The school runs differently from MLHS and WLHS in a number of ways. The school is smaller, has uniforms, has more of a structure and employs entirely urban school teaching and discipline strategies. This is where a number of WELS voucher school students have been academically successful when they might not have been at MLHS or WLHS. HOPE is also located in a spot that is easier to get to for many of the students. HOPE is not a preferred partner for the WELS urban grade schools because the school is Christian but no longer Lutheran. Although HOPE is

very willing to let outside ministries, like St. Marcus, send staff to reach out to students, they do not have the capacity or vision to do that themselves. HOPE High School also has as its priority the many graduates from their own growing grade schools who get first priority in the voucher lottery.

This author feels that a new WELS Urban High School needs to be explored and begun as soon as it can be done well. This would allow for all WELS urban school grads to enter a Lutheran High School and to have an ideal academic and spiritual institution uniquely built for them. One interviewed principal even suggested that there should be two new high schools.

This author recommends that the WELS Urban grade schools keep their partnership with WLHS and continue to recommend and send students there when the student fits. The grade schools would also build an additional partnership with the New WELS High School (NWHS) and send students that will fit best there. Ideally WLHS and NWHS would be true partners, working together in every way possible. They would not be school competitors but schools that are complimentary. One way this teamwork could be achieved would be if the same federation of congregations with the same top administrator controlled both schools. This set up may be difficult to manage, but at the very least the administrators and boards from the two schools would need to get together regularly to sync their mission and visions.

A new federation of the WELS Urban Conference could set up this NWHS. Even a single congregation could own this high school ministry. This author proposes that St. Marcus, since it is the largest and most connected urban grade school, lead the way. St. Marcus would “own” the school but have fellow urban congregations participate with members on the board.

This author feels that it would be best practice for NWHS to have its own campus pastor and its own Sunday worship opportunity, either as a daughter congregation or a satellite campus

of an existing church. This Sunday worship would be aimed at the teenage students that did not have their own church and their families and would be led by the school's campus pastor. This same campus pastor would organize the daily chapel services and speak at many of them. This ministry would function as a church in the community and use the teens to engage the community with action.

NWHS would be smaller and more intimate than WLHS or MLHS and closer to the style of the HOPE high school, but it would be WELS Lutheran with all WELS teachers. It would need to have fewer electives and two main tracks of college prep or technical college and workforce prep. It would also have limited sports due to its size and to its budget capacity. NWHS would need to plan to spend little more than what the voucher amount would provide. Students would wear uniforms and teachers would employ urban teaching and discipline best practices. It would be set up from the beginning as a place to continue the Christian discipling and education of students from the WELS Urban Grade schools. A physical location on the southern or eastern side of Milwaukee would be ideal for helping students with transportation challenges still get to a good school.

To get this NWHS going, a gathering of WELS leaders needs to happen with many stakeholders involved. Fortunately, among those who would be invited are those who have constructed, started, set up, run and managed WELS high schools in the past and present. With God holding the window of voucher evangelism open, his people in Milwaukee need to seize the opportunity.

Forward with Blessings

The blessings of the Christian voucher schools can already be seen. There are measurable blessings such as baptisms, confirmations and worship attendance as well as visible blessings

such as fuller classrooms, fuller sanctuaries and new or expanded buildings. A quick glance at the growing enrollments of the voucher schools is enough to make a lifelong Lutheran supporter of Christian education declare with tears, “It is hard to believe a [growing] Lutheran school like this exists and now to learn there are a bunch of you just makes me so thankful to Jesus.”¹ But the real blessings will be seen in the generations to come and in eternity and will not be seen in the lifetime of those who ventured into this ministry.

There is a bigger picture of impact voucher schools are making as God uses them to turn a person from a life of evil to a life of serving God. Garden Homes’ Pastor Jeremy Mattek conveyed this concept at a school ministry-sharing event to help school leaders understand the possible long term impact voucher schools are making. He shared the study of “Max Jukes” and Pastor Jonathan Edwards² and the next five generations that came from them. Both men had an unusually large number of direct descendants and had an extreme outcome from his family, but by observation and from God’s word the effects of a person are clearly felt to the “third and fourth generation.”³ In the study, “Max Jukes” a poor evil criminal it is observed:

Scarcely any of the Jukes were ever at school any considerable time. Probably no one of them ever had so much as a completed rural school education. ...On the basis of the facts gathered by Mr. Dugdale, 310 of the 1,200 [descendants] were professional paupers, or more than one in four. These were in poorhouses or its equivalent for 2,300 years. Three hundred of the 1,200, or one in four, died in infancy from lack of good care and good conditions. There were fifty women who lived lives of notorious debauchery. Four hundred men and women were physically wrecked early by their own wickedness. There were seven murderers. Sixty were habitual thieves who spent on the average twelve years each in lawless

¹ Mark Boche, during a school tour at St. Marcus by the author on July 16, 2013.

