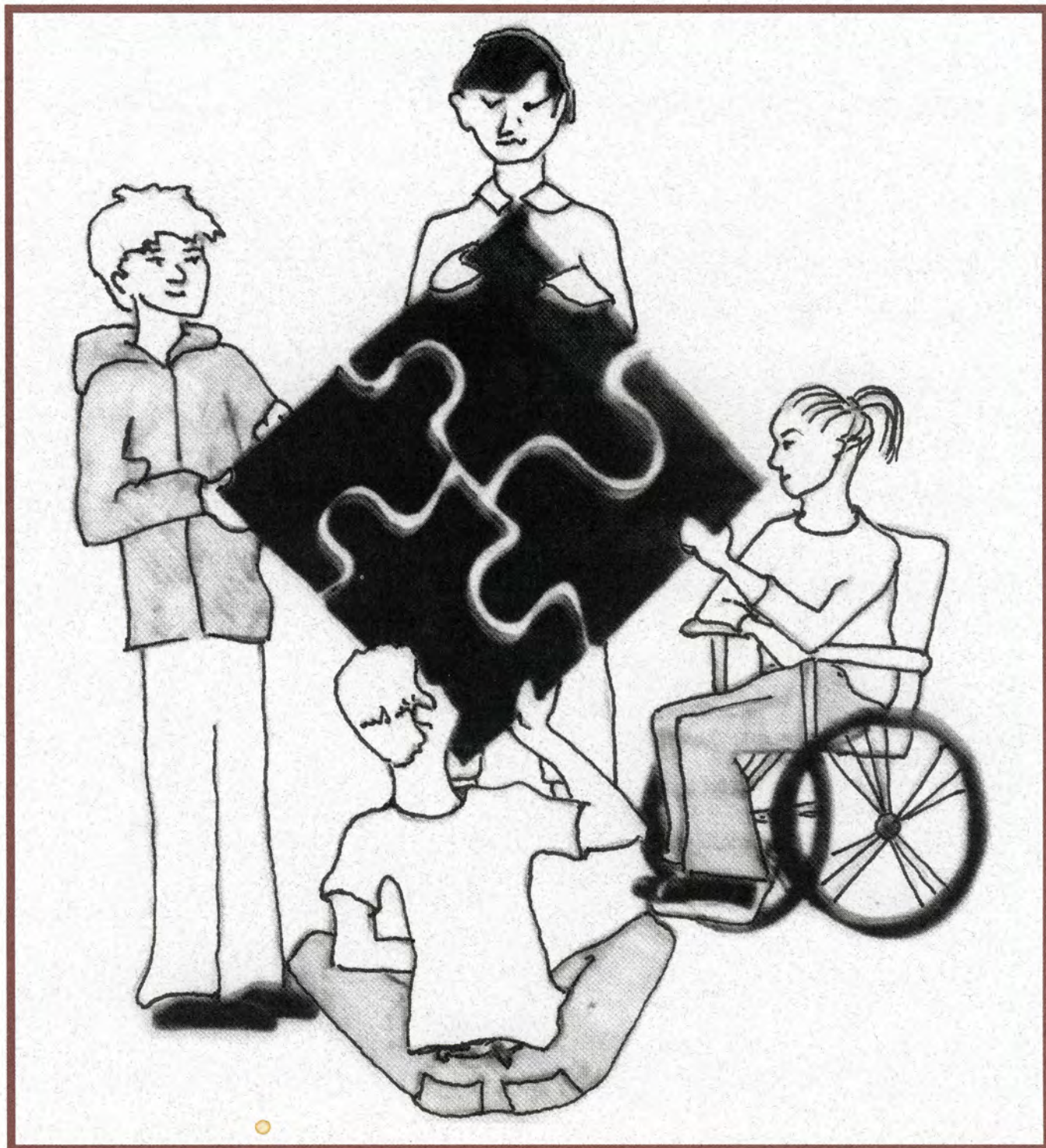


A forum for Christian school educators

# *Christian Educators* Journal

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**How Inclusive Are Our Schools?**



## No Child Left Outside!



In preparation for this issue on inclusive schools, I read *Passing for Normal: A Memoir of Compulsion* by Amy S. Wilensky. The author describes herself as someone who suffers from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) as well as Tourette Syndrome. On the back cover the editor of *Village Voice* describes her account as “a harrowing and wryly humorous story of a woman’s lifelong battle with tics and obsessions and her gradual acceptance of treatment.” That pretty much sums up the book.

What the book did for me was take me into the weird world of repetitive and involuntary movements and strange obsessions — like touching wood or doing everything in sixes — and help me understand that Amy Wilensky, the person to whom this was happening, was as normal or abnormal as I am myself. The disorder did not define her. It was passed on to her through the genes she had inherited from her grandmother and father, both of whom displayed symptoms of OCD. Talents are gifts, we generally acknowledge. But so are disorders. Not all gifts are equally appreciated. But we must learn to stretch out our hands and accept them as the stuff that comes our way in the great scheme of things and work with them all as gifts. God is not the creator of disorders, but he allows us to turn them into blessings.

Which brings me to another thought: these disorders come to the whole community as a painful gift, not just to the one who is visited with the disorder. We as humanity are the ones who are visited. And just as we should not ask for whom the bell tolls, we should not ask who is visited with Down Syndrome, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, ADD or Asperger Syndrome.

### Nothing too insignificant

While reading *Passing for Normal*, I also picked up an art book that has been sitting on our shelves since 2000, the year we visited the Netherlands. It’s the amazing story and art of Jopie Huisman, a man who was never taught how to draw or paint but who performed magic with his pencil, brush and pen. He died three or four years ago. Huisman was a ragman, known especially for his realistic portrayal of the throw-away items he bought and sold. His philosophy was that everything that exists, counts. Nothing was too low to deserve his attention.

For example, he painted Muoike (Frisian for aunt) Albertje’s woolen underpants, a substantial item far removed from today’s women’s panties or scanties in both weight and texture. He had bought it after her death, along with other clothes that used to belong to her. The intimate garment had been mended 133 times (he counted the repair spots). He noticed that most of the repairs had been done with thread the same color as the drawers, but that after the old woman’s husband had died, she had taken whatever color wool was available. After all, nobody would see her

in her underwear anyway.

He showed the underpants to a meeting of women after reciting some poetry and talking about some of his paintings. After the women had laughed uproariously, perhaps with some embarrassment, he told them, “You’re laughing about this. But this represents you. This is how small a human being is. You have nothing to say about being born, and a little later, by all appear-



ances, you dissolve into nothing.” (I don’t think Huisman rejected the idea of the afterlife, but he is talking the way the Preacher talks in Ecclesiastes 3:19 — “Man’s fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both; As one dies, so dies the other.... All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return.”) I’m

sure ladies’ society “Dorcas,” or whatever name they went by, hadn’t quite expected this sobering visual presentation on the meaninglessness of life.

### All are disabled

What the experience of going through Huisman’s book did for me was instill in me a renewed appreciation for his humility and lack of pretension as well as for the common things of domestic life. Huisman’s life and art reminded me that we are all cut of the same cloth (or underpants), and that we should appreciate all people, no matter their station in life. This is a powerful argument for inclusion in the Christian school, it seems to me.

Amy Wilensky titled her book *Passing for Normal*. It reflected her attempts at hiding her disabilities. That is an understandable effort, but it does not get at what the real problem is with inclusion or the lack of it. I think most of us spend so much of our life trying to pass for normal that we close off both ourselves and others to the reality of who we really are. We do that because we know that there is little honesty and acceptance of differences out there in the world. We don’t want to expose our disabilities if we can help it. We want to pass for normal. But none of us are. We all depart from the norm somewhere.

During my earlier years in school, I became a stutterer. I will

never forget the absolute shame I felt when two teachers were watching me as I tried to read a section of our textbook in third grade. I got hopelessly stuck. My cheeks turned beet red. Over the years my disability got less and less, but it never completely disappeared. It sometimes shows up when I am tired. It's there to remind me that I, too, participate in the woundedness of a fallen humanity.

### Our true identity

But let me set the record straight. People with disabilities don't want others to focus on their disability but on their abilities. Professor Hoeksema reminds us in his article "Radical Shifts" that inclusion challenges "the dominant paradigm of disability as defect." He adds that we should not base inclusion on a sense of compassion. I agree with him. Inclusion is a matter of kingdom justice. Also, we should not romanticize disability. I call disability a painful gift, one that God wants us to use for our benefit. But the over-riding attitude should be that we value each other as persons, no matter what our gifts are. Our identity does not lie in our talents and our disabilities. It lies in being children of God. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1). It's through his naming that our identity is established.

Knowing that and believing that is something the Christian school community has to prove by their actions. Not accepting from Christian school supporters a child with significant learning disabilities because of financial restraints is a clear sign of betrayal of their covenant obligations. It cost Jesus his life to include us, totally disabled servants, in the covenant of grace. I think principals should lay down their careers on the battlefield of inclusion if they face a reluctant and "bottom-line-rules" kind

of board. "No child left outside," should be our rallying cry. Those school communities that have practiced inclusion understand the benefits to all.

### A sense of hope

According to Jopie Huisman, "When something does not have love as its basis, it is not genuine." How genuine are our schools? There is much we can learn from this humble man from Workum, Friesland. He has been called the painter of compassion, because he felt for the marginalized in society. There is one thing missing in the paintings of Jopie Huisman, however. He is at heart an existentialist, an artist who concerns himself mainly with the human condition and with nature. He sees life as an end in itself and treasures human freedom above all. He paints what he sees but offers little in terms of vision. However beautiful his paintings of rags and old hats and shoes are, there is no perspective that takes you beyond earthly existence. What hope is there in Aunt Albertje's worn woolen underpants, even if she did try to mend the tears and the holes? One can hardly think of it as a symbol of the resurrection.

For Christian schools the success of any endeavor, including the enfolding of children with significant handicaps, rests on the promise of redemption. We know that the creation has been subjected to frustration and that Christian schools have limited budgets, but we strongly believe that this creation and our Christian schools must be and will be liberated from their bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. In this hope we are saved (Romans 8: 18-27). And in this hope we take on the responsibility of welcoming all God's children into our classrooms.

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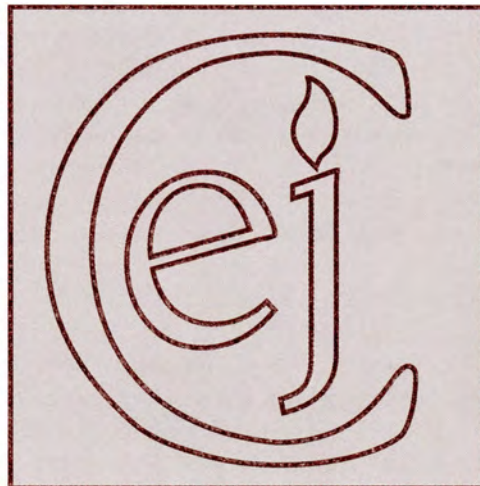
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# Radical Shifts:

## *New Ways of Thinking About Disability and Schooling*

by Thomas B. Hoeksema

*Tom Hoeksema is professor of education at Calvin College and is coordinator of the Program in Cognitive Impairment.*

Discourse on the inclusion of students with disabilities in Christian schools needs adjustment if the culture of schools is to change and we are to reap the full benefits of everything that inclusion promises. Radical shifts are necessary both in how students with some kinds of differences are viewed and in how we “do” school. Beware of inclusion. Properly understood, it challenges the dominant paradigm of disability as defect, the orientation of desired school outcomes around narrow, norm-based, academic standards, and our concepts of what instructional accommodation is and for whom it is provided.

### Shifting Ways of Thinking

Christian educators have not fully addressed the fundamental question of who is considered a burden and who is considered a resource, who is expendable and who is esteemed. When we continue to advocate for inclusion using arguments based on charity or compassion and see inclusion as primarily an opportunity to share others’ burdens, then we fail to understand a fundamental truth about all humans: none of us are either burden or resource; all of us are both. As Nancy Eisland says in *The Disabled God* (Abbingdon, 1994), “...telescoping our lives into simplistic categorizations...denies that the lives of people with disabilities, like all ordinary lives, are shot through with unexpected grace, overwhelming joy, and love returned. Life is simply a mixed blessing.”

Disability, then, is not something to be avoided, eliminated or accommodated but is a part of humanness that we can respond to positively, just as we do with other forms of difference connected to gender, culture, race, ethnicity, and social class. Children who live and go to school with

disability have the same hopes, needs and aspirations, and experience the same kinds of disappointments, celebrations and vagaries of life as any other child.

A subtle but insidious implication of talking about including students who are frequently excluded in schools is that it can perpetuate a kind of “us-them” thinking. There are those who need special treatment in order to be successfully integrated into typical school environments, and then there’s the rest of us. The truth is, “they” are not to be included or excluded by “us.” They *are* us. No more expendable. No less esteemed. No more a burden. No less a gift.

### Parts of the body

In order for schools to become more complete and more congruent with biblical imperatives, they will need to embrace the idea that “uncured” students who may never be “remediated” are nonetheless purpose-filled, contributing people. Schools that embody the scriptural idea of shalom understand that so-called “disabled” and “non-disabled” students are complementary parts of the body — the student body and the body of believers. Such a view changes the context in which students live with disability. Instead of seeing disability as something that must be tolerated and accommodated in order for students who experience it to fit in, students of all kinds are valued for making unique contributions to an interdependent community.

In this way, inclusion provides opportunity for corporate healing of how we understand our collective selves rather than individual “cure” for those who live with disability. The way we have constructed our thinking about schooling has probably been a bigger impediment to the learning of students with disabilities than the objective impairments with which they cope.

