

## NJ District Education report for 2018 Convention

By Caren Vogt

Lutheran Education, like our churches, are experiencing difficult times in New Jersey. Although our schools are rated among the best by the state for education and reaching out to the whole family, we often miss the mark in meeting the needs of our community as a whole. We have closed two preschools in the last 3 years, 5 others are struggling to stay open and be financially stable. We have only one elementary school, Our Redeemer in Fords, who is struggling to stay open. We have four preschools currently in transition. Two are looking for new directors to lead their schools, while two others have found directors to lead their school. We want to welcome Douglas Puls as the new director at Christ Memorial and Martha Gilmore as the new director of Redeemer Preschool, Westfield. We have provided conferences each year in the spring. The Spring Educator's Conference for Pastors, DCE's, Directors and Teachers has provided trainings and CEU's with both Lutheran and Secular presenters to help our churches and schools in their ministry. An average attendance of 55 participants per year. We encourage you to send your teachers and ministry team to the annual conference, as well to make suggestions for future conferences.

Out of 20 preschools and 1 elementary only three operate with hours for working parents (6am to 6pm). The rest still have half day programs or extended programs, but they often don't meet the hours of working parents. Parents need consistent care 12 months of the year for their children. Parents also wish they can make one stop when looking for childcare for their children. Our schools need to look at school age care for siblings of preschool children in our care. Providing before and after school, holidays, school closings, and care for all ages during the summer. The schools that have made these adjustments seem to be doing well, while still maintaining a high quality educational program.

Our Churches need to be active in our schools. Our retired members could volunteer to be greeters. Welcoming parents and be encouragers. Sharing their wisdom when parents have concerns and offering prayers for the parents they meet. Members could visit new parents and welcome them to the school family and share information about the church. Keep each of the school families in the prayers of the church. Attend school functions and mingle with the parents sharing the gospel and finding out if there is any way the church can be of service to them. Members can reach out to staff and become a prayer partner with a staff member. Offer your time and talents to staff to make the school program the best it can be. Reward your hard-working staff with messages of encouragement and praise. Hold a dinner for staff and parents after a long day just to let them know you care. Doing these things and others will help you see your school in action and help you to keep the ministry of your school in the forefront of your church's ministry plan.

Please support all of schools with prayers, financial gifts, encouragements, and the many gifts and talents with which God has blessed you. Our Schools are a powerful outreach ministry into our communities. With Church and School working together the Gospel message will reach many.