² A.E. Winshop, "Jukes-Edwards a Study in Education and Heredity," Infomotions, July 19, 2013, accessed July 19, 2013, <http://infomotions.com/etexts/gutenberg/dirs/1/5/6/2/15623/15623.htm>.

³ Exodus 34:7; Number 14:18; Exodus 20:5.

depredations. There were 130 criminals who were convicted more or less often of crime.⁴

In contrast, the 5 generations that came from Jonathan Edwards were very different:

Not all of the college members of the family have been discovered, and yet among the men alone I have found 285 graduates and a surprisingly large number of these have supplemented the college course with post-graduate or professional study. Just as the "Jukes" have intensified their degeneracy by neglect, the Edwards family has magnified capacity and character by industry and education. Among the 285 college graduates of the Edwards family there are thirteen presidents of colleges and other higher institutions of learning, sixty-five professors of colleges, and many principals of important academies and seminaries. Forty-five American and foreign colleges and universities have this family among the alumni. From this family have come presidents for Yale, Princeton, Union, Hamilton, Amherst, the University of California, the University of Tennessee, the famous Litchfield (Conn.) law school, the Columbia law school, and Andover Theological Seminary.⁵

In many cases, if students were unable to attend one of the quality Christian voucher schools, they would instead be attending a school without Jesus and often get little or no education. An African-American male in such a school would have a low chance to graduate from high school and perhaps be the start of five generations of no education and much evil. If by the power of education and God's word, a voucher school can change a person from being a "Max Jukes" and instead becoming like a "Jonathan Edwards" it may change everything spiritually and physically for hundreds or thousands of direct descendants. This would also be a blessing to the thousands of people these descendants would have relationships within their lifetimes. That is a reason why it is worth the extra effort to go the extra step to reach a child.

One example from the ministry of St. Marcus is the story in progress of Ma-Lik Rollins. He came to St. Marcus when his family moved to Milwaukee and an aunt recommended the

⁴ A.E. Winshop, "Jukes-Edwards a Study in Education and Heredity," Infomotions, July 19, 2013, accessed July 19, 2013, page 6, <http://infomotions.com/etexts/gutenberg/dirs/1/5/6/2/15623/15623.htm>.

⁵ Ibid. page 18.

school. Ma-Lik was in eighth grade and had never attended a Christian school before or been given much Christian training. His father was an inactive Muslim. In that one year of schooling, he built a special relationship with the school pastor, ended up at his home often, and eventually was baptized, confirmed and became certain he needed to train to become a pastor. With his family needing to move again to New Jersey, he looked to the pastor and St. Marcus to help him attend Luther Preparatory School, which specializes in preparing high school students to attend a pastor and Christian teacher training college. In 2013, he graduated from high school and has continued his plans and is enrolled at Martin Luther College to study to become a pastor. More importantly he has continued to spend much time at the pastor's home during breaks and summer, observing how a Christian family functions including watching a Christian marriage and morning and evening devotions, something he had never seen before. By his contact with this voucher school and its ministries and staff, Ma-Lik may have been changed by God to make eternal differences for thousands through his descendants and ministry.

Arguably the most important group reached through voucher schools is young black males on their way to being men. In Milwaukee the black demographic is statistically demonstrable as among the world's worst. The black community in Milwaukee has 45% employment, 60% of students habitually truant, a 50% high school graduation rate and the 3rd worst infant mortality rate in the country.⁶ For males, this situation leads to incarceration, which leads to the next generation continuing to suffer.

