



Fall Conference 2010

FAQs

For the past several years, you have been giving us great feedback on the Wisconsin Lutheran State Teachers' Conference program. While we have always taken these questions and suggestions seriously and looked at ways to address them, there are a few lingering issues that have not been answered very publically. We don't know if the answers will satisfy everyone, but we felt it was important to tell everyone what the conference leadership has been doing behind the scenes.

1. WHY CAN'T I SEE AND HEAR WHAT'S GOING ON THE AUDITORIUM WHEN I AM IN THE CAFETERIA?

For whatever reason, you did not arrive early enough on the first day to fit into the 900-seat auditorium or find the casual atmosphere of the cafeteria to your liking.

First, we removed any sales of NPH from the cafeteria and moved snacks into that same area. If you wish to eat and drink during the main speaker's presentations we appreciate you not doing that in the auditorium. Hopefully people are being quiet and respectful during worship. This setting improves our amenities, but encourages a very casual atmosphere. Good and bad isn't it?

Secondly, Wisconsin Lutheran High School and the WLSTC have embarked on a \$6000 partnership to improve audio and video delivery in the cafeteria. This project will allow WISCO to live stream activities in the auditorium via the internet, replace wiring to the cafeteria with high efficiency wiring, add improved amplification to the audio and provide up to three high definition projections of video.

The old system had degraded over the years because WISCO no longer needed to send chapel services to the cafeteria when enrollment dropped below 950 students and they remodeled their auditorium. This partnership resolves this problem.

2. WHY NOT HOLD THE CONFERENCE AT FOX VALLEY OR ANOTHER AREA LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL?

Appleton is centrally located and Fox Valley Lutheran High School is a beautiful new school with plenty of parking. These strengths are undeniable. Some claim that technology would be easier to deliver at FVL because of their commitment to technology — we will deal with this aspect later.

Many more people would have to travel to the Fox Valley area than have to travel to Milwaukee. Is this fair? Should other schools need to carry the economic burden once in a while? These are fair questions that have no easy answer. Any teacher knows the difficult slippery slope of the "that's not fair" argument.

Fox Valley's beautiful auditorium has a capacity under 600. Half of us would have to sit in the gym on folding chairs or we would all need to sit in the gym for general sessions. We did not think this to be an improvement.

The main reason that we have this two-day conference is so that all of state's teachers can attend a quality conference at one site. Wisconsin Lutheran High School is the only WELS school that can hold us all comfortably in their auditorium and give us the 20-25 classrooms for sessions. Using any other school would require cutting back the program or splitting us into multiple groups. We already have separate conferences during the school year connected with our local high schools or geographic regions to cut down on travel and allow for a more intimate setting. We see value in this larger conference and hopefully we deliver.

3. WHAT ABOUT ANOTHER SITE?

There are few other places in Wisconsin that can hold a convention of 1200 people with 4 large presentation areas and 20 small breakout rooms. They include the Frontier Airlines Center in Milwaukee, Monona Terrace in Madison, or the Waukesha County Convention Center. Pricing for these venues would include \$10,000-\$20,000 in rental costs. This would increase costs \$10 to \$20 per person and would cause additional parking costs for each participant. We continue to look into this option for a special program.

4. WHY CAN'T WE REGISTER THE OLD WAY?

WHY CAN'T WE REGISTER ALL OUR TEACHERS AT ONCE?

WHY CAN'T WE PAY FOR ALL THE TEACHERS WITH ONE CHECK?

OUR SCHOOL DOESN'T HAVE A CREDIT CARD OR WON'T LET US USE THE CREDIT CARD?

All of these concerns go together.

Do you remember when the big question was why do I have this "oo" on my nametag when there should be a sectional number? Do you remember people running through the halls to get to sectionals?

With paper registration, we did not know until everyone registered how many could attend each sectional. It took many man hours to handle the information manually. This was not good for you and was not good for the conference, but it was better than running to sectionals to find them full or having people stake out places prior to devotions so they could get into certain sectionals. Professional conferences allow you to register for a sectional and be assured that you will get into that sectional. We are now able to provide that. With this improvement comes the necessity of getting personal information in real time. No longer do you have to rely on your principal getting everyone's information, or worry if your principal remembered to send in your information on time. Another set of former complaints taken care of.

