

A Public Statement on Education  
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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
September 2022

In recent years, we have witnessed a significant increase in public discourse surrounding the curricula used in our public schools, specifically regarding instruction on issues related to race, gender identity, and sexual orientation. We have also seen a rise in conflict in our local school boards, in Wisconsin and elsewhere, regarding who should serve on these boards and what role these boards should play in determining which books should be read and which topics should or should not be covered by the teachers of our children and youth. The purpose of this statement is to declare the Greater Milwaukee Synod supports an educational system that incorporates a robust consideration of diverse views and resources and seeks to develop the critical thinking skills that are a necessary component of an engaged and enlightened citizenry.

When this doesn't happen, when important voices are silenced or significant events and movements in history are ignored because they may cause some to be uncomfortable, our students are deprived of the opportunity to develop into the thoughtful, engaged, and respectful citizens we so desperately need. We recognize that we live in challenging and divided times, and we may be tempted to shy away from controversial topics and difficult conversations. We believe that the road to a just and inclusive society does not avoid conflict and controversy, but travels through it as we listen, learn, and grow.

In the 2007 ELCA Social Statement, "Our Calling in Education" we affirm that "schools—all schools—should strive above all to be communities in which people with distinct roles join together in mutual respect around the common concern for learning, teaching, and knowing. Communities of learning and teaching ought to be places of thoughtful and civil instruction and dialogue."<sup>1</sup>

We therefore reject all efforts to limit or prohibit the discussion of the history and legacy of racial discrimination and systemic racism, sexual orientation, and gender identity. We support efforts to incorporate parents, educators, those with experience in the educational process, counselors, communities of color, and the LGBTQIA+ communities in building a curriculum that deals with these realities in age-appropriate and sensitive ways, allowing parents to opt their children out if they are uncomfortable.

As people of faith, we pray for a time when racism will be overcome, and people of all gender identities and sexual identities be recognized as people of dignity who find justice and inclusion in the communities where we reside. We call upon our governmental officials and educational leaders to join us in working to make this vision a reality.

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<sup>1</sup> ELCA Social Statement on "Our Calling in Education," p. 25. (<https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Education>)