“No state comes close to Wisconsin in imprisoning black males. The study found that 12.8 percent, or 1 in 8 of African American working age men, were incarcerated. That rate is 32

⁶ Politifact, "Conservative black sheriff says Milwaukee blacks have high unemployment, truancy, infant mortality; low graduation rate, reading scores," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 13, 2012, accessed July 22, 2013, <http://www.politifact.com/wisconsin/statements/2012/feb/13/david-clarke-jr/conservative-black-sheriff-says-milwaukee-blacks-h/>.

percent higher than the second worst state, Oklahoma, and nearly double the national average of 6.7 percent (or 1 in 15).”⁷

The most deplorable example of the impact of incarceration can be seen in the 53206 zip code, from North Avenue to Capitol Dr. and I-43 to 27th Street. Of 7,628 black men aged 18-64 in the zip code, about half, or 3,837, have served time in state prison. “By 2012 nearly every residential block in the neighborhood had multiple numbers of ex-offenders with prison records,” the study notes. Lena Taylor a representative who lives there said, “It’s horrific and nothing to be proud of,” she says of the rate of black imprisonment. “It really is the highest rate in the world, when you consider that Wisconsin leads the nation and the U.S. has the highest rate of incarceration in the world.”⁸

One of the concerns Christian voucher schools have is whether the Christian education that they give will stick and last for a lifetime and into the next generation. Will a young man who has promise in 8th grade and talks about Jesus regularly simply go back to heading the same direction that he was before, especially if he does not have a family that is spiritually encouraging him? A number of studies show the difficulty of a young person growing up and becoming active in a Christian congregation if he does not have his father going with him when he is young. Results of one such study:

The question was asked to determine whether a person’s religion carried through to the next generation, and if so, why or if not, why not. The result is dynamite. There is one critical factor. It is overwhelming, and it is this: It is the religious practice of the father of the family that, above all, determines the future attendance at or absences from church of the children. . . . No father – no family – no faith. Winning and keeping men is essential to the community of faith and vital to the work of all mothers and the future salvation of our children.⁹

⁷ Bruce Murphy, “No Country for Black Men”, *Urban Milwaukee* (April 25, 2013), accessed July 22, 2013, <http://urbanmilwaukee.com/2013/04/25/murphys-law-no-country-for-black-men/>.

⁸ Politifact, "Conservative black sheriff says Milwaukee blacks have high unemployment, truancy, infant mortality; low graduation rate, reading scores," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 13, 2012, accessed July 22, 2013, <http://www.politifact.com/wisconsin/statements/2012/feb/13/david-clarke-jr/conservative-black-sheriff-says-milwaukee-blacks-h/>.

⁹ Robbie Low, "The Truth About Men," *Touchstone*, June 2003, accessed July 18, 2013, <http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=16-05-024-v>.

Statistically one study found:

Father's Church Practice	Mother's Church Practice	Percent of Children who become regular churchgoers	Percent of Children who become irregular churchgoers
Regular	Regular	33%	41%
Irregular	Regular	3%	59%
Non-Practicing	Regular	2%	37%
Regular	Irregular	38%	36%
Regular	Non-Practicing	44%	35%
Irregular	Non-Practicing	25%	23%
Non-Practicing	Non-Practicing	4%	15%

Table 6: Long Term Results of Parents' Religious Practice¹⁰

These statistics could make those in Christian voucher schools despair about the uphill battle they are waging. Instead, trusting in the Holy Spirit, this can be seen as an amazing opportunity to change the next generation of fathers and impact generations to come. This means that when striving for using best practices, the most important targets are boys and men. This also shows the need for each Christian voucher school to have an adequate supply of adult Christian men who practice their faith openly and publicly. "Adult women as well as men will conclude subconsciously that the dad's absence indicates that going to church is not really a

¹⁰ Robbie Low, "The Truth About Men," *Touchstone*, June 2003, accessed July 18, 2013, <http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=16-05-024-v>.

“grown-up” activity.”¹¹ Perhaps seeing and experiencing other men they have a good relationship with can help change that perception and pass it on to generations. It will take this effort to bring in as many blessings as possible.