Now we had to decide about payment and dues.

First of all, we believe it is between you, your principal and your Board of Education as to whether you attend this conference. Our job is to present a quality conference that would make you want to attend. We do not charge dues to every WELS teacher regardless of whether they attend the conference. We do not need excuses if you can't attend. Like almost every other conference you attend, you register and pay to attend a conference that you find useful to your ministry.

Secondly, every school has different policies on payment and reimbursement for conferences and use of Title money to pay for conferences and workshops. Quite honestly, in this regard, we cannot be all things to all people. We went with a system offered by the synod that can collect payment for around \$0.25 a participant and gives us complete information for sectional scheduling, name tags, lunches, payment, etc. These same features cost \$3.00 a participant through other vendors. We understand this causes difficulties to some principals, secretaries, and treasurers. In today's world, however, this is how professionals register for conferences. Work with your church and school to approve policies that will make this process easy and fair. Understand that most public school district policies and government funding is predicated on the employee paying for, attending and then getting reimbursed for conference attendance. Our conference is economical enough that all congregations and schools should be able to put together policies to make registration quick and painless.

5. WHAT'S UP WITH TECHNOLOGY?

WHY DON'T ALL THE LINKS WORK ON MY PRESENTATION?

WHY CAN'T WE GET WI-FI?

DON'T OTHER SCHOOLS HAVE MORE LAB AREAS WE COULD USE?

WHY IS IT A HASSLE TO HOOK MY COMPUTER UP FOR PRESENTATIONS AND GET INTERNET TO MY COMPUTER?

The best answer to these questions is that WISCO has an extensive computer network including six 30-person labs. We do have room for a lot of technology, they also need to protect their equipment.

WISCO employs an extensive firewall system to protect their students and their equipment. Shutting down the firewall is not an option. WISCO will work with all presenters to open access to sites in your presentation. For this reason we are expanding our technology services.

Bill Scharf and Phil Krueger will be working with presenters to get their presentations posted to or linked to the web site. Phil, Bill and Kris

Snyder will assist presenters in making their technology needs known to Kurt Seeger and Denyse Schumacher at the high school. Technology is great, but it also takes great planning. Think of the amount of time it took to get the technology in your room to act just the way you want it every time. You will need to reconfigure internet connections to get through WISCO's firewall. I think about the national conferences where speakers arrive an hour and one-half prior to their presentations to make sure that all of their technology works properly. One who did an advanced PowerPoint workshop at WISCO practiced his whole presentation at WISCO prior to the conference to minimize gafs. When is the last time you had to do this?

In short, plan ahead.

We would like to see more hands-on workshops. Sign up to present and tax the system. Usually we have just a few each conference. If we fill up WISCO's labs we can rent portable labs, but we will have similar problems configuring all of those new computers.

We are also working with WISCO to see if an internet café can be set up in the cafeteria during the conference with easy WI-FI access.

Technology has advanced and will continue to allow for new and amazing tools for teaching. Plan ahead and work with us to continue to push the horizons of what is possible.

6. WHY HAVEN'T YOU SIGNED UP FOR A PRESENTATION LATELY?

All right, this was a planted question addressed to you.

More and more of you are gaining state licensure and certification, filling out professional development plans, attending conferences other than WLSTC and the conferences offered in your local district or high school conference. How are you sharing this information with your fellow teachers?

WLSTC values peer presentations and would like to rely heavily on such presentations. Thankfully we have many gifted and learned educators. Think about your passions. Think about what your classroom students get excited about and when they excel. Share those ideas with others.

When you registered this year there was an opportunity for you to volunteer and give a sectional for the 2011 WLSTC. If you didn't volunteer for a sectional, please go to the WLSTC web page and contact a program committee member.

This conference is only as good as the presentations. You make this conference great. We need you!