Proponents of inclusion in Christian schools often cite a theological rationale, using concepts such as the image of God,

covenant, kingdom, and discipleship. As foundational as those arguments are, they fail to come to terms with all of the circumstances that sustain resistance to inclusion and fail to address the treacherous traps of unwitting prejudice and discrimination. Persistently seeking justice and shalom requires that we stop thinking of disability as the primary cause of exclusion and stop discounting structural and attitudinal barriers as causes of stigmatization, isolation, and school failure.

It is time to transform our discourse — not only to re-conceive disability, but also to re-shape our view of the purposes of school and reform our methods of schooling. Rather than seeing some students as “not measuring up,” we need to see that some students are disadvantaged by the way schools have responded to them. This is evident in such practices as elitist eligibility requirements for school admission and extra tuition charges for some students. Rather than stigmatize unconventional minds or bodies or non-traditional ways of learning, we should stigmatize attitudes that lead to segregation and even exclusion.

### Segregated practices

We need to do more than change our views of disability. It is time to challenge systemic structures and views of teaching and learning that perpetuate isolation and oppression for some members of the Christian community. Our ways of conceptualizing “help” and of defining “adaptation” and “accommodation” as something that only some get, serve, in fact to marginalize the recipients of help and continue the belittlement of people who live with disability. The perception that disability is a problem to be coped with through adjustments made by individual students and their families rather than through attitudinal changes, corporate commitment to equality of opportunity, and efforts to change the skill sets of teachers is persistent. ☪

Myths, distorted perceptions, and unexamined attitudes maintain segregated educational practice and keep children with disabilities on the outside more than the objective characteristics of their impairments do. Thereby schools are complicit in the marginalization of some children. Ignoring the learning characteristics of some students, and failing to provide the supports that all students need for learning, constitute discrimination.

### **Schools must change**

Change needs to occur in the way we think of and provide accommodations for students. The root problem is a distorted

notion that only some learners require adaptations in curriculum and instruction. The truth is, to thrive, all students require instruction that is fitted to their ways of learning. The fact that some students' instructional needs are less common does not make those students unique in needing accommodation. *All* learners need and deserve instruction that fits their ways of being smart, their cognitive characteristics, and their preferred modes of expression. When educators believe that only students with disabilities are in need of accommodation, it is too easy to see such accommodation as elective. That means inclusion happens only because of the community's

beneficence. Schools can choose not to provide or pay for such accommodations because they are unusual. To provide them is nice but goes beyond obligation. Again, instead of stigmatizing students who embody forms of difference with which some people are uncomfortable we ought to stigmatize these exclusionary attitudes.

Schools seeking justice do not follow the prevailing paradigm of maximizing high academic achievement, individual talent, and personal independence. Rather, ideal schools are places where we teach and learn about human connectedness and interdependence. They are places where we learn that belonging to our faithful Savior means that we belong to each other as well. This view of school puts individual accomplishment and opportunity to develop talent within the context of community and a biblical understanding of shalom. We are webbed together, as Neal Plantinga puts it, and when we fail to operate that way, we perpetuate injustice and individualism. Inclusion is countercultural. It confounds society's dominant notions about who and what has value.

### **Conclusion**

When viewed as an act of charity, benevolence, or compassion, inclusion perpetuates a paternalistic stance toward those who live with disability. True inclusion happens only

when we recognize that all of us live lives marked by the ambiguities of being both strong and weak, not one or the other. In one way or another, all of us need care from others. In one way or another, each of us provides something others need. When we acknowledge this about ourselves, we can begin to see that the locus of the "problem" of disability lies not in the non-conventional physical or cognitive characteristics of some learners but in the prejudice and social discrimination that marginalizes some people. It is in school structures and practices that we favor some learners and some ways of learning more than others. We can do something about that. ©

## **Core Values Underlying Inclusive Christian Education**

**God, who created all learners in the image of God and for intentional purposes, has given all students unique combinations of gifts.** The job of Christian educators is to reveal and develop these gifts, whether they be physical, spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, spatial, interpersonal or any other form. Students ought to discover their own distinctive gifts in school, develop them as fully as possible, and learn to recognize and receive the gifts of others.

**Students must be taught to take seriously the biblical command to love and care for one another, and they must be shown how to do so.** The responsibility to be "present with" other members of the human family, including learners who are experiencing unordinary circumstances, is to be modeled and practiced in schools. That means we revel in each others' successes and share in each others' struggles. Friendships between children with and without labeled disabilities are mutually beneficial.

**Developing spiritually and learning to live lives that serve others are both critical tasks for all students.** The school's job is to help students identify their deepest loyalties and help them search for ways to live that are congruent with these ultimate values. In the Christian school this means discovering who God is and what his intentions are for how his children are to live as responsive disciples.

**Creating shalom – "the webbing together of all people in justice, mercy, and delight" (Plantinga) – is a central task of the school.** Students must understand that independence is a false ideal and that it is interdependence that truly characterizes the human condition. That means each person is valued for what she can offer to others in their need, and each person is enabled to receive from the strengths of others whatever it is that she may need.

**Living shalom means that students will learn to take action against injustices that affect their neighbor as quickly as they do when injustices affect themselves.** Shalom exists when students comprehend how mutually interconnected people are and recognize the reciprocity that exists in relationships between people who have different constellations of capacity and incapacity.





# How to Meet the Needs of Diverse Learners

by Greg Yoder and Tom Hoeksema

*Greg Yoder is an inclusion consultant for the Christian Learning Center Network, and Tom Hoeksema coordinates the undergraduate special education program at Calvin College. When not writing CEJ articles, Hoeksema and Yoder enjoy cycling and playing bocce together.*

For many families in Christian communities, not a lot of planning goes into the decision about where their children will go to school once they reach school age. If there is a Christian school in their town or neighborhood, all of their children will likely attend.

Jill and Matt Nelson followed this pattern. When their daughter Sara became five, she began attending the local Christian School kindergarten, and when their son Josh became five, he did the same. Both children have had wonderful school experiences, and Jill and Matt are grateful for the wonderful Christian education Sara and Josh are receiving.

Now their youngest son Aaron has reached school age and is eager to join his brother and sister in their school. But Aaron was recently diagnosed as having Asperger syndrome<sup>1</sup>. When Jill and Matt explained Aaron's unique needs to the school principal, the principal expressed his strong desire to have Aaron enrolled; but he then explained to them that the school had no one on staff with special education training and that the school simply was not equipped to give Aaron the type of education he deserved. Deeply disappointed, the Nelsons enrolled Aaron in the local public school. Aaron does not understand why he cannot go to the same school with his brother and sister.

## Many questions

With increasing frequency today we hear Christian schoolteachers and administra-

tors lamenting the fact that they feel unable to meet the needs of all students in their classrooms and schools. They are asking good questions: How can I help every student be successful? Is it really fair to expect children who are so different to be measured against the same standard? How do I make my classroom a place where all students are challenged, but not frustrated? How do I meet the needs of the student who has a learning disability? Can my class be a good learning environment for a student who is cognitively impaired?

In answering these questions we begin with the premise that every student not only belongs in the classroom but that we have an obligation to help each student believe that he or she belongs there. The Christian school classroom is not just a sanctuary for the academically talented, but a place where every student, regardless of abilities, belongs. We recognize that every child who walks through the door of every classroom in some way displays the image of God and is gifted in unique ways. It is our role as Christian educators to help that child discover just how he or she is uniquely gifted. It is in the discovery of these gifts that we begin to help every child to succeed.

So, what is success? Is success for Aaron the same as for Sara? If they are gifted differently, how do I use the same standard of success for each? Or should I? If not, what standard do I use? How do I figure out Aaron's gifts when he never seems tuned in to what we are doing in class? And if I do figure them out, how do I begin to set appropriate goals? Additionally, how do I measure whether he has met them or not?

## It can be done

These are the questions we are called to answer today. It is no longer a "one size fits all" classroom, if it ever has been. Now more than ever before we are challenged

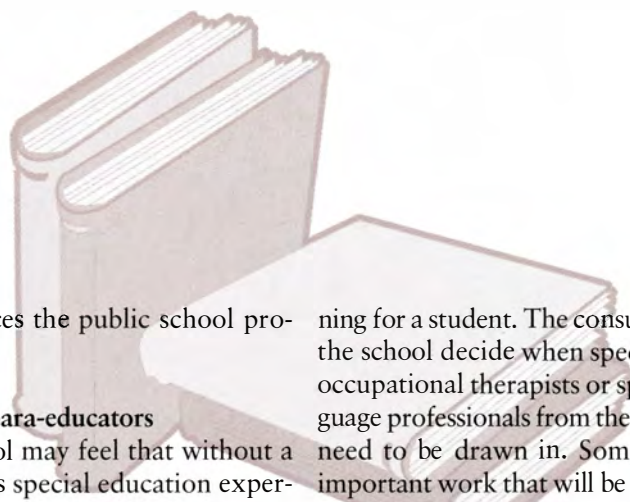
to meet the needs of every child in every classroom. This is all very difficult in a world where "No Child Left Behind" policies and state standardized tests seem to rule the day. Christian educators are people with large hearts. They are willing to serve every child, and, yet, when asked to serve a child who needs unconventional support, their first concern is typically for the other students in the classroom.

In addressing these many questions and concerns, it might be helpful to first point out that, not only is it possible to serve students of widely varying degrees of ability (including significant learning disabilities and cognitive impairments) in the same classroom successfully, but that it is literally happening in many Christian school classrooms across the U.S. and Canada. The intent of this article is to suggest some of the ways this can happen in your school.

Schools can follow many different approaches in trying to unwrap the distinct gifts of all its students. Deciding on the approach will depend, among other things, on the particular package of gifts and needs a child presents, class size, and the human and financial resources available. When a school begins to think imaginatively, it usually turns out that everyone benefits. The approaches that follow are ordered from those requiring the least financial commitment for the school to the greatest. As each is explored, we consider how each might affect all of the students in the classroom. Regardless of the approach a school chooses to follow, it can be very helpful to have an organization such as the Christian Learning Center Network or Elim Christian School guide the process. Both agencies work with schools outside of their immediate geographical area.

## Approach #1: differentiation of instruction

We will start here, because differentiation is very effective for all students and is



a set of practices that most teachers are already beginning to implement to some degree.

There is, quite rightly, a lot of emphasis on differentiation in the classroom today and there should be. Our classes, even those without a “child with a label,” are made up of students with a broad range of abilities, styles, interests, and motivation. To teach a unit and expect that when finished every child will have learned the same thing and will produce a similar product to demonstrate their knowledge is to put unfair demands on some and to expect far too little from others. Though space does not allow us to go into the principles and practice of differentiation here, much has been written on this topic in professional journals such as *Educational Leadership*. One of the best book-length resources is Carol Tomlinson’s book, *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms* (ASCD, 2001), in which she explores content, process, and product differentiation. We encourage all teachers to hone their skills in this approach to providing meaningful instruction for *all* students.

#### **Approach #2: public school services**

Public schools are legally obligated to serve all students, regardless of their characteristics, though parents and Christian schools do not have to accept all the services that may be available. Neither is the public school obligated to pay for Christian school services that a family elects to use. However, it is not an all-or-nothing matter. Christian school students may still receive educational diagnostic services, speech and language intervention, physical or occupational therapy, and social work services through the local public school. Administrators need to develop collaborative partnerships with their public school counterparts. Individualized educational plans (IEPs) will need to be developed for

whatever services the public school provides.

#### **Approach #3: para-educators**

A small school may feel that without a teacher who has special education expertise on their staff they would be unable to enroll students with significant learning disabilities or cognitive impairments. This is not necessarily true. A para-educator, with the guidance of a trained special educator from an organization such as CLC Network or Elim Christian School, can do many things to help meet the instructional

“It is no longer  
a one-size-fits-all  
classroom.”

needs of some students. Using this approach, a consultant from the supporting agency visits the school on a regular basis and is also on call to support teachers and answer questions as they arise.

During visits the consultant will offer help in any way it is needed. The school will determine how they wish to use the consultant. This may include student observations or evaluations, but most of the time will be spent in looking at specific ways of working with individual students. Together the consultant and the para-educator will collaborate to determine how best to meet the needs of particular students. The consultant will advise the para-educator on lesson planning or specific learning strategies that may be helpful. Generally they will sit together in problem-solving sessions or spend time reviewing what has worked and what hasn’t. The consultant and para-educator will also attend meetings with parents, teachers, and administrators to help determine goals or do specific plan-

ning for a student. The consultant will help the school decide when specialists such as occupational therapists or speech and language professionals from the public schools need to be drawn in. Some of the most important work that will be done together is making sure that the student is fully included in all activities of the classroom and that he feels a total part of all that is going on.

Not everyone is equipped to be a para-educator helping children with special needs. This person needs to feel comfortable around all types of children and the school setting. He or she will need a willingness to work with other people and to learn new ways of doing things. Flexibility, the ability to change plans as needed and to make on the spot adaptations are also important skills to possess. Many schools have parents with backgrounds in education who are eager to work in a school setting. You may be able to put together a combination of volunteers and para-educators to address some of the needs of your staff and students.

#### **Approach #4: certified special education teachers**

Frequently, when a school makes the decision to enroll students with a broad range of learning characteristics, the school will hire a teacher with expertise in learner diversity and instructional design. This person may be hired on a part-time basis initially, but as the value of this person is seen and as the needs of other students are recognized, the hours may be increased. All schools have some students who are not performing at their full potential. Having such an “inclusion facilitator” on staff helps teachers match instruction to students and can get them closer to the goal of helping every learner be successful.