The future in Milwaukee’s Christian Voucher schools is not guaranteed but it does look good. The Center for Urban Teaching, working especially with Wisconsin Lutheran College and Martin Luther College are increasing the supply of good quality teachers eager and ready to do urban ministry. Schools that Can – Milwaukee is helping these schools and others who want to provide excellent education and make sure teachers don’t burn or flame out. Henry Tyson and other “vision casters” picture 20,000 Milwaukee students in high performing schools by 2020 – with many of those in Christian voucher schools. Many of the Christian voucher schools are at capacity or growing close to full. Some are looking at expanding on their own campus or starting a satellite school and doubling their ministry. There are still political hurdles and stresses, but in general those barriers have continued to be broken down.¹²

If the vision goes forward, there could be 10,000 students in Christian voucher schools in Milwaukee, which would mean about 1000 of those students per year would be heading down the pipeline to college graduation, getting jobs, raising families, living in communities and filling churches. Since the current population of the city of Milwaukee is about 600,000, there are about 8,000 newborns and 8,000 people 44 years old who live in it. Even if half of those with Christian voucher backgrounds remained in the city, the impact would be huge and represent 6% of the people and about one person on each block being a light for Jesus and in the community.

¹¹ Robbie Low, "The Truth About Men," *Touchstone*, June 2003, accessed July 18, 2013, <http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=16-05-024-v>.

¹² M.D. Kittle, "Records Request: What’s Going On with Vacant Milwaukee School Buildings?," *Wisconsin Reporter*, April 1, 2013, accessed July 22, 2013, <http://watchdog.org/77499/records-request-whats-going-on-with-vacant-milwaukee-school-buildings/>.

The physical impact for the city would mean lower crime and unemployment rates and higher income, taxes, number of homeowners and active community members. By 2050, everyone would see the impact of the high performing Christian voucher schools on the community as they see Christ in the people that attended them. This is a vision that needs to be put before school leaders and staff as well as the communities they serve.

Steps Toward that Future Vision

Christian voucher schools cannot settle for their current ministry outcomes. The numbers and stats of ministry can quickly be compared to peers in their church body and look amazing and give cause to be satisfied. The reality most often is that the ministry blessings experienced were only a portion of what could have been. Voucher ministries need not only to track ministries done such as baptisms, but also publish the numbers of students in school that yet are not baptized. They need not only to rejoice when parents join a congregation, but they need to let everyone know how many parents have declared that they do not have a church. It is measurable data like these that can help a ministry not grow stagnant.

As ministry teams get bigger, it is also easy for a lot to be done without a lot being accomplished. It can be like trying to build a Lego building, if one or two people work together they can easily understand what each other is doing and work together. If however eight people build a Lego building, they will put together many pieces but in the end these pieces may not connect well or make a good-looking house. Teams need a strong leader, who holds the vision and holds team members accountable. For many ministry leaders, having a team work with them

and having it grow is a new and challenging experience. These leaders need to seek training and use resources like the Vision-Traction-Organizer.¹³

Christian Voucher schools also need to assess very carefully their end product, their graduates. They need to assess them as they leave the school and follow them continually after that. Schools need to compare their ministry outcome using other schools as a comparison – both urban schools and non-urban schools. The first and easier data to measure is the academic side of religious studies at these schools. Regularly these schools assess math, reading, social studies and science growth in their students, and they are required to once a year by the state. In contrast here is no mandate to test their religious academic growth either by the state or their church body. This lack of testing opens the door to apathy or simply not knowing the progress or gaps of religious knowledge in students. This author feels that a comprehensive religious knowledge test should be given to each student entering fifth grade and then again as she graduates. The scores on these tests can help measure the effectiveness of the kindergarten and primary teams and the overall effectiveness of the school. An outside party in the WELS would write the exam and that same test would be administered to all the urban schools and to a number of non-urban schools for comparison. Each year a different test could be written and the schools could compete in an enjoyable yet useful way to push themselves forward in the religious instruction of the students.

The second, but much more difficult data to assess, is the spiritual blessing received by students who attend the school. This data is difficult to assess because spiritual blessings often happen slowly and can be perceived incorrectly. Also, the data that is most important is whether the spiritual blessings lasted all the way to eternity and spread to other people. Even though it is

¹³ Gino Wickman, *Traction: Get a Grip On Your Business*, Expanded ed. (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, 2012).

difficult to assess, a congregation and school would be blessed with some data to analyze and dialogue with and even to compare themselves with other congregations.

As a test of this process, a survey was given to the graduating class of three of the larger urban grade schools: HOPE Prima, Atonement and St. Marcus. This survey found more similarities than differences between how the eighth grade students reported the spiritual impact of their school. Without a control group or previous years to compare, the survey was only minimally valuable. It is this author's advice to all Christian voucher schools that they agree on a survey and give it to all of their graduates in May and then compare scores with each other and to non-urban Christian schools.

