

# 10 Minutes with a Teacher



A candid interview reveals the struggles, the joys, and the opportunities for service that are part of the job description of a Lutheran School teacher

## What does a teacher do?

We spoke to Steve, an English teacher at a Lutheran high school in Dallas about what it's like to be a teacher.

Here's what he shared:

### 1 What are your primary tasks as a teacher?

The office of Lutheran teacher is an office of ministry. As a minister I am concerned with more than the cognitive growth of my students; my ministry is a ministry of nurture addressing the welfare of the *whole person*. In dealing with the whole person a teacher addresses the academic, social, emotional, physical, aesthetic, and spiritual needs of your students.

As a teacher in a Lutheran school, I also have the thrilling opportunity to help my students grow spiritually, and to share with them the good news of their salvation in Christ Jesus.

A teacher's role as instructor is the most well-know task. Hard-working teachers today attempt to use diverse instructional methods, beyond traditional lecturing, with which to meet the needs of their students and match the unique features of the curriculum.

As an educator in a Lutheran school I am also a member of a ministry team, the faculty and staff of my school. Just as my ministry focuses on the well-being of my students, I have a responsibility to and among my ministry colleagues to affirm, support, and care about them and their needs.

### 2 Describe your typical work day.

Classes at our school begin at 8:00 a.m. and I like to be in the building at least an hour before so my day begins early. Typically I start my workday with mundane tasks like opening the office, adjusting the temperature in my classroom, logging on to our school computer network, and making the first pot of coffee for my colleagues. Two mornings a week members of our staff participate in Bible studies and devotions.

The morning passes quickly. I teach two sections of middle school English, a section of high school-level religion, and supervise a study hall in consecutive periods. By late morning (about 11:15), I am ready for the opportunity to attend to my responsibilities as college guidance director.

For about the next hour and fifteen minutes I munch on a sandwich with one hand and try to type scholarship recommendations with the other...or return phone calls from universities...or meet with college-bound seniors...or process out-going transcript information.

The afternoon, like the morning, is busy. In addition to teaching two more sections of middle school English, I also spend about 35 minutes a day with my 15 freshman/sophomore advisees. At 2:45 I return to the needs of guidance responsibilities. Afternoons also include various meetings, conferences, and work on school-related projects. In the evenings I make a conscious effort to be home for family mealtime.

"The greatest reward . . . is knowing I have touched a life . . ."

### 3 What is the greatest challenge of your profession?

The greatest challenge for me as a professional church worker is maintaining balance. The role of teacher is diverse and challenging. The teaching ministry is demanding and the needs of God's people are inexhaustible. But keeping "space" for family needs, personal spiritual growth, and physical rest and renewal requires deliberate attention.

Just as teachers attend to the various needs of the students, they can easily become consumed with ministry activity and fail to address their own personal needs.

## 4 What is the greatest reward of your profession?

The greatest reward I experience in the teaching ministry is knowing that I have touched a life, spiritually, intellectually, aesthetically, and/or emotionally.

Few things are more gratifying than knowing that you have affected someone's life in a positive way, and even more rewarding is knowing that you have been able to share with a young mind and heart the amazing, incomprehensible love of their savior, Jesus Christ.

## 5 What kind of training does it take to become a teacher?

An entry level teacher typically holds a bachelor's degree in education with a specialization in at least one academic discipline. Although licensing requirements vary from state to state, candidates for teaching certificates are required to complete student-teaching experiences in actual classrooms with mentor teachers.

In addition to meeting state mandates for teacher training, individuals preparing for work in Lutheran education must also complete specialized theology training and acquire church certification.

## 6 What is the average starting salary for a teacher?

At the school where I teach, the average starting salary is about \$24,000, plus benefits. That is a little higher than the national average for starting teachers in Lutheran schools.

## 7 How many hours do you work during a typical week?

There are no typical weeks! School policy determines that faculty must be in the building from 7:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. five days a week. There are days, however, when meetings or extracurricular activities require additional time. Much of the extra time I spend at school is that which I choose to spend on projects or planning.

Though I work particularly long hours some days, I am able to take advantage of holidays and school breaks to "catch up" and enjoy time away from school.

## 8 How does your job affect your family life?

My youngest son will soon be graduating from the Lutheran high school where I teach. Like his older sister and brother,

his school experience has been a "family" event. He and I have been in school together since he was a three-year-old preschool student so the daily routines of "family" include the daily routines of "school." Being a teacher on the faculty of the school which my children attend has been a remarkable experience very few parents enjoy.

**"Teachers have a more profound effect on society than any other profession."**

Church workers can encounter a certain amount of stress, but the opportunities which exist for family interaction and togetherness are exceptional. When my children were younger, they would often "hang around school" after hours and read, play in the gym, or fly kites on the playground while I planned

lessons or graded student work. And only a teacher could have lunch in the school cafeteria with his kids every day! In other words school, church, and home were merged into our "way of life."

## 9 In what ways are you able to help others as a teacher?

I am proud to be a professional educator. It is my opinion that teachers have a more profound effect on society than any other profession. Teachers nurture the full potential of individuals and equip them for productive lives.

As a professional educator in a Lutheran school, I have an

## 10 And now a question for you...

Have you considered that God might be calling you to serve the church as a teacher?

Here are some steps you might take to help you answer that question.

- Talk to your congregation's pastor. He's there to give you the guidance and support that you need.
- Call the admissions offices at one of the colleges or universities of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for more information about the training it takes to be a teacher.
- Contact a teacher directly with your questions or thoughts.
- Ask God to grant you guidance as you consider ways in which you can serve His church.

"They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." Dan. 12:3