Inclusion facilitators will have a variety of ways of working with students and teach-



ers. Ideally they will use a “push-in” model as much as possible. This allows them to be in the classroom giving direct support as it is needed. One advantage of this model is that it makes it possible to serve many children in the classroom who may be needing help on a task, not just the child with obvious learning problems. This model does require that the classroom teacher be willing to work with another adult in the classroom. Sometimes a “pull-out” model may be what is needed. On occasion, the support a student needs may make it advantageous for the facilitator to work individually or in small groups with students in a resource room. The goal is to use the least intrusive, least stigmatizing, least isolating supports.

The inclusion facilitator will work closely with classroom teachers. At times they may choose to team-teach a class together. The inclusion facilitator can be a great resource in helping teachers to differentiate their instruction. Further, inclusion facilitators are experts in making accommodations in the classroom and in helping classroom teachers become adept in adapting instruction as well. They also recognize that general education teachers have areas of expertise. As these teachers work closely together, both learn from each other, but the children benefit as well. For example, the general education teacher is an expert in her subject area. She will be able to find interesting ways of creating units of study that guide student learning. The inclusion facilitator, on the other hand, may be more skilled in identifying the various skill levels within the class and in knowing ways of differentiating the way material is presented as well as projects and assignments that are given. In this way the skills of each teacher complement one another, and, again, all students benefit.

Another task of the inclusion facilitator will be to identify and evaluate students

who may not be performing as expected. Some students who struggle may not qualify for special education services if they were in the public school, yet, with appropriate support, they may be able to find greater success in school. The classroom teacher does not always have the time or skills to sort out why students may not be performing up to their potential, but she does know that something needs to be done. The expertise of an inclusion facilitator will allow her to decide what type of assessment is needed and, in collaboration with the inclusion facilitator, to determine the necessary adaptations or modifications for students.

### For every teacher

In every classroom and subject area there will be students who are not working at the same level as the majority of their peers. Even if para-educators or inclusion facilitators are not available on staff, there are many things that the classroom teacher can do to help students succeed. Here are several:

- On occasion pair off (you can orchestrate this) and have each student in the pair re-teach what you have just presented. Students often learn much better from each other than they do from adults.

- Give students more choice in their projects and assignments. Students have different interests, styles, abilities, and preferences as to how they go about learning.

- Be willing to make on-the-spot adaptations or modifications for students. It is quite easy to reduce the number of problems on a worksheet for a student, just as it is to say to an academically talented student, “I want you to skip the questions at the end of the chapter and instead write a paragraph explaining what you think the purpose of the author was and whether you think she was successful.”

- Accept the functioning level of each

student and set appropriate goals. This doesn’t have to be an exact science, but it is certainly not necessary to think that every student in the class will learn the same thing for each unit.

- Confer with other teachers about what seems to be effective in working with a particular student who is having difficulty in your class.

- When doing group projects, create student learning teams of varying sizes. It may be helpful to place the student having difficulty in a larger group. Assign a specific role or task within that group.

- Hospitality means becoming vulnerable enough to receive what the other has to offer as well as offering what the other needs. Teach children that when they see weakness they should look for strengths nearby — and the reverse.

Let’s return briefly to the Nelson family whom we met earlier. Suppose that their local Christian school had chosen one of the models mentioned above. The Nelsons and Aaron are feeling accepted. Their Christian community feels that they are keeping their baptismal promises to him and his parents. Aaron is learning from and sharing his gifts with his peers. Teachers are stretching themselves in new ways and discovering that, once they understand Aaron’s abilities, they are able to provide him and his peers with an excellent education. It is a step of faith, but the rewards are great.

<sup>1</sup> *Asperger Syndrome or (Asperger’s Disorder) is a neurobiological disorder named for a Viennese physician, Hans Asperger, who in 1944 published a paper which described a pattern of behaviors in several young boys who had normal intelligence and language development, but who also exhibited autistic-like behaviors and marked deficiencies in social and communication skills.* ©



# Jovita

## A Joyful Life

by Henry de Jong

*Henry de Jong and his wife, Wendy, have lived in the Niagara Peninsula since 1984. Henry is a self-employed renovator and computer programmer in St. Catharines, Ontario. Wendy became (and remains) the administrative assistant of Jubilee Fellowship CRC when Jovita, and Jubilee, were born in 1986. Jovita's older brother is off to university and a younger sister is growing up fast in the now renovated halls of her high school.*

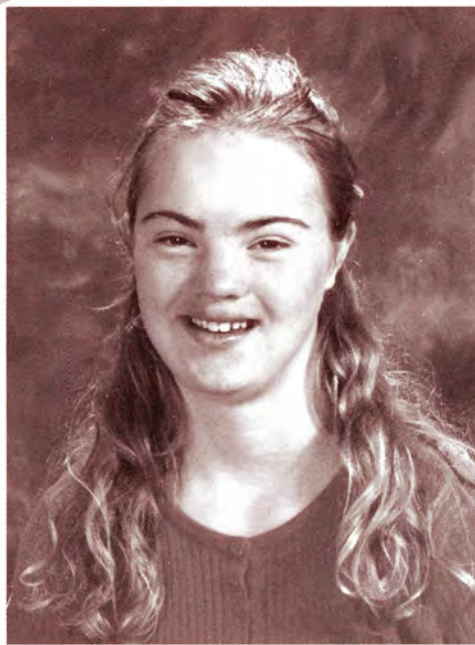
Jovita Maria Christina de Jong is in grade 15. With these fifteen years of elementary and secondary education, one year of kindergarten and two years of pre-school, she has now been in school for all but three of her first twenty-one years. So education has played a huge part in this opening stage of Jovita's lifetime of living with Down Syndrome.

There has been a great deal of security for us as parents to have Jovita enrolled in school all this time. Next June, when she finally finishes her high school extension, we will be faced with the uncertainty of Jovita's joining the working world. But that will be another story. When Jovita was born in 1986, we were also uncertain. But our deep roots in family and church and faith were able to still our fears. And the movement to integration that was then gathering steam, and in which we actively participated through our local Down Syndrome support group, offered hope where history did not.

### Certain expectations

I had grown up in my hometown, Sarnia, where Ben Prange was an active participant in my congregation's worship and social life. And at Jovita's birth, my father, Herman, who had become development director of Friendship Groups Canada,

could be congratulated for having "one of his own." So we were not naïve about what awaited us. We simply began to walk the fine line between grateful acceptance and unprejudiced expectations of Jovita. In being Jovita's advocate we have had to nudge others — friends, teachers and church leaders — to walk the same fine line in their dealings with Jovita. And we have had to work at our accepting the limitations of this support community and expecting more from it, as we had to do with our-



selves — for in some ways we are all disabled.

We have been members of our local Christian school society for a long time now. There was never any doubt of our preference. My siblings and I had all gone through Christian schools; my father taught in one; and my wife had veered naturally in that direction after landing a secretarial job with the Christian Labour Association of Canada. So when our oldest child entered grade one at Calvin Memorial Chris-

tian School in St. Catharines, we had already been in touch with its board and staff about enrolling Jovita the following year.

### Costly commitment

After that, Jovita simply followed along with her peers through nine years at the elementary school and four years at Beacon Christian High School. "Simply" is a bit of an overstatement, for there were many situations, personalities, and a significant commitment of resources to complicate matters. But the premise of belonging never wavered. For that we are deeply grateful. The resources that were committed to Jovita and a fellow classmate were costly. Along with special-ed teacher Andy VanderKloet, Marlene Dykstra aided Jovita's education from Kindergarten through grade eight and tearfully ceded her responsibilities to Phillipine Vandezande and then Linda Lensink at Beacon High School. During most of those years Jovita shared their attention with another student with Down Syndrome. Thus, the application of a half-to three-quarter-time position was made somewhat more economical for the school.

The stability that came from having such long-term aids was no doubt a great blessing, but the variety of teachers embracing Jovita's class over all those years has also been good (not just for Jovita). Some teachers felt trepidation at the beginning of their year; others were more relaxed and even enthusiastic. All warmed to Jovita's (mostly) good nature and to her willingness to work.

### How to measure

It's hard to put a value on the things that Jovita was taught and the things she learned. I doubt that she could still do long division, but Jovita will still enlighten us with arcane facts of history. Perhaps it's *the process* of learning that is most important; and perhaps we must simply accept



that, if we throw enough stuff at students, some of it is bound to stick. We were not expecting any miracles. We just wanted to maximize her potential with the resources at hand.

There was a tendency for some teachers to accept the convention that children with Down Syndrome will “plateau,” and that sooner or later the focus of teaching should be on “life skills.” We had to push our own conviction that convention should never take precedence over the inherent individuality of any person. We are blessed, no doubt, that Jovita’s abilities are not as severely curtailed as they could have been, but you can never know until you try.

### Many positives

There are lots of things that Jovita does well. She sure knows American history (from Liberty’s Kids) and popular culture. She gets around a little bit too easily on her own computer and has done data entry for a co-op. Jovita follows instructions well and is the only one of our children who can clean up the kitchen to my wife’s satisfaction. She is the best worker of the lot in the special needs greenhouse.

Jovita reads a lot. Sure, she does like Archie comic books, and she favors the Hardy Boys. But just recently she had a very thick Harry Potter book on the go. She likes to write and draw, too. Her stories are remarkable for their vocabulary and well-formed plots and she is a prolific fashion sketcher. She obviously understands the nature of fiction and of fashion photography.

She also catches on quickly to the latest figures of speech: “whatever.” Jovita communicates well, and (when she’s in a good mood) exhibits social graces that would be the envy of many parents. If there is one thing that we regret most, it’s that her tongue gets in the way and that her otherwise very coherent thoughts tumble out so

quickly that even we have a hard time understanding them.

### Too normal?

So with this innate ability to mimic, we are happy to have had Jovita in the mainstream. Jovita is now in her third and final year of the special needs program of our public high school, and she does spend one hour every week in a Friendship Group. But by and large her formative influences have been “normal.” This can backfire, too. After years of observing (from the sidelines) classmates talking together as friends, she now has animated conversations with the friends that inhabit her imaginary social circle (she can have a really good time all by herself). And, of course, we would prefer less influence from our too normal pop and entertainment culture.

In reality the “mainstream” is clearly not without problems. The schools that Jovita has attended are all compromised by the very human nature of teachers, students and their parents. It pained us when classmates stopped inviting Jovita to birthday parties after about grade four. It is sad to see now that Jovita has no steady friends apart from the ones we pay and the ones she imagines. Teachers, students and we as parents were too often unable to carve time for Jovita out of lives made too busy by poor choices or bad circumstances.

But there is always grace, and the level of care and acceptance that Jovita experiences in our community is wonderful. The fact that so many of her teachers have been members of our church community, too, has helped to reinforce her feeling of acceptance and to keep stretching the level of communication. We have also come to value the community of people with disabilities — her schoolmate Sherri, the Friendship Groups and the 30 or so kids in the special needs program at Collegiate High School. I guess some of our sense of

belonging needs to come from being with like-minded people, not just people who care.

### It’s “both-and”

We have always straddled the divide between the mainstream and the segregated educational models. Jovita and Sherri were increasingly pulled from class to do one-on-one or one-on-two tutoring as they progressed in their mainstream schooling. And now that Jovita is in a segregated program, she regularly (up to half-time) gets sent through the Collegiate’s cavernous halls to participate in a regular geography, drama or social studies course. One of the means toward integration that the public school uses, but which our Christian schools did not, is peer tutoring, which proved to be a good experience for Jovita.

Integration is also a good model for teachers. As much as students with disabilities should take their cues from and share opportunities with other students in the mainstream, teachers should take their cues from and share resources with other teachers and parents — who are, after all, the primary teachers. We were often disappointed that the ideas and resources that we collected from reading and from conferences were left to languish in some drawer or to-do list. We encourage all teachers to seriously consider anything that a parent thoughtfully submits.

Teaching children with developmental disabilities, especially in the context of a regular classroom, is no easy thing. We thank all teachers who have taken this on. We can reassure them that no super-human feats are expected. We ask only that they work to the best of their abilities. But we add to this that diligence will be rewarded, that help can and should be found, that an open mind will quickly fill up with solutions, and that, in the end, love is the greatest force for good. ☺



# Inclusive Classrooms:

## *A Matter of the Head and Heart*



by Debra Paxton-Buursma

*Debra Paxton-Buursma is coordinator of the Graduate Program in Learning Disabilities at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

Creating inclusive learning environments poses a daunting proposition for educators. Our hearts want to include all learners, but we often feel inadequate in crafting an inclusive practice. The problem is not a lack of materials and resources on strategies and programs. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) updates a website with information, articles, and resources on inclusion. Likewise, a text, *Creating Inclusive Classrooms: Effective and Reflective Practices for all Students* (Salend, 2005), lists over 1,700 references on articles, books and resources for creating inclusive, supportive environments, differentiating instruction across grade and content, using technology, and evaluating the progress of individuals and inclusion programs. Since a plethora of strategies, materials and resources for implementing inclusion exists, why do we persist in feeling overwhelmed and ineffective?

### Complexity and accessible

If you are experiencing feelings of inadequacy and worry about providing effective learning situations for your students, good for you! These feelings are normal and natural, given the significant complexity involved in designing and implementing accessible instruction. Let's look at three of several interrelated factors adding to the complexity of instructional decision-making: (1) who: the diversity of learners and teachers; (2) what: curricular issues and resources; and (3) how: pedagogical tools and ways of implementing instruction. No matter how carefully teachers plan for factors in advance, new factors emerge during teaching, putting educators in on-the-spot decisions about adapting instruction (Jorgensen, Schuh, Nisbet, 2006).