The surveys showed that all three schools helped most of their students pick their high school, and that the top recommended choice was the top destination of students. HOPE Prima had 90% of its graduates choose HOPE High, whereas Atonement and St. Marcus each had the majority going to their partner school, Wisconsin Lutheran High School. This shows the power of a grade school guidance counselor in directing a solid choice for students.

All three of the schools had graduates who self-identified similar priorities in a high school choice. Academics, sports, religion, location and programs were the top five vote getters. St. Marcus stood out as having sports as the most important priority. This finding underscores the need for a choice high school to have varied and quality sports to attract students.

Both St. Marcus and HOPE Prima had many students join their graduating class in middle school years due to the expansion of their schools, whereas Atonement had many more that came in kindergarten and stayed. A study that would compare the blessings of students who attended their whole grade school career at a school to those that joined in the middle would be a beneficial project to undertake in the years ahead.

When the students of these three schools rated how well their schools helped them academically, they all received a score between “well” and “greatly” showing that the students think they are at a good school. This perception comes from comparing their school to a school they attended earlier, by comparing their school to the schools of their friends and from what the school pushes as its identity to the students.

The most interesting data is the self-reported spiritual data. Regardless of the school, the average response to how often their family attended church was “often” but not “every week” and each school’s students reported a very slight increase in worship for their family with HOPE Prima’s students reporting the most average worship gain. This little boost in family worship activity is in contrast to the big boost that the students report in their own faith life from enrollment till their graduation. The greatest end product was found at HOPE Prima and Atonement where students identified themselves as 3.94 or 3.91 on a scale of 1-4 on strength of faith, growing about a half a point on that scale from their enrollment rating. That is an awesome strong self-perception. St. Marcus experienced the greatest reported spiritual growth with students gaining almost a whole point on the scale, with a typical student saying they enrolled at St. Marcus with “average faith in Jesus” and getting ready to leave with “strong faith in Jesus.” Each of the schools received an overall spiritual rating from the graduates between spiritually helping them “well” and “greatly.” It is this sort of data that would be useful for school leaders, teachers and congregations to look at to assess their own success and whether they are growing in their mission.

Students rated their chapel services. Surprisingly the school without a pastor and without an actual church building or “ideal” worship space received the highest rating of the three with the average of “good.” Many students identified chapel and religion classes as main ways they

were brought closer to Jesus, but many of them mentioned “day to day discussions about Jesus” and “Jesus is in everything including the discipline.” Students felt they would be worse off spiritually if they had not attended their school and normally had a particular staff person they identified as a spiritual mentor to them. HOPE and Atonement had key individuals that dominated the responses, Mr. Adam Harvey and Pastor Jon Hartmann, respectively. St. Marcus had a much more distributed group of adults mentioned including six different teachers, middle school teachers of all the grades, and the school pastor with none of them getting more than eight votes. This difference either shows that two of the schools are blessed with strong spiritual leaders or that St. Marcus is blessed with wonderful balance and team effort. Regardless, each school should learn which staff members are gifted with making a spiritual impact with students and use them to the fullest degree.

It is this author’s recommendation that every school, voucher or not, yearly take a version of such an assessment and study the results and implement intentional changes to improve those results.

Teamwork

Voucher schools in Milwaukee are improving in how they get together and help one another educationally. There are conferences facilitated by Schools that Can and the Center for Urban Teaching and there are many ways that school leaders and teachers share and help one another. Often this comes in the form of school observations and teachers across schools getting together and sharing their stories. But there is not much sharing among these schools in the area of ministry. Some of this can be explained because some Christian voucher schools do not have a ministry component beyond the classroom. There is no reason why Christian voucher schools from the same church body should not get together regularly to share ministry techniques and

encourage one another in this unique ministry. The world's greatest experts on voucher evangelism all operate in one city and yet they do not get together to share.

A proposed way to do this for WELS voucher schools is to have an "Inter-congregation Voucher School Outreach Practical Conference – IVSOPC" This conference could be held every year in conjunction with the Urban Teacher's Conference at the end of October possibly at the same location. The IVSOPC would have a later start and would be scheduled to allow some staff that may want to attend parts of both to choose what is most beneficial. For example, if the Urban Teacher's Conference begins at 9 am, the IVSOPC could begin at 10. Lunch and other activities could be together to allow teammates to see one another and for efficiency.

Another way to carry this sort of working together is for two Christian voucher schools to get together and share ministry happenings and strategies. One month one school would visit the other who would supply a tour and present their challenges and strategy in outreach, concluding with sharing and discussion. The following month the schools would switch roles. If all the schools participated and made one of these learning connections each year, it would take 10 years before schools would reconnect with each other. This would be more of a personal way to share ministry and build relationship for informal sharing between gatherings. Perhaps, a hybrid of the two proposals might accomplish the most, having a one day conference and as part of that conference allowing ministries who think they might have the most similarities or the most to learn from each other make a plan to exchange visits in the spring.

Wisconsin, the rest of the United States and the world are watching Milwaukee and what happens with voucher schools. Voucher schools have been in other states like California and Ohio and the District of Columbia, but no program has included private religious schools as in Milwaukee. Even other nations that have or are considering voucher schools have toured the

schools in Milwaukee. How Milwaukee's Christian voucher schools handle the situation will be a model for all of those considering making this an option in their school district and for those considering opening up their private school to participate. Milwaukee's success and practical strategies as outlined in this thesis will serve as a model to do more than impact a city, but will impact the world and the world to come.

2050 Vision

2013 marks the 9th year of most WELS Christian schools entering the voucher program. Schools have transformed, congregations have adjusted and been invigorated, and there are many visible blessings. The long-term blessings are being prayed for and difficult to envision. But in 2050, in 33 years or about four times longer than the program has currently existed, this author sees many things changing.

Schools That Can will have reached their goal of 20,000 students in high performing schools by 2020. The voucher program will have expanded extensively throughout the state and in the city. By 2050, 40,000 students will be in high performing schools with the majority of them being Christian but including charter and public schools. The high performing schools will have won over the public school leaders by 2030 and there will be more teamwork. The school unions that used to yield such power will have lost it.

There will be strong anti-Christian movements in the voucher system by those that see Christianity as a cult, but in Milwaukee the sheer number and quality of Christian schools will win the day. The alumni of many of the grade schools will now be in their 40's and 50's and in active positions of influence in the city.

The WELS schools will have continued to expand and daughter new schools and ministries and have established themselves as a Milwaukee educational and community power.

Graduating 600 students from their 28 grade schools and 500 from their three high schools each year, WELS schools will be noticed as the best of the best and represent Christ in their communities.

The WELS congregations with schools will now consist mainly of individuals who have gone through their schools and are equipped to live as disciples for Jesus. The men of these congregations will be leaders in their families and committees and be noticeably different than the majority of men around them. These congregations will be leaders in their church body and supply many teachers and pastors for around the nation and world.

The total impact of this open window of voucher schools will not totally be seen until the Last Day when everything will be seen. On that day, men and women will stand up and there will be many thousands from Milwaukee that will be able to point to Christian voucher schools and those that served in them and say, "God used this to bring me his gospel message and make me his child!" Christian voucher school leaders and staff need to live today with that vision of tomorrow.

Appendix

New WELS Lutheran High School Exploration Proposal

By Pastor Paul Steinberg

November 25, 2013

Reason for Proposal:

1. WELS Urban Elementary Schools (WUES) are graduating more students than ever and are growing. In 2020, WUES could be graduating 300 8th graders each year.
2. WLHS is the preferred high school of WUES, but not all WUES grads will be able to be accepted due to enrollment caps etc.
3. WLHS is designed to be a comprehensive high school to serve the entire WELS Federation of congregations. This excellent model does not fit all of WUES grads.
4. Paul Steinberg discovered a quiet groundswell of interest in a new WELS high school while doing interviews for his thesis. Lance Meyer noticed the same interest as he has been working with WUES alumni and their schools.

Proposal:

1. Invite key leaders for an initial discussion/ idea gathering / brainstorming session in January 2014.
2. From that meeting, form an exploration/ feasibility team to investigate and communicate and form a proposal to be shared with WLHS and the WELS Urban Conference.

Thoughts that need to be explored by future committee:

- Is there truly a need for NWHS (new WELS high school) in Milwaukee?
- Would this high school be operated best by the WLHS Federation, new Urban Federation, individual WELS congregation or other board?
- How would WLHS be affected by NWHS?
- How would NWHS be different than WLHS in its operation? – Uniforms, College bound only, sports, size?
- Who would the NWHS school leaders be?
- Where would be an ideal location?
- How would capital funds be acquired?