### Who: Members of a Learning Community

The better we know our learners, the more responsive we can be in our instruction. A learner profile describing a student's world and how that student makes sense of her world becomes a valuable decision-

making tool. Profiles document our changing knowledge and questions about student gifts, concerns, and situations around a number of variables (See figures 1 & 2). First, a profile summarizes what they know and can do. Second, cognition (e.g., memory, language, thinking), physical and motor, socio-emotional, and spiritual developmental and cultural variables help us analyze potential pitfalls and promises in learning tasks. Third, keeping track of a student's learning situation (e.g., ethnicity, gender, socio-economic class) provides insight into their learning preferences such as visual, oral, or written, and how they view time or technology usage. Cultural differences between students and teachers also affect how we as educators see student strength or weakness (Artiles, 2003). Sometimes what appears to be a deficit may, in fact, be a cultural difference. Profiles are best developed cooperatively from conversations with family members, the learner, and educators.

Knowing the learners is crucial. Knowing ourselves and others involved in a student's learning also provides valuable insight into teaching-learning relationships.

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Englert, C.S., Mariage, T.V. (2003). The sociocultural model in special education interventions: Apprenticing students in higher order thinking. In H.L. Swanson, K.R. Harris, & S. Graham (Eds.), *Handbook of Learning Disabilities* (pp. 450-467). New York: Guilford Press.

Jorgensen, C. M., Schuh, M. C., & Nisbet, J. (2006). *The Inclusion Facilitator's Guide*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Nevin, Thousand, Villa (2002). Creativ-

ity. In J.S. Thousand, R.A. Villa, & A.I. Nevin (Eds.), *Creativity & Collaborative Learning*. (pp. 267-270). Baltimore: Brookes Publishing Co.

Reid, D. K., & Valle, J. W. (2004). The discursive practice of disability: Implications for instruction and parent-school relations. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 37(6), 466-481.

Rodis, P., Garrod, A., Boscadin, M.L. (2001). *Learning Disabilities and Life Stories*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Salend, S. J. (2005). *Creating Inclusive Classrooms: Effective and Reflective Practices for All Students*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.

### Literacy:

Strategic Writing Instruction:

Expository Writing and Think Sheets:

- Think sheets for subprocesses of writing. Look for technology coming soon! (ACCEL project)

Mariage, T. V., Englert, C. S., Garmon, M. A. (2000). The teacher as a "more knowledgeable other" in assisting literacy learning with special needs students. *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 16, 299-336.

- Mariage, T. V. (2001). Features of an interactive writing discourse: Conversational involvement, conventional knowl-

When teachers profile their own set of strengths, needs, and goals, such as in a professional development plan, they become clearer about the interplay of unique factors between themselves and the learners. Teaching-learning breakdowns can be anticipated by strategically recognizing possible mismatches between members of a learning community.

For example, Tim may be a strong auditory learner who is teaching Lee, a highly visual learner. Once Tim recognizes that he doesn't enjoy or see the potential in drawing or using diagrams or images, then a team can begin to support ways in which Tim might better reach Lee.

### What: Curricular Content

Responsive inclusive instruction goes



their special education students access to the general education curriculum. The further students are distanced from one another curricularly, the greater the chance a student finds herself excluded within an "inclusive" classroom. The following questions provide a beginning analysis of the inclusive nature of particular curricula:

- How flexible and intuitive is it?
- How comprehensive is it?
- How differentiated is it?
- Does it provide alternatives and choices within topic and skill areas?

- Is it linked to standards?

Specifically answering the question "What's the Point?" for every lesson, skill, or knowledge set provides a way to consider how diverse learners may be able to participate in common learning through differentiated means. For example, if a

beyond consideration of interrelationships between classroom community members. The relationship between the content, learners, and teacher also affects learning. Ideally, all students can be included in some way within the curriculum. In the United States, *No Child Left Behind* requires schools to provide all but 10 percent of

edge, and internalization in "Morning Message." *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 34, 172-196.

• Englert, C. S., Berry, R., Dunsmore, K. (2001). A case study of the apprenticeship process: Another perspective on the apprenticeship and the scaffolding metaphor. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 34, 152-171.

### Strategic Instruction Model and Acronyms:

• Writing Acronym (Defends) Strategies Ellis, E. S., Covert, G. (1996). Writing strategy instruction. In D. D. Deshler, E. S. Ellis, B. K. Lenz (Eds.), *Teaching adolescents with learning disabilities: Strategies and Methods* (2nd Ed., pp. 127-207).

Denver: Love.

• COPS (proofreading) Schumaker, J. B., Nolan, S. M., Deshler, D. (1985). *Learning Strategies curriculum: The error monitoring strategy*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press.

### Self-Regulated Strategy Development for Content Area Composition:

• Graham, S. (1992). Helping students with LD progress as writers. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 27(3), 134-144.

• Troia, G. A., Graham, S. (2002). The effectiveness of a highly explicit, teacher-directed strategy instruction routine: Changing the writing performance of students with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 35, 290-306.

*ing Disabilities*, 35, 290-306.

• Harris, K. R., Graham, S., Mason, L. (2002). POW plus Tree equals powerful opinion essays. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 34(5), 74-77.

• Graham, S., Harris, K. R., Fink-Chorzempa, B. (2003). Extra spelling instruction: Promoting better spelling, writing, and reading performance right from the start. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 35(6), 66-68.

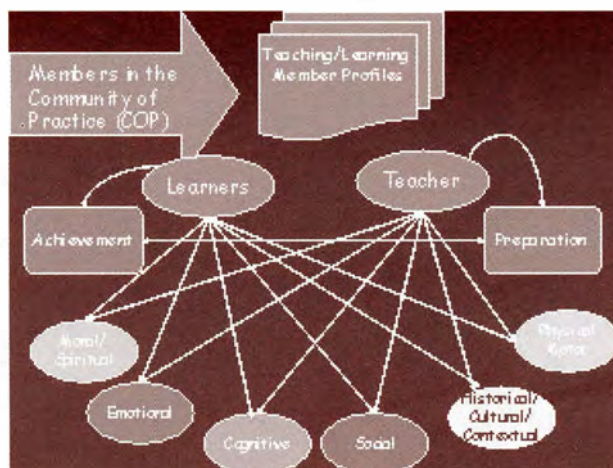
• Collaborative Writing Groups. Writers' workshop.

Tompkins, G. E. (2002). Struggling readers are struggling writers, too. *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning*



Civil Rights lesson is being taught, the point may be recognizing and understanding the difficulty when family members have differences of opinions. For some learners this may mean listening to a story of two brothers who fought against one another; for others it may mean writing letters to family members about their positions. If I am teaching math, the bottom line may be that all students will be able to work with numbers in an applied way. If the lesson is on percentages, students may calculate sales or mortgage percentages; others may learn about the risks with credit card interest; while still others may practice and record tithing.

The **bottom references** in this article provide research-based programs and strategies for use in inclusive settings. The list only scratches the surface of available resources in certain areas. For example, the topic of social skills, a critical component in inclusive teaching, is beyond the scope of this article. However, the references offer schools a starting place (or a way to recognize all you are already doing!). Much



of the research on responsive teaching in inclusive settings recognizes that choosing good curricular content also considers how that curriculum will be implemented. Since every inclusive situation is different, schools and teaching teams must also consider pedagogically how their school and students will affect the shape of any program or strategy.

### How: Pedagogical decisions

Creating a responsive teaching practice requires understanding pedagogical choices. Inclusive instruction is supported

by principles developed around differentiated instruction, universal design (Salend, 2005), and socio-constructivist theories (Englert & Mariage, 2003). Some common principles include designing instruction capable of engaging all students at some level, recognition of and room for error, creating sensible and meaningful tools, adaptations, and assessments that scaffold and demonstrate learning, practical life application, and involvement in a learning community. Let's look at

two aspects in some detail: learning as socially constructed activity through learning communities and supporting learning through tool-use.

The principle of learning community reinforces the social nature of learning. Group work capitalizes on development of learning communities. The power of varied groupings — (1) large, small, dyads; (2) homogeneous and heterogeneous groups; and (3) peer tutors, partner learning systems — should not be underestimated. Groups provide opportunities for all students to learn social and communi-

*Difficulties*, 18, 175-194.

- Graham, S., Harris, K. R. (1992). Cognitive strategy instruction in written language for learning disabled students. In S. Vogel (Ed.), *Education alternatives for teaching students with learning disabilities* (pp. 95-115). New York: Springer Verlag.

### Handwriting:

- Graham, S., Harris, K. R., Fink, B. (2000). Extra handwriting instruction: Prevent writing difficulties right from the start. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 33(2), 88-91.
- Handwriting skills and writing evaluation checklist. Writing strategies.

Naus, J. M. (2000). Helping hands: A world of manipulatives to boost handwriting skills. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 32(4), 64-70.

### Reading Comprehension, Literature, and Higher Order Thinking:

#### Book Club:

- Hindin, A., Morocco, C. C., Aguilar, C. M. (2001). "This book lives in our school" Teaching middle school students to understand literature. *Remedial and Special Education*, 22, 204-213.
- Raphael, T. E., Florio-Ruane, S., George, M., & Levorn Hasty, N. (2004). *Book Club Plus!* Lawrence, MA: Small

Planet Communication, Inc.

### Literacy Circles:

- Tompkins, G. E. (2003). *Literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice-Hall.

### Resources & strategies for information texts that motivate elementary and secondary students to read:

- Dreher, M. J. (2003). Motivating struggling readers by tapping the potential of information books. *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 19, 25-38.

### Mathematics:

### Computation and Numeracy:

cative competencies as well as academics. In addition, group work provides empowering roles for all students and allows teachers space for listening to students, taking notes, and learning more about what they know and how they think and learn.

Tools powerfully mediate meaning-making for students. Tools can be as simple as particularly chosen words, actions, and objects strategically implemented during teaching. For example, when teachers call learners authors, or thinkers, or scientists, they begin to see themselves as part of the world of that discipline. Likewise, a few powerful acronyms taught and posted or placed in student binders may provide learners with the steps for reading comprehension, writing a paragraph or essay, listening during story time, or taking notes. Finally, color-coding, role-play, and use of technology such as Inspiration (see figure) or power point may provide just enough support to empower a student toward more authentic participation in learning activities. Simple, well-chosen tools can dramatically shape the depth of involvement and learning for a student.

## Getting to the Heart of Matters: Professional Dispositions in Schools

Creating inclusive learning environments calls us to reconsider our own past educational experiences and professional practices, shift our beliefs and paradigms, and redesign curricula and pedagogy. Furthermore, particular dispositions support inclusion and provide insight into beliefs affecting our instructional decisions and actions. Inclusion will be enhanced if individuals within a learning community embrace seven basic dispositions: (1) hope, (2) inherent dignity of all, (3) a collaborative spirit, (4) hospitality, (5) flexibility, (6) curiosity, and (7) creativity. Without these traits, the depth of decision-making stays shallow, and strategies remain shelved or eventually stagnate.

### Hope

Typically, inclusion schools create space for problem-solving meetings. While meetings can really help folks clarify and fine-tune action plans, what would happen if we called the gatherings *visioning* meetings? School mission or vision statements

centering on inclusive learning community provide ballast and remind us of what really counts in the big picture. Meetings that center on a problem often result in having a student, who is only one of many factors in a complex situation, become *the problem*. When disability spreads to frame decision-making from a deficit perspective, resentment, low expectations, or frustration may replace hopeful opportunities. Visioning meetings position hope centrally in a designing process that acknowledges weakness and concerns, but leads with goals and strengths. Hope balances problems with possibility, *re-visioning* learning environments for surprising gifts.

### Inherent Dignity

Every person has been fashioned by Creator God and thus has inherent dignity. Acceptance of intrinsic worth apart from a humanly constructed scale of "what counts" frees educators to cherish others and oneself in new ways. Inclusive communities affirm the potential and possibilities available individually *and* collectively through educational planning and implementation. This is not easy. It means at times we must

- Math Facts and Computations. Kaufmann, L., Handl, P., Thony, B. (2003). Evaluation of a numeracy intervention program focusing on basic numerical knowledge and conceptual knowledge: A pilot study. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 36, 564-573.
- Woodward, J., Baxter, J. (2001). Working with numbers. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 33(5), 80-84.
- Mathematical Literacy through calculators. Woodward, J. (1999). Redoing the numbers: Secondary math for a postsecondary work world. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 31(4), 74-79.

- Mathematical Fluency and Conceptual Thinking. Helwig, R., Anderson, L., Tindal, G. (2002). Using a concept-grounded, curriculum-based measure in mathematics to predict statewide test scores for middle school students with LD. *The Journal of Special Education*, 36, 102-112.
- Math Problem Solving
  - Problem-Solving. Hot Math – multi-step intervention for teaching word problem solving. Fuchs, L. S., Fuchs, D., Prentice, K., Burch, M., Paulsen, K. (2002). Hot Math: Promoting mathematical problem solving among third-grade students with disabili-

ties. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 35(1), 70-73.

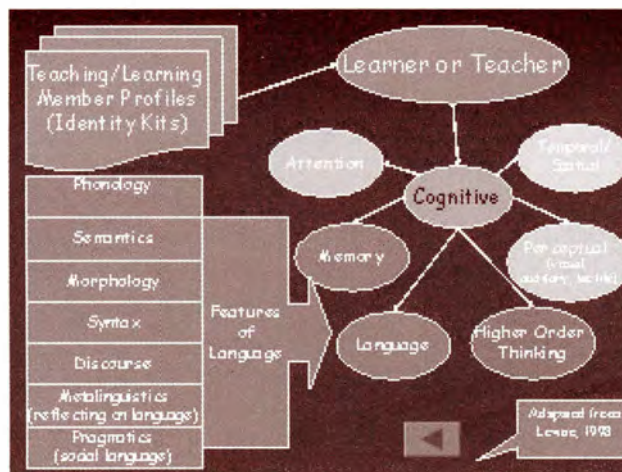
- Multiple choice and interview assessment of estimation skills. Montague, M., van Garderen, D. (2003). A cross-sectional study of mathematics achievement, estimation skills, and academic self-perception in students with varying ability. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 36, 437-448.
- Jitendra, A. K. (2002). Teaching students math problem-solving through graphic representations. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 34(4), 34-39.
- Content Area:
  - Concept map for Secondary Students



unveil our own weaknesses or sacrifice our own ideas while we appreciatively look for, listen to, and lean on the capacity in others. Educational decisions acknowledging the dignity of all inspire a spirit of collaboration.