Key invitees: Henry Tyson, Dave Kehl, Bill Schaefer, Ken Fischer, Aaron Robinson, Peter Unnasch, Wendy Greenfield, Joel Jaeger, Kole Knueppel, Tim McNeil, Ray Dusseau – others?

Historical Growth and Decline of WELS Urban Churches (Communicant Membership)

<u>Church</u>	<u>1956</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>2011</u>
Atonement	925	1,020	775
Bethel	525	Joined Nathanael - 172	
Bethesda	1,027	Joined Gloria Dei - 230	
Calvary	80	167	61
Centennial	225	370	219
Christ	720	460	222
Divine Charity	500	Joined Divinity - 286	173
Ephrata	275	Closed	
Fairview	450	440	155
Garden Homes	258	418	303
Gethsemane	550	363	52
Gloria Dei	135	973 (before combining with Bethesda)	172
Grace	550	346	904
Jerusalem	942	291	Closed
Messiah	228	241	107
Mt. Lebanon	675	1,050	453
Nathanael	140	169	49
North Trinity	1,100	1,305	566 Merged with St. John-Clinton Ave. to form Loving Shepherd in 2001
Parkside	235	Closed	
Redemption	165	627	182
St. Andrew	228	218	103
Resurrection	625	541	196
Risen Savior (founded 1970)		185	296
St. Jacobi	900	652	Relocated
St. James	664	741	203
St. John on Vliet (not WELS)	596		Surviving
St. Lucas	1,688	1,445	1,221
St. Marcus	903	298	867
St. Matthew	720	Relocated 865	271
St. Paul	230	374	124
St. Peter	670	340	213
St. Philip	40	193	191
Salem (east)	273	154	101
Salem (107th)	370	1,110	660
Saron	374	Closed	
Siloah	1,964	599	384
Zabaoth	850	253	80
	<u>20,800</u>	<u>16,208</u>	<u>9,303</u>

Ultimate Student Survey Questions to Evaluate Voucher School's Ministry

1. What school do you attend?
2. What high school will you most likely attend next year?
3. Has someone from your current helped you select this high school?
4. What are the top three reasons you selected this high school?
5. What grade were you when you started attending your current school?
6. Rate on a scale of 1 (poorly) to 5 (excellently) how your school helped you academically?
7. Rate on a scale of 1 (poorly) to 5 (excellently) how your school helped you spiritually?

Choose the answer that best fits:

8. When you entered this school, you had ... A. No faith in Jesus B. Weak faith in Jesus C. Average faith in Jesus D. Strong faith in Jesus E. Not sure
9. Now as you are ready to leave this school, you have... A. No faith in Jesus B. Weak faith in Jesus C. Average faith in Jesus D. Strong faith in Jesus E. Not sure
10. When you entered this school, your family attended church... A. Never B. Once in a while C. Often D. Every Week E. Not sure
11. Now as you are ready to leave this school, your family attends church... A. Never B. Once in a while C. Often D. Every Week E. Not sure
12. Rate on a scale of 1 (poorly) to 5 (excellently) how your school held chapel services?
13. Please share how your school has brought you closer to Jesus:
14. Finish this sentence: "If I had never attended this school, spiritual I would be..."
15. Who was the person(s) from this school that helped you spiritually the most?
16. Please share anything you think your school should know as it goes forward with future students:

OUTREACH LEADER BEST PRACTICES SURVEY

Please answer each question and feel free to add any comments anywhere that you think would be important for me to know or consider.

1. Does your ministry currently make sure to learn and record the church connection/ spiritual situation of each student in your school? If so, how do you do this?
2. Is there one person who is the head of school outreach and held accountable for it? If so, what is the name and job title of this person.
3. Do students from your school sing in church worship services? If so, how often do they sing? What percentage of students make it to worship -- estimate if you don't know?
4. Do you feel your worship services are school family friendly? Describe why you think they are or aren't.
5. How do you offer Bible Information Classes to school parents? Do you have regular times, individual sessions? Who normally teaches them?
6. When new families join the school do they receive a spiritual visit by a pastor or staff minister? If not, how do you spiritually orientate new families?
7. How are your pastors visible and involved in the school?
8. Do you have a staff person who helps students select a high school? Do you have a staff person who follows students' spiritual and academic progression in high school?
9. How do you line up baptisms for school families? Do you have a big event where many are baptized or a special push at any time?
10. What sort of events do you have that gets school families to connect with the congregation and the ministry?
11. What church membership requirements do you have for called and other staff? How do you encourage active membership?
12. How do you encourage staff to personally reach out to families? Do you use any system for accountability or focus?
13. Is there space in your school that parents can gather and feel comfortable to gather informally as school begins or ends or at other times? If so, please describe the space and how it is utilized.
14. Do you have a lay team of individuals that does evangelism among school families? If so, please describe how many, who leads them and how often they make calls.
15. Do you have a certain percentage of the budget or voucher amount set aside for ministry staff and purposes? If not, how do you determine how much funding goes to the ministry side of the school?