### Spirit of Collaboration

A spirit of collaboration is a signature of inclusive community and fuels a synergy of possibilities. Instead of functioning in isolation, administrators, teachers, parents, students, and ancillary professionals roll up their sleeves and together talk, plan, implement, and evaluate. When provided with space and time, inclusive visions and principles can be transformed into realities. Cooperatively planned opportunities take shape and live on school signs, home bulletins, and websites; in school hallways, playgrounds, locker rooms, and rehearsal halls; and, during science experiments, writing activities, and school parties. Collaborative work is a time-consuming, sacrificial, and vulnerable activity; however, it is also priceless in creating inclusive learning com-



munity. Indeed, collaborative activity suggests that “neither seeing nor being seen ultimately means much unless each results in a positive remaking of the worlds in which we together live” (Rodis, Garrod, & Boscardin, 2001, p. xv). *Remaking* a school world means together, *recreating* learning spaces that welcome all.

### Hospitality

Folks within inclusive school environments create places of hospitality — places of physical, emotional, and intellectual safety for students *and* teachers. Inclusive environments require everyone to risk new

knowledge, new skills, and new beliefs. Innovative programs or strategies call us to mutually abandon notions of perfection and welcome thoughtful trial and error. Mistakes and accomplishments by administrators, teachers, students, or parents can provide a window into new learning. Reid and Valle (2004) suggest a disposition of hospitality when we “assume that everybody belongs and ask how educators can make general education

classrooms welcoming, productive, and constructive environments for all students ... [where] our focus is on redesigning the context, not on ‘curing’ or ‘remediating’ individuals’ impairments” (p. 10). Welcoming transforms traditional ideas of remediation into acts of *remembering* where all members of a learning community participate.

### Flexibility

Teaching is the art of *re-doing* what you thought you were going to do in the first place. While thoughtful, intentional planning and designing is critical to good teach-

Gajria, M., Mullane, T., Sharp, E. R., Heim, T. (2003). *Concept mapping: Improving content area comprehension for secondary students with learning disabilities*. Presentation at the annual meeting of the Council for Exceptional Children, Seattle.

- Concept Anchoring Routines.

Deshler, D. D., Schumaker, J. B., Lenz, B. K., Bulgren, J. A., Hock, M. F., Knight, J., Ehren, B. J. (2001). Ensuring content-area learning by secondary students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 16, 96-108.

- Palincsar
- Okolo, Ferreti

### Technology:

#### General Sources:

For information on Current Technology Resources: <http://speedchange.blogspot.com/> The site includes regularly updated information on web accessibility, free digital reading software (Microsoft Reader, FoxyVoice, FireVox, ReadPlease, etc.), assistive technology, digital text, literacy, and much more.

CAST – Center for Applied Special Technology Founded in 1984 as the Center for Applied Special Technology, CAST has earned international recognition for its development of innovative, technology-based educational resources and strategies based

on the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). CAST led a national blue-ribbon panel in drafting the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) to guide the development and distribution of digital instructional materials.

Basic Digital Reading Software:

- Speech – <http://www.apple.com/macintosh/features/speech/>
  - Easy Access to Digital Text:
  - Project Gutenberg <http://www.gutenberg.org/>
  - Fordham University <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/asbook.html>
- Ensuring your web sites are accessible:



# Head and Heart

ing, there are many unforeseen factors that affect implementation of any instructional design. Flexibility is the key to being responsive to students in the moment-to-moment decisions made on a daily basis.

## Curiosity

Opening our schools and classrooms to diverse learners means discovering how much we don't know and how much we can still learn. We find we didn't know that someone with cerebral palsy can play basketball but may not be able to write for long periods of time; or that someone with Asperger Syndrome might not be able to change to Friday's unique schedule easily but knows more than we do about World War II. Likewise, we may not know how to design an activity or assessment in a way that makes it more accessible to a learner. A disposition of curiosity helps a team see ignorance or misinformation as challenge rather than threat or obstacle. Curiosity breeds courage to ask others, innovate, and *re-imagine* learning experiences.

## Creativity

Learners, teachers, and their school en-

vironments are unique. A creative outlook bridges promising programs or strategies to unique school contexts. Nevin, Thousand, & Villa (2002) suggest that responsive teachers require creativity. All teachers can be creative; however, creativity is not a switch that can be turned on or off. Creativity requires nurturing. Administrators and boards can support teachers by eliminating five threats to creativity (Nevin et al.). First, our perceptions can threaten thinking outside of the box, such as class rules ("But we always do it this way"), stereotypes about people ("All people with ADD are unorganized"), or incomplete information ("I don't know if the parents can help"). Second, creative blocks can occur when our cultural beliefs and practices support inflexible traditions limiting the range of acceptable ideas ("Testing accommodations are not fair to other students"). Third, emotions such as fear of chaos or judgments can stand in the way of generating new ideas. In addition, when groups lack corporate language for understanding issues, communication difficulties can arise, thwarting innovative thinking. Finally, creativity can be stifled by institu-

tional structures that block time or resources needed for imagining responsive educational activity. Creativity provides new ideas for new and unusual situations.

## Conclusion

Including all students requires several people committed to *reculturing* schools. When we reculture learning environments we reconsider, revision, remake, and re-imagine particular beliefs, knowledge, skills, practices, and tools. Dispositions provide key resources for recultured contexts supportive of complex instructional decision-making. And what of our feelings of being overwhelmed and inadequate? They will persist — and they should. However, inclusion nurtured out of hope, vision, and collaboration will also add increased feelings of camaraderie, satisfaction, and joyous surprise. ☺

"Bobby" <http://webxact.watchfire.com/>  
Cynthia Says <http://www.cynthiasays.com/>  
ALA – <http://www.ala.org/ala/products/nooks/editions/adaptivetechology.htm>  
Scan-and-Read Software:  
• WYNN <http://www.freedomscientific.com/LSG/products/wynn.asp>  
Voice-to-Text:  
• IBM ViaVoice – <http://www-306.ibm.com/software/voice/viavoice/>  
• SpeakQ – <http://www.wordq.com/speakqenglish.html>  
Alternative Keyboards:  
• Dvortyboards <http://www.dvortyboards.com/>

[boards.com/](http://www.dvortyboards.com/)  
Writing support:  
• Inspiration Kidspiration <http://www.inspiration.com/>  
• WordQ – <http://www.wordq.com/>  
• Soothsayer – <http://www.ahf-ner.com/sooth.htm>  
• Microsoft Office <http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/content/factsheets/pdfs/Spelling%20and%20options%20in%20Microsoft%20Word.pdf>  
• Word Processing Disability Resources (2000) – information on specially designed programs to teach typing skills to individuals with VI.

- Phonics Practice: Spelling – Simon Spells.
- Ochoa, T. A., Vasquez, L. R., Gerber, M. M. (1999). New generation of computer-assisted learning tools for students with disabilities. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 34(4), 251-254.
- Interactive software.
- Kapperman, G., Sticken, J. (2002). A software tutorial for learning the Nemeth Code of Braille mathematics. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*. 96, 855-857.



# CALVIN COLLEGE SUMMER 2007 GRADUATE WORKSHOPS

## Summer Opportunities for Educators' Professional Growth

The Summer Program at Calvin offers a variety of graduate workshops and courses. Workshops are held for 1 week, meeting morning and afternoon, and offer 2 semester hours of graduate credit. Graduate courses meet for 2 weeks and offer 3 semester hours of graduate credit. Classes do not meet Wednesday, July 4. All workshops and courses reflect the mission of Calvin's Teacher Education Program to develop responsive and transformative Christian educators in multiple school settings.

### June 18-22 1 Week Workshops

Culture and Learning

Musical Health

Using Illustrated Books Effectively

### July 9-13 1 Week Workshops

Teaching Africa

Health and Sexuality

Moral Development and Mathematics

### June 25-July 6 2 Week Courses

Collaboration and Consultation

Reading Diagnosis and Remediation

Curriculum Theory and Development

### July 16-20 2 Week Courses

Theories of Learning Disabilities

Introduction to School Leadership\*

\* 1 week workshop or 2 week course

### JUNE 18-22 (1 WEEK WORKSHOP) Culture and Learning (EDUC 617)

*Denise Isom*

Globalization, diversity initiatives, multiculturalism; we live in a world that increasingly requires us to engage with cultural complexity. Teachers need to understand their own cultural identities, the cultural identities of their students, and the ways in which culture impacts teaching methodologies, curriculum, and student learning. Focusing on the major ethnic cultural groups of the nation and region, this workshop will help participants develop a deeper understanding of the complex cultural characteristics of Whites, African Americans, Chicano/Latinos, Asian Americans, and First Nations/Native Americans and the intersections among culture, race, gender, and class. (2 sem. hrs.)

### JUNE 18-22 (1 WEEK WORKSHOP) Musical Health for Classroom Teachers (MUSC 601)

*Dale Topp*

Explore the power of music in your classroom. This experiential workshop presents song activities that empower individuals and classrooms toward optimum personal growth. Primary focus will be on classroom teachers in the elementary

school whose musical skills and experience may be limited. (2 sem. hrs.)

### JUNE 18-22 (1 WEEK WORKSHOP) Reading Pictures: Narrative Art in Illustrated Books and Graphic Novels (ENGL 601)

*Donald Hettinga and Gary Schmidt*

Build a vocabulary for interpreting picture books and graphic novels, develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between narrative and illustration, and learn to appreciate the artistic visions of significant illustrators. In this workshop, the instructors will lead you through an examination of recent illustrated books for children and young adults. You will learn more about effective methods of teaching with picture books in K-12 classrooms. (2 sem. hrs.)

### JUNE 25-JULY 6 (2 WEEK COURSE) Collaboration and Consultation: Professional Roles in Education (EDUC 511)

*Debra Buursma*

This course offers an interactive advanced study of the dilemmas and challenges involved in effective, culturally sensitive collaborative relationships necessary for creating schooling experiences

responsive to all learners. You will explore, practice, and critique models and methods of collaboration, consultation, professional development and coaching appropriate for working alongside teachers, learners, specialists, parents, paraprofessionals, and community agencies in complementary, interdependent relationships. Through readings, discussion, labs, role-play, interviews, reflective writing, and group projects, you will investigate topics such as resistance and agency, teams and consensus decision-making, ethics, and visioning transformative change. (3 sem. hrs.)

### JUNE 25-JULY 6 (2 WEEK COURSE) Diagnosis and Remediation for Reading Disabilities (EDUC 542)

*KaiLonn Dunsmore*

Meet the new State of Michigan literacy course requirement for professional certification under PA-118. In this course, you will develop a cognitive framework for diagnosing and planning instruction for K-12 students who find reading difficult. You will also review theories and approaches for supporting reading and writing development. In addition, you will use informal and formal assessment materials to work with a student to support literacy development in a targeted area of weakness. (3 sem. hrs.)



# AND COURSES

## **JUNE 25-JULY 6 (2 WEEK COURSE) Curriculum Theory and Development (EDUC 580)**

*Jan Gormas*

Participate in a study of theories and development of curricula for pre-school through grade 12 students in all content areas. In this course, you will become more aware of theories that inform curricula choices and contextual curricular issues, with special consideration of the more practical side of implementing curricular change. Discussions will be grounded in the integration of faith and learning including issues of social justice. (3 sem. hrs.)

## **JULY 9-13 (1 WEEK WORKSHOP) Teaching Africa: History, Culture, and Contemporary Issues (EDUC/AADS 646)**

You may already be teaching about the great continent of Africa, but a limited exposure to Africa's vastness, complexity, and diversity can create difficulties in teaching this content effectively. This workshop will offer the resources of faculty members and African students studying at Calvin. The goal of the workshop will be to discover more of the riches and complexity of Africa, and to develop curriculum resources for your classroom. Note: The workshop offers 1 hour of credit or 3 CEU's and meets only in the mornings.

## **JULY 9-13 (1 WEEK WORKSHOP) Health and Sexuality (HE 564)**

*Debra Bakker*

As of fall 2007, if you teach health and/or sexuality courses in a public school in Michigan, you will need to be endorsed in health education. This applies to you even if you have been teaching health courses previously. This sexuality workshop will qualify as part of a health education minor and will also meet the requirements for training in the area of HIV prevention. You will review perspectives, content, methods and materials in teaching sexuality and HIV prevention in the school. You will also examine the laws of the State of Michigan in regard to teaching sexuality and HIV education, as well as the controversies related to teaching sexuality education. (2 sem. hrs.)

## **JULY 9-13 (1 WEEK WORKSHOP) Fostering Moral and Spiritual Development in the Mathematics Classroom (EDUC 647)**

*James Bradley and Gary Talsma (Sponsored by the Kuyers Institute)*

If you are a middle school, high school, or college mathematics teacher in a faith-based school, you are told to integrate your faith into all the subject matter you teach. But how does this work with mathematics? In this workshop you'll examine the rich tradition of thought about the relationship between mathematics and Christian faith. The workshop will also have a strong emphasis on practical curriculum design and will examine resources from the Charis Project and from Kuyers Mathematics Project (both substantial curriculum projects seeking to connect mathematics with spiritual and moral development in rigorous and educationally responsible ways). (2 sem. hrs.)

## **JULY 16-27 (2 WEEK COURSE) Theories of Learning Disabilities (EDUC 550)**

*Staff*

Learn more about one of the fastest growing areas of special education: learning disabilities (LD). You will explore the history, legislation, and pressing dilemmas and issues in the field of LD. Through a broad spectrum of scholarship and research, you will become acquainted with how definitions and theoretical models of LD have informed our understanding and questions related to general characteristics, language acquisition and use, academic achievement in basic skills and higher order thinking, and socialization of students identified with LD. (3 sem. hrs.) Prerequisite: Education 202 or an Introduction to Exceptional Learner course.

## **JULY 16-27 (2 WEEK COURSE) Introduction to School Leadership (EDUC 534)**

*Al Boerema*

Examine leadership theory and practices that build school communities and promote learning. In this course, you will focus on organizational and leadership theory; establishing a school mission; collaborative problem-solving; decision making skills and procedures; and personal leadership qualities. This course is part of the Educational Leadership program—appropriate for M.Ed students, but also a source of professional development for those already working in school administration. Also see workshop option below. (3 sem. hrs.)

## **JULY 16 - 20 (1 WEEK WORKSHOP) Introduction to School Leadership (EDUC 634)**

*Al Boerema*

Persons who wish to study school leadership but do not need a three semester hour graduate course may take the first week of EDUC 534 as a 2 semester hour workshop (see description under EDUC 534). Students taking the workshop and those taking the course meet together the first week. Course participants continue during the morning of the second week for an additional hour of credit. (2 sem. hrs.)

**For Further Information  
see Web site or contact:**

**1-800-688-0122**

**1-616-526-6105**

**Graduate Program Office  
3201 Burton St SE  
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# THE END OF THE BEGINNING.

## ONE SCHOOL'S JOURNEY TOWARD INCLUSION

by Mike Sligh

*Mike Sligh is in his thirty-fourth year of service at Lakeland Christian School, the past ten as Headmaster. He enjoys golf and reading, and is a big fan of his alma mater team, the Florida Gators.*

"This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But let us hope that it is the end of the beginning." Winston Churchill's words on the occasion of the successful invasion of Italy implied an understanding that it was only a matter of time before victory would be realized. Coupled with the success of D-Day and the resurgence of Russia in the east, there was now reason for hope for a successful end to World War II.

Several years ago one of our school families confronted us with their desire to have their fourth son educated in the same school where his three brothers attended. The older three would qualify for any major university's honors program. The fourth has Down syndrome.

Although our school had provided special education services for students with a limited range of learning disabilities for over twenty years, we had never considered trying to educate a student with this level of need. There were, however, compelling arguments in favor of considering this request. Lakeland Christian School believes in partnering with families to educate *all* of the children in the family. They wanted us to honor that commitment for their son. The gnawing truth of scripture, "...to the least of these..." and our espoused core value that all children are created in the image of God and are deserving of honor and respect began to erode our resistance to the possibility of inclusion.

### Beginning of the journey

Over the past five years, LCS has expanded the range of support services avail-

able to our students. Some students are being included who previously would not have enrolled or who would have been forced to leave our school in order to have their instructional needs met. We have not always experienced success. In fact, we were able to sustain services to the student mentioned above for only three years. We are pressing ahead nonetheless.

The quotation from Churchill is a descriptor of our journey toward inclusion. We have not arrived. In many ways we have only just begun. We hope that the beginning is over and that we will continue to move forward. Along the way, some lessons from our experience have emerged

"There are few things worth doing that are convenient"

that may prove helpful as your school considers moving toward more inclusive practices.

**Recognize that it will be messy.** Giving birth to an inclusion program will not be tidy. It will call for administrators, faculty and staff to have a teachable spirit and a commitment to learn new ways of doing things. A tolerance for ambiguity, loose ends and contingency planning will be required. A focus on seeking solutions rather than attributing blame is essential. This understanding will focus professional development activities for current faculty and staff, and it will influence hiring decisions.

**Visit successful inclusion programs in other Christian schools.** We appointed a visiting team comprised of a board member, assistant principal, special education department chair, and the headmaster to visit schools in Michigan that had been

involved with inclusion for many years. This was the most powerful factor in our decision to move ahead. We visited classrooms where inclusion was in place, and we talked with principals and teachers and observed the dynamics between the included students and the typical students in the school. I believe our progress would have been accelerated if I had sent an additional team comprised primarily of classroom teachers prior to initiating our inclusion efforts.

### Don't get too far ahead of the troops!

One of our self-inflicted difficulties was a gap between leadership and the teachers on the front lines who would be directly involved in the inclusive classroom. The headmaster and special education department chair ran too far ahead of others on the staff. I did not respect this "lag" enough and needed to involve more teachers in the discussion earlier in the process. If I had it to do over again, I would implement a task force of teachers as well as school leadership to spearhead this effort. Initial buy-in will not be school-wide at the outset, but establishing a "critical mass" of support among board members, administration and teachers will be a great benefit as you face the challenges along the way.

**Educators and parents must shift from adversarial postures to supportive partnership.** Many parents have learned that assertive advocacy is often necessary in order to obtain the supports their child requires. They have learned from experience that unless they are strong advocates, their child's needs may not be met. Some, weary of the need to constantly negotiate power structures, become aggressive and sometimes even overbearing. At some point in the process, candid conversation may be necessary to enable some parents to transition from adversary to partner. On the other hand, educators who are being challenged to think of schools in new ways and to



operate differently may come to feel professionally threatened or may resist leaving the comfort of familiar pedagogical practice. They, too, may need help in transitioning to a posture of vulnerability, trust and mutuality.

**Clarify planning time commitments up front.** Regular stakeholder meetings are an essential element in the process. Teachers, special education resource staff and parents must allocate set times for planning and communication. At the outset, these should be held weekly. Other school or outside commitments cannot be allowed to infringe on this joint effort by the partners. Administrators with responsibilities for instructional leadership should be involved periodically in these sessions. If this component is compromised, the whole effort can quickly unravel.

**Training and ongoing support is an important component of the teachers' "safety net."** A commitment to ongoing, hands-on, professional development for teachers is required. Ideally this will be provided by experienced Christian educators who can integrate biblical perspectives along with the pedagogical skills involved with inclusion. Opportunities for faculty to enlarge their repertoire of skills for inclusion may also be available through local school district professional development programs. Educators who are committed to inclusive practices are eager to spread their message and share their experience with others. Take advantage of their experience and willingness to share with your staff.

Although a great deal of focus is placed on modifications and accommodations for the included child, the teachers involved need to have a sense that their needs for know-how and also for practical assistance are being met. Additional support from paraprofessionals, more planning time provided in their school day, opportunities to



attend conferences and interact with practitioners from other schools — all contribute towards this sense of professional well-being as they move forward into uncharted waters.

**We are partners, not just service providers.** We began our inclusive efforts with families in our school that have already demonstrated a commitment to Christian education. We strive to build a community of families and will not normally partner with a family who wants to enroll only their special needs child while leaving their other children in the public schools. Our financial aid program provides assistance for families who lack the resources to fund Christian education for multiple children. This adds credibility to our expressed goal of working with the whole family. The use of a third party financial needs assessment service protects the privacy of the families' financial matters and ensures that the school's financial aid funds are properly allocated.

**Know when to hold; know when to fold.** Recognize that sometimes you take some steps back. Mistakes are part of the learn-

ing process. No team wins 'em all. Failing to try can be worse than trying and failing. The inability to do it perfectly the first time should not paralyze us from moving forward. For example, you may face a case in which health and safety concerns for the students or staff preclude your ability to continue an inclusive approach with a particular student. This is not an excuse to quit when things get tough. It is important to realize that if you face a case for which your best efforts at inclusion are not successful, that you do not "throw the baby out with the bathwater." We must balance our deep commitment to make it work with the understanding that we may face situations that we are unable to handle given our current level of expertise and experience. On the other hand, over time, we may find ourselves able to meet the needs of some students that we were previously unable to serve.

**It's worth it.** There are few things worth doing that are convenient. Our commitment to an expanding range of special education services often stretches us beyond our professional and emotional comfort zone. Fortunately, the notes and comments from appreciative parents, the light in the eye of the student who has accomplished something previously thought to be impossible, and the growth in the caring spirit of the other students gives us a glimpse of why it is worth it all.

Churchill was convinced the cause was right and the outcome was sure. He knew there would be some defeats along the way, but he also was confident that ultimate victory was in sight. The goal of making Christian education accessible to the broadest possible range of learners is an objective worth the struggle. May the Lord enable us to end our beginning and move forward in this worthy campaign for the **glory** of God and the good of all students. ☪



# Slouching Toward Bedlam

## Grandparents' Day in the Life of Bedlam Christian or *The Unbearable Lightness of Pedagogy*

*Jan Kaarsvulam ran into some trouble during a recent field trip with his art students from Pella Christian. On a trip to the children's museum in Bettendorf, Jan attempted to engage his students in a Problem-Based Learning exercise (PBL) and ended up watching as ten of them floated away down the Mississippi on a homemade paddleboat. The students were rescued, but only with the help of the US Coast Guard and the Army Corps of Engineers. Jan, unfortunately, panicked and hid from the authorities in an abandoned hot dog wagon. After a short time on the lam, Jan resigned his position at Pella Christian and has since accepted a job as water-safety instructor for Ontario Christian School in California.*

The sun was beaming outside, but the storm clouds were gathering in the faculty lounge of Bedlam. Teachers sat in tight clusters around the tables, all of them bent over the three pages of instructions they had just received for Grandparents' Day. Among the things principal Bentley Vanderhaar was demanding of his staff were three elements — a special forty-five minute activity that was “sound pedagogically but also intentional about including grandparents with students,” a mixer game to begin each period, and several platters of baked goods in each room (“to be supplied by teacher or students, as teachers see fit”). Though perhaps not excessive in and of themselves, the demands had put everyone in a foul mood because Grandparents' Day was only three days away, and this was the first they had heard of their principal's desires.

Heads shook in disbelief. Jon Kleinhut, the school librarian and resident conspiracy theorist, would usually have been the first to erupt, but, frankly, he hadn't even read the memo yet. Dressed in a full contamination suit, he was currently fulfilling his turn with kitchen duty, picking through the refrigerator's various leftovers. A geologist might date the items he removed based on their proximity to the appliance door. A biologist would simply count the mold spores.

With Kleinhut preoccupied, no one was sure who would be first to complain. Maybe Jane VanderAsch, the septuagenarian math teacher. But although she liked to complain, she seldom had the audacity to do so publicly or initially. Winkle was usually too busy foraging for food (indeed, at the moment he was arguing with Jon about whether a half-inch of mold on a donut really made it inedible), and Rex Kane, when he spoke, just confused people. Heads wagged in disgust, and eyes bounced from face to face, but when a voice of complaint finally arose, it came from the most unexpected of corners.

“I've had it!” said normally staid Bible teacher Cal VanderMeer. “Vanderhaar's gone too far this time. I refuse to do this.”

No one knew what to say. Cal echoed thoughts all of them had but none dared express.

“You'll do it, buddy-old-boy,” said Rex with a slap on the shoulder. “You always do. You're working for The Man. You always have and you always will.”

Max Prentiss-Hall, the school's counselor, looked at Cal earnestly. “We have to do this, Cal. I mean, it's not very nice, but we don't have a choice. And besides, it is important to build connections with grandparents.”

Cal snorted. “If it is so important, why are we just getting word about this now, three days prior to the event? Doesn't the administration know we write lesson plans weeks ahead of time?”

“Yeah,” said VanderAsch, emboldened by her colleague. “And my students take the AP Calculus test in one week. Am I really supposed to set aside last minute preparations so the kids can play “Thumbs-Up, Seven-Up” with their grandparents?”

“So you don't think Grandparents' Day is important?” Max said, his voice trembling. His faculty mentor and hero, it turned out, had clay feet.

“Of course I think it's important,” Cal said. “That's why I'm frustrated. Vanderhaar has all kinds of good ideas, but he always enacts them in a half-baked fashion. If this day is going to be valuable to our students and our school community, it deserves more time and thought than we've given it. This is just like his big push to work with a sister school in Germany.”

“*Dumme Art- und Weiseschule?*” asked Max. “That's a great program.”

Kleinhut spun around and shouted through his mask, “That's a joke! We've never done anything but busy work with them.”

VanderMeer smiled sadly. “I'm afraid I agree with Jon on this one. I love the idea of a sister school, of having our students make cross-cultural connections, of our teachers aiding one another. But in the end, we had to come up with special lesson plans connected to that school, but nothing ever came of them. We wrote the plans, several kids got letters back, and then we just forgot about it. For a year. Then, suddenly, out of the clear blue, last January we had to plan a big festival for the school. We drop everything we are doing to put on the festival, and then the sister school disappears again. Why?”

“Probably because we had that Service Learning Initiative: Maximized (SLIM) thing. Remember, that cookie sale for world hunger?” said Max. “That required a lot of planning and organization.”

“But we had poor student participation,” Winkle said. He was scraping the back of a butter knife across what looked to be a piece of ham. Great green gobs of mold collected on the knife. “Kids don't want to go without food.” Kleinhut was trying to

reach around Winkle's massive body to wrest the butter knife from him.

"No, they don't," said Cal, "but we didn't really do much to educate them about hunger or social justice because we were too busy with our work with *Dumme Art-und Weiseschule*. So instead of having either one of the events go well, both ended up being pretty lame."

"And let's not forget the *Phil Collins / Billy Squier* writing method," piped in English teacher Christina Lopez. Everyone groaned. Four years earlier the faculty had undergone three workshops and numerous faculty meetings for two years to try to improve writing across the curriculum with the PCBS method, but then it had quietly disappeared as Vanderhaar wholeheartedly embraced Differentiation Under Development (DUD). Now new teachers weren't even made familiar with the writing program.

"And that's only the tip of the iceberg," chimed in Cal Vandermeer again. "You new teachers probably don't remember Heuristic Assessment Mediation Language Evaluative Training (HAMLET), Scholastically Unified Base System for Teaching And Nurturing a Daily Alternative Reading Directive (SUBSTANDARD), Best Initiative Practices-Broad Outcomes Philosophy - And Responsive Educational Excellence Bilateral Accreditation (BIP-BOP-A-REEBA), and Pedagogically Uniform Kinesthetic Effective Youth Guided Under Natural Consequences (PUKEYGUNC). Every single one of these initiatives lasted less than two years. Essentially just about the time when we have made the adjustments and prepared for the pay-off, the point where we are supposed to be seeing results, the administration of this school gets off that bandwagon and hops on a new one.



I'm sick of it."

Maxwell had been working his courage up for some time now. He spoke quietly and with a shiver in his voice. "Cal, you sound like you are against anything that might help teachers improve their teaching. Now maybe you don't need these workshops and programs, but isn't it possible that they might help the new teachers?"


"Nope!" Rex Kane had vehemently entered the conversation again. "And here's why, my little Maxwellian friend.

Because any teachers worth their banana muffins can learn the new buzzwords well enough to get the administration off their backs so they can do what they were hired to do — teach."

Cal cleared his throat. "And the teachers that are not worth their 'banana muffins' can do the same. So for all this work, nothing ever changes. The bad

teachers stay bad at what they do and the good teachers do the same. The only difference is that everybody has to waste time on busy work and learn the new terminology."

At that point, Jon Kleinhut, having emerged from the refrigerator at last, stripped off his Hazmat facemask and offered his two cents.

"Fact is," he said, holding aloft a grey desiccated vegetable of some kind, "You can say what you want, but this stuff gets really old really fast." The bell rang, and the intrepid teachers, in spite of all the forces arrayed against them, departed the staff room to do what they had been hired for in the first place: to teach. 





Nancy Knol  
Column Editor  
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# William John:

## *a glimpse from God*

*For this issue, I have requested permission from one of my ninth-graders to print a speech she recently gave in my ninth-grade Religion class. Since the theme for this issue is inclusive education, Katie's message seems more than appropriate. I hope the words of this tender and articulate young woman will touch you as it touched those of us who had the privilege of hearing it in person.*

When Mrs. Knol first talked about the God Glimpse assignment, I knew right away what I would do. It's something that has drastically changed my family's life in many ways. I cannot imagine my life without my little brother, Will.

I am an average girl. I like to sing, play soccer, ski, act, and play piano. I love the outdoors, lying under the stars at night, snow (especially!) and Lake Michigan. I have two brothers, David (older) and Will (younger). My dad works in the Financial Department at Gordon Food Service, and my mom stays at home. Our family has grown very close in the last nine years mainly because of my brother Will.

On April 16, 1997, my mom gave birth to a healthy little boy. He was a small baby, and his hair was brown. My parents decided to name him William John. I was five at the time, and my older brother David was eight. We played a lot together, and when we visited at the hospital, we were eager to meet our new little brother. Little did we know that baby Will had been diagnosed with Down Syndrome, which, according to the dictionary is "a birth defect characterized by mental retardation, slanting eyes, a broad, short skull, broad hands with short fingers, and the presence of an extra chromosome."

Neither David nor I understood any of that, but somehow we knew something about our brother was different. My mom's eyes were red, wet, and puffy. My dad looked sort of shocked. At the time, neither of them understood the exact meaning of this syndrome, other than that Will had a disability. A couple of days later Will came home, and I made signs to welcome him and put them up all over the house. I was honored to be given the role of big sister. My mom came home with books about Will's disability.

From ages one through four, Will didn't talk very much at all. We taught him sign language, signals like "more," "please," and "thank you." He said very little, but could call us by name: "Mama, Daddy, Davay, and Kee." As a ten year old, I was beginning to understand what this disability was.

When he hit age five, Will began to babble non-stop. It was as if God had pressed the "talk" button and held it down, because

he still talks all the time. He went to preschool for three years, and then my parents started looking for the

right school for him. I was home schooled for grades 2-4, and I was in sixth grade at a Christian school. My parents wanted Will to be in a Christian environment, so they approached my school even though it had never had a student with a disability before. Will has been there since kindergarten. He is now in the third grade, nine years old.

Average people with Down Syndrome have an IQ level of a third grader. I feel that my brother will go above and beyond. He loves to read, but has difficulty with math. Just the other day while doing his math, he said, "I'm not much of a math guy." He has a great sense of humor and picks up funny phrases from conversations or movies and sometimes uses them at the wrong time. Most of the time, though, he gets it right, and it's hilarious. He keeps us all entertained.

Will is always a comfort, a joy. But I know it is going to get hard for him soon. As he gets older, he will be cruelly made fun of by his classmates, and we won't be able to protect him as much any more. I remember a time in the summer I was entering seventh grade when I started to worry about this. Will went to a traffic safety camp called "Safety Town." On the last day of the week-long camp, the kids sang songs about what they had learned, standing up for a program in front of parents and relatives. A boy standing next to Will shouted, "Will has no brain! He can't think!" This made me so angry, and I wanted to hurt that boy in some way so that he could feel how he was hurting us and Will himself. But then I looked at Will, and all of my anger drained from me. He stood there, grinning at me, and then he turned and smiled at the boy who had insulted him. It reminded me of what Jesus preached about turning the other cheek. If things get worse as Will gets older, I pray that God will make me, as well as Will, strong through those times.

It also bothers me when people stare at Will. They act like he has a contagious disease. But Will is quite an amiable little guy. He knows all the teachers at his school, and everyone there has learned to love him. He knows all the kids in his class and many beyond that. He is friendly, only occasionally shy. When people see his big heart, they fall in love with him. He's in the same lake, just a different boat. God has sent my brother to us to be an angel with a message of love and faith. Will teaches us. Our walk is stronger because of him. ©

# No Child Excluded



Albert Boerema  
ajb37@calvin.edu

*Al Boerema (ajb37@calvin.edu) associate professor of education at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., asked the Dot Edu panel to consider what they, as educators, think are some of the joys and obstacles of inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom.*

## January 5, 2007

**From Tony Kamphuis:**

Wow! I'll jump right in on this one because we have just been approached by a family whose Down's Syndrome child is not getting great treatment in the public system. We would love to bring him in — and I'll admit there is a bit of a selfish "good-for-our-current-students" motive at work. I think our students would have a greatly enriched experience because of the challenges and opportunities a student like this would bring. Learning to live with differences and respecting "the other" take on a whole new depth! But the budget, the budget...the cursed budget! He'll need a fulltime EA. Can we afford one? I hate (and I think it is with a righteous hate) when our desires as Christian educators get tripped up by fiscal realities, but we are already stretched beyond our limit in terms of helping families with lower incomes, for example. What are we to do?



Tony Kamphuis

## January 5, 2007

**From Agnes Fisher:**

I agree completely with Tony. Every child of Christian parents committed to Christian education must have the opportunity to attend a Christian school. However, the budget constraints are becoming an increasingly difficult problem, and there are far too many parents who already have taken their children to the public sector due to these constraints. Special needs children require extra time, personnel and cost. So what, indeed, are we to do?



Agnes Fisher

## January 6, 2007

**From Johanna Campbell:**

Yes, Tony, if it wasn't for the budget, we could do all kinds of things. Here, in British Columbia, we now receive full government funding for special needs students, so that is a plus in terms of money. However, if we strongly believe that Christ teaches us

to include all learners and that our learning environments need to honor their needs of body, mind and spirit, we must have diversity in our schools. In I Corinthians 12:12-26, Paul describes the body as a unit, each part needing the other in order to function as a whole. It is our task as teachers to arrange and design the learners and the classroom community so that all can use their gifts, so that all are valued as created in God's image and as a part of the body of Christ. Henri Nouwen and Jean Vanier have both addressed these issues very well. "Strong" students can grow to their maximum potential only when their gifts are used to help the weak. Similarly, "weak" students blossom when the strong are given opportunities to help them. And so each accepts God's grace from the other. We may not exclude those with special needs from this community of shalom, where each lives for the other and all live for God.

## January 7, 2007

**From Pam Adams:**

Of course we should include students with various disabilities in our Christian schools. I think we should do the right thing first, then worry about the money. Is there not a way to solicit funds (scholarships) for these students when state and provincial funds are not available? Isn't Christian education as worthy a cause as the many others we freely give to? We have scholarships for economically needy families, why not scholarships for students whose education is more expensive. I have found the Christian community to be especially sensitive to the needs of children, so let's give them a chance to serve in this way. I think we will be surprised with their generosity.



Pam Adams

## January 9, 2007

**From the moderator:**

Hello Panel. Thanks for the great discussion about one of the important aspects of inclusion — the tension between the desire to serve and the cost. Let's shift this to the classroom experience and the joys and obstacles at that level. Can you comment on your experiences, either as a classroom teacher or an observer of that experience?

## January 9, 2007

**From Johanna Campbell:**

I'll have to jump in as an observer and a listener to the class-



room experience. I discussed this issue with a teacher the other day, while we were driving to a meeting. She said that her combined grade 6 and 7 class has worked with a disabled student since grade one and that most of the students are very much in tune with the special needs of this girl. While the teacher had to be out of the class for a short time, the students immediately volunteered to watch over and help the weak student. Inclusion facilitates this type of showing love and concern for the weak. I think that is a beautiful example of the body of Christ. On the other hand, some special needs students can be very stressful to have in the class, even with a full-time aide. However, if we truly believe we are all created in "Imago Dei," can we leave anyone out because of financial considerations?



*Johanna Campbell*

## January 10, 2007

**From Pam Adams:**

Although I am not teaching in a K-12 class right now, I have seen good things happening in classes I visit when I observe student teachers. I have seen Christian concern expressed by students for a child who has special needs. This is, of course, what we want. I think back to my own school days when special needs students were closeted away from us "normal" students. We only saw "them" in the lunch room where teasing was downright mean. I have a very vivid memory of a girl in my class passionately defending the special needs students in a tone that was pure righteous indignation. How different it would have been if these students had been better integrated into the various aspects of school life.

## January 10, 2007

**From Tony Kamphuis:**

We've had some examples of wonderful Christian education in the schools in our area over the years — students with Down's Syndrome, various forms of autism, fetal alcohol syndrome, Tourette syndrome and more. What I've been amazed at is the way that classmates and the student body as a whole quickly learn that "fair" treatment for those with these challenges doesn't mean "identical" treatment. I've generally found that staff were more worried than the students about making special allowances for a child and about whether this would undermine their effectiveness with the others. This adaptability of the other students I

attribute to their parents and the Christian sensitivity they inculcate into their children.

The biggest challenge seems to be working with those who outwardly seem most "normal," and whose conditions result in social awkwardness. Our resource programs can help quite well students with academic challenges, but the traditional school setting has a tough time finding an effective balance for students who, in spite of high native intelligence, experience organizational and social challenges. (I'm thinking of students with Asperger's, Tourette syndrome, or ADHD). Is enough time spent during teacher training programs for regular classroom teachers to gain appropriate sensitivity for these things?

## January 12, 2007

**From Johanna Campbell:**

I appreciate your response, Tony. It is a joy to hear that students with special needs are so well received in our classrooms. That is as it should be. The biggest challenge you mention is helping those who outwardly seem normal. Here at Trinity Western University, each pre-service teacher must take a course on how to deal with special needs students. I would hope that these types of courses are compulsory at other teacher-training universities as well. Maybe what you are saying is that more training is necessary, and I totally agree with that. We could start by offering at our conventions more workshops dealing with "outwardly normal" special needs students.

## January 12, 2007

**From Pam Adams:**

At Dordt students are required to take a course in "exceptionalities" which includes the "outwardly normal." Our hearts go out to those who are obviously challenged in some way, but we all could be more accepting and gracious to those students who we think "should be acting like the rest of us." Each day we should pray to be more understanding and accepting of *all* students.

## January 12, 2007

**From Tim Leugs:**

I'm in agreement with your comments, but I think that there is an important point that needs to be taken into consideration, as well. It is important not to look at students with special needs merely as objects towards which the others could show compassion. Too often, I think, we have a tendency to look simply at

what the Christian community can do for the students who have special needs without recognizing that all of God's children have special needs of some sort or another. Similarly, all of God's children can offer their gifts to help the class.

In order to better explain what I am saying, I am drawn to one of the first classes that I had as a teacher, a class in which I had three students with special needs working within an inclusion setting. Although work with them required many personnel and curricular resources (and many financial resources from my school, I'm sure), the result of the classroom community built that year through their roles in the class was a "grace-full" experience. Owing in no small part to the special needs that my students had, that class grew into one of the warmest, patient and most caring classroom communities that I have ever had. Students consistently took time after they completed their work to ask, "How can I help?" And they addressed that question to any other students in need, including my three students with special needs.

I found it especially important that year to emphasize the wide range of expertise and gifts that God gives to all of his children. As a result, I worked to assure that the students in that class didn't see the three students with special needs as "those special-needs kids in our class"; they saw those students as "just three other kids in our class." Although many of the students in that classroom might have initially seen their roles as being that of compassion-givers through helping those three students with tasks ranging from class work to helping get snow gear on, they learned through the year that all of God's children have gifts that they can bring to others.

Toward the end of the school year, I experienced one of the most rewarding moments of my teaching career (and maybe my life) — I saw one of the most academically advanced students in any class I have had gratefully accepting help through an assignment from a student with significant special needs ... and coming to understand the concepts because of his assistance. If we can teach all of God's children to give and accept help, what an incredible community we will have helped to build and what a mission we have helped to effect!




*Tim Leugs*

open with parents about our resources and our limits. The parent can then decide which place is best for their child. In this area, we have parents who have chosen both routes — putting their students in the public school because of the services available or bringing the student to Rehoboth — at times because of the gentler community that the student experiences here.

Thinking through this question and these responses made me realize my inexperience in light of the good things all of you had to say. An inclusive classroom is something I have not reflected on enough in my measly three years of teaching. So, thank you for talking it out. My classroom is not one of inclusion simply because of the lack of possibilities for a special education program at our school. We do offer remedial help for reading and math, through teachers funded by the state with Title I money. Since those two wonderful teachers have many tricks up their sleeves, I go to them with many of my questions. I am happy to be able to work hard for all of my students, but it is true, I ache for those students lagging far behind. As Tim noted, fostering community helps each student feel welcome and valued in the school. It is only then that students begin to learn. Thus, I have found prayer request time to be crucial in our classroom. My students don't let me get away with simply offering a prayer for them — they themselves need to share and pray out their concerns in this place. I started classroom meetings this year, a practice which has allowed quieter students to have a voice about school-related issues. Those community-building activities allow academics to happen. There are times when I feel as if I am teaching to a wall, but it'll be a prayer time or a classroom meeting that opens up the student, and it is then the learning can begin.



*Jolene Veldhuizen*

As I have thought about the question of inclusion, asking colleagues and friends, I have also been struck with the truth that all of God's children offer gifts as we help each other. Your words are a call to the importance of building a sharing community in our classrooms. I feel so blessed to work in a Christian place where we can — alongside our students — call on God for his grace in our communities, his wisdom in building them, and his understanding in the trials. Last year our school theme was the Fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22, 23. Those verses offer concrete advice for helping students build community in our classrooms. Saying to students "Let me see the fruit of God's Spirit in you as you play" was such a blessing. And it sank deep into my second graders. They began to encourage each other to display the graces of the Christian life — love, kindness, and gentleness. 

## January 12, 2007

From Jolene Velthuisen:

Thank you, Tim. Our school cannot offer the services that the public schools offer for children with special needs, so we are



# **Semper Reformata: Always Reforming**

## **Seek Conformity to Jesus Christ**

by Jack Fennema

*Jack Fennema is professor of education emeritus at Covenant College. This is the third in a series of four articles that provide suggestions for reforming schools that desire such renewal.*

The first article in this series encouraged schools to institute a renewed “focus on God.” The second article enjoined schools to “fully appropriate the mediating Word.” This, the third article, entreats students, in obedient response to God’s revelation through his Word and Spirit, to “seek conformity to Jesus Christ.”

God’s revelation always calls for obedient response. Authentic Christian education includes both revelation and response in its teaching and learning. Knowing God *fully* — through all three manifestations of his revelatory and mediating Word — leads to the response of glorifying him *in all ways*.

But what does it mean to glorify God? Essentially, it means to reflect or mirror God’s glory back to him. For students, this is imaging God. Since the Fall, this is done by conforming to Jesus Christ through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, for the mediating Word reflects the very essence of the Father (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18). In brief, students glorify God by *being* like Jesus and by *doing* what Jesus would do. This is what it means for students truly to declare: “Jesus is Lord!”

### **Being like Jesus means emptying ourselves.**

Imagine an ad for a Christian school that issues the invitation: “Come to Centerville Christian School to die!” In today’s climate such a public statement might not be wise, but the essence of the invitation should, in fact, accurately represent a school’s desire for its students. Just as Christ “emptied himself” (Philippians 2:7) of his prerogatives, our students are called to empty them-

selves of their rights and privileges; they are to die to self. That is the right response to lordship.

To die to self is to cry out: “I can’t do this!” It requires utter brokenness. That is not the typical condition of youth, who are more prone to bravado and self-sufficiency. Yet, that is what they are called to do — point and pray for the acknowledgement of their brokenness. Our desire for them is the same profession as the Apostle Paul: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20a). It is offering our bodies as living sacrifices so that the Spirit of Christ may dwell within and function through them. Our students must become weak in order to be strong. That is a tough sell — but necessary.

One result of dying to self is bearing the fruit of the Spirit. This fruit is not borne through human effort. One cannot love better by trying harder; we fail every time. We cannot bear this fruit in our own power; we must ‘let go and let God.’ It is even more than surrender; it is dying-to-self to the point of becoming “dry bones” that can be given life only by the renewing touch of the Spirit. Ultimately, it is *Christ’s* love and joy and peace that manifest themselves through us — for it is Christ who lives in us. But, first, we must die.

### **Being like Jesus means giving ourselves away.**

There is a somewhat famous recruiting poster in the United States that pictures a rather stern Uncle Sam pointing and saying, “I want you!” Uncle Sam no longer is willing to settle for our well-wishes or even our taxes; he wants us! This poster illustrates incarnational giving — the giving of our very beings to others. Scripture tells us: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). Christ took on “the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:7).

Continuing the thought of Paul from above: “The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20b). Being like Jesus means giving ourselves away. Glorifying God is reflecting his likeness back to him within his world. It is more than giving of our possessions from a distance. It is giving our selves.

The operative word of the Great Commission is “Go.” We are commanded to go where the need exists, just as Jesus did. Reformed Christian schools do not seek to escape from or reject society and culture, for that is not Christ’s commission to them. Rather, they equip students to engage the world in the Name and with the *shalom* of Christ the Lord. Students are to stand ready to enter God’s world as his ambassadors.

We all know that the greatest gift is the gift of self. We thrive on the time, attention, and touch of others. We are energized when someone partners with us to share our burden. We are truly touched when the “haves” of our worlds become “beggars sharing a piece of bread.” We understand this as the essence of love. May they say of our students as they said of Jesus: “See how he loved...!”

Our schools must create opportunities within their curricula and school life for students to give themselves away. Since charity begins at home (or, in Jerusalem), giving ourselves away begins within the four walls of our own classrooms.

### **Doing what Jesus would do — functioning as image bearers**

Jesus exhibited true humility and incarnational love in his very being. He epitomized and personified these attributes. They were who he was. We, too, must “be” before we can “do.” The latter flows from the former.

Within Christendom we celebrate Jesus the Christ as our Chief Prophet, our Only High Priest, and our Eternal King. He func-



tioned  
within these  
three divine  
offices, the

avenues, if you will, through which he carried out his earthly ministry. Our students, in seeking conformity to Christ, are called to function as prophets, priests, and kings, as well — in the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The school is to equip them intentionally for these offices. They are to be threads woven through the entire program.

### **Students are to be 21<sup>st</sup> century prophets with true knowledge.**

Students are to know the Truth Incarnate, the truth inscripturated, and that which is true within our world. It is our responsibility to introduce them to all three ways of knowing the truth, for by the truth they can be set free to prophetically and publicly proclaim God's ways. This equipping first involves becoming biblically literate and learning to apply the Sword of the Spirit to all things in all situations. These are the operative questions that students must ask repeatedly: "Is it faithful to the Word of God? How does it line up next to the plumb line of the Word?" These questions are grist for classroom discussion, analysis, and evaluation.

A biblical view of the world and life within it is to be taught and then applied to lessons in all subjects. Students are to be taught to think in a particular way — with the mind of Christ, if you will. This is not simply an add-on. It's the way Reformed Christian schools do business. Then those insights into the way things are supposed-to-be must be shared. The world needs to hear about the new world order of Christ's kingdom. The announcement "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near" is to be proclaimed in all corners of today's marketplaces.

### **Students are to be 21<sup>st</sup> century priests**

### **with true holiness.**

Believers and their children have been declared holy by God (1 Corinthians 7:14). They have been set apart as divine mediators of reconciliation, serving others through applying the healing touch of Christ. With the advent of the Fall, God's integral creation fragmented. Consonance, congruence, balance, and harmony gave way. Relationships were destroyed. Unity became elusive. The need for wholeness and healing became comprehensive and all-pervasive.

Holiness, however, must be personal business before it can go public. Students must first give testimony that: "I am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. I have been set apart." Holy living is to be a hallmark of Christ-imagining schools.

Personal holiness can then be extrapolated into public holiness. Restorative healing, advocacy for the marginalized and disenfranchised, relationship building, and conflict resolution are fruit of priestly holiness. These, too, begin "at home" — in the classroom — before attempts are made to export them elsewhere. Christian schools need to be safe, loving places for all students. 1 Corinthians 13 tells us that if we don't get this one right within our home turf, we can forget about the rest.

### **Students are to be 21<sup>st</sup> century kings with true righteousness.**

This takes us all the way back to the creation account when the kingdom of God was established on earth. The kingly function of an image bearer truly captures the essence of Reformed Christian education, for students are 'kids of the kingdom' who are called to rule righteously in the name of their Lord and King Jesus Christ — in his world. This will be the theme of the fourth article in this series: "Glorify God in all things." ©

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Psychology  
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# Special and Inclusive Education

Tena Siebenga-Valstar serves as Education Administrator at Fort McMurray Christian School, Alberta. We encourage teachers and principals to submit questions for this column, even if they think they know the answer. Send your questions to Dr. Tena Siebenga-Valstar, 168 Windsor Dr., Fort McMurray, Alta, T9H 4R2, or email her at [tvalstar@telus.net](mailto:tvalstar@telus.net).

## Who Sets the Demands?

### Question #1:

Do you think the state is being too demanding of special education teachers?

### Response:

I believe that we must begin with the assumption that the task of the special education teacher is to provide the best possible learning situation for the students for whom the teacher is responsible. That task is really no different from that of the regular teacher. All competent teachers are office bearers with their own peculiar authority and responsibility assigned by God (Van Dyk, 2000, p. 49). Teachers are to enable students to function as knowledgeable disciples who respond to God's call.

We have seen the pendulum swing regarding the role of special education. Inclusive education allows all students to be taught in the regular classroom with the classroom teacher ultimately responsible for the program of each student in that classroom. In 1992 Christian Schools International's publication *Inclusive Christian Schools* encouraged Christians to open Christian school doors to all children of God's covenant, regardless of the condition of their bodies and the boundaries of their intellects. This was based on I Corinthians 12:12 - 26, which speaks of the unity of the body. Inclusive education is envisioned as schools where all children are welcomed, placed with peers in regular classes and provided with the necessary support.

To facilitate inclusive education, the special education teacher or resource teacher serves as a resource person to the classroom teacher, helping the classroom teacher provide the needed educational programs for each of the students in the class. Often state or provincial funding is available for students who have specific learning challenges. The beginning of the school year can be a demanding time for special education coordinators as this is the time when individual assessments are required and forms need to be completed within specific time lines in order to obtain the funding for the child to receive the necessary educational support. Either the special education teacher needs to have knowledge of the assessments or secure someone who is able to do the testing of the students. This time can be demanding for the special education teacher as the teacher must coordinate ef-

forts with the classroom teacher, education assistant, administration and parents.

Ultimately the classroom teacher is responsible to coordinate the individual education plan, but the resource teacher is often involved in the process of insuring that all parties involved in the student's education are represented. The special education teacher is also the one who requires the additional education or training to insure that the school meets all the requirements to rightfully obtain the funding for the children who face learning challenges.

Another responsibility that the special education teachers may have specific to their particular office is educating their colleagues so that all children with disabilities are assimilated into the life of the regular classroom. Very often the learning strategies that are effective in helping students with learning disabilities are the same strategies that will help many of the other students in the classroom achieve greater success in their learning. "Cooperative learning groups, student directed learning, peer tutorials, peer-mediated instructional arrangements greatly enhance outcomes for all students in integrated instructional settings" (Sailor and Rogers, 2005).

The special education coordinator, along with administration, is also key in evaluating the special education program to insure that high-quality services are being delivered and that students' needs are being met by asking questions such as these:

Is individualized programming occurring? Is effective instruction being delivered? Are students with disabilities being included in general education? Are the general and special education teachers fully collaborating? Are students progressing? All students should be expected to succeed to their utmost potential, including those with extremely challenging needs (Curtis, 2005).

In conclusion, I believe special education teachers are called to their God-given tasks in the same way as all teachers. Their responsibilities may be different from that of the classroom teacher, the administrator or the secretary. Each school employee has the same amount of time in which to do her job. Provided the special education teachers are fairly compensated for the level of training, given adequate time to do the research, assessing, collaborating and reporting, they can be satisfied that they are doing the best for the students with the gifts they have been given. Although special education requires specific duties, I do not believe the state or the province places undue pressure on them.

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## Specific Suggestions

### Question #2:

What is the best possible technique for including different learning styles, including students with ADHD, into a lesson?

### Response:

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a condition that affects between three to five percent of children and becomes apparent in preschool or early school years. The principle characteristics are inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. Because many children may exhibit some of these behaviors, it is best to have a child diagnosed by a well-qualified professional. The symptoms of impulsivity and hyperactivity usually precede those of inattentiveness, which may not emerge for another year or so.

#### Signs of hyperactivity-impulsivity include:

- feeling restless, fidgeting, and squirming while seated
- running, climbing or leaving a seat when not allowed
- blurting out answers before hearing the whole question
- having difficulty waiting in line or taking turns.

#### Signs of inattention include:

- often becoming easily distracted by irrelevant sights and sounds
- failing to pay attention to details, making careless mistakes
- rarely following directions carefully and losing or forgetting things like toys, or pencils, books, and tools
- skipping from one uncompleted activity to another.

Children who exhibit these types of behaviors require accommodations to their learning environment in order for them to

succeed. Observation and inventories can assist the teacher in determining a child's learning style. Research gives various names to different types of learning styles, but this article will concentrate on