16. How is the church sanctuary physically connected to the school and utilized by the school?

17. Is there any way you particularly target school children's fathers?

18. What is the number one struggle in doing ministry with school families?

19. What is the best thing that has happened in the school ministry in the last couple of years?

20. Please check the following totals of ministry actions and write corrections if needed. I got them from the synodical stat book online, but I know there are mistakes.

Year	Baptisms- child	Baptisms- adult	Confirmations Youth	Confirmations Adult
2010				
2011				
2012				

21. Without doing too much research, what percentage of the ministry actions in the above table do you think are related to your school ministry?

21. Please share anything else you think I should know about outreach in voucher schools. You can write on the back or send me an e-mail if you wish.

LISTING OF INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED IN THE STUDY
Education Evangelism: Maximizing Opportunities in Milwaukee's Christian Schools
Investigated by Paul Steinberg
Liberty University
Seminary

Atonement Lutheran School, 4224 W Ruby Avenue, Milwaukee, WI
Christ-St. Peter School, 2229 W Greenfield Avenue, Milwaukee, WI
Garden Homes Lutheran School, 2450 W Roosevelt Dr, Milwaukee, WI
HOPE Christian Prima, 2345 North 25th Street, Milwaukee, WI
HOPE Christian Fortis, 3601 North Port Washington Road, Milwaukee, WI
HOPE Christian Semper, 3040 West Capitol Drive, Milwaukee, WI
HOPE High School, 3215 North Dr. Martin Lutheran King Drive, Milwaukee, WI
Milwaukee Lutheran High School, 9700 W Grantosa Drive, Milwaukee, WI
Mount Lebanon Lutheran School, 6100 W Hampton Ave, Milwaukee, WI
Risen Savior Lutheran School, 9550 W Brown Deer Rd, Milwaukee, WI
St. Lucas Lutheran School, 648 E Dover Street, Milwaukee, WI
St. Marcus Lutheran School, 2215 N Palmer Street, Milwaukee, WI
St. Philip Lutheran School, 3012 N Holton Street, Milwaukee, WI
Salem Lutheran School, 6844 N 107th Street, Milwaukee, WI
Siloah Lutheran School, 3721 N 21st Street, Milwaukee, WI
Wisconsin Lutheran High School, 330 North Glenview Avenue, Milwaukee, WI
Word of Life Lutheran School, 3545 S 23rd Street, Milwaukee, WI

Epitome of Proposed Actions

1. Voucher ministries study and implement best practices as able, focusing on one practice at a time.
2. Voucher ministries yearly measure their ministry ratios and make adjustments.
3. Voucher ministries yearly administer ultimate student surveys, compare them with previous years and with other comparable ministries and plan to make adjustments.
4. Some ministry considers partnering with HOPE Schools for outreach.
5. Voucher ministries meet to start a New WELS High School in Milwaukee.

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VITA

Paul S. Steinberg

PERSONAL

Born: In Appleton, WI, 1971.

EDUCATIONAL

B.A., Northwestern Lutheran College (Now MLC, New Ulm, MN).

M. Div., Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI.

D. Min., Liberty University (2014).

MINISTERIAL

Dual Parish Pastor: St. Paul Lutheran, Mauston & St. Luke Lutheran, New Lisbon, Wisconsin

Team Pastor: Immanuel Lutheran Church & School, Medford, Wisconsin

Pastor of School Ministry: St. Marcus Lutheran Church & School, Milwaukee, WI
2008-present

November 5, 2013

Paul Steinberg
IRB Approval 1651.110513: Education Evangelism: Maximizing Opportunities in
Milwaukee's Christian Schools

Dear Paul,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.

Professor, IRB Chair

Counseling (434) 592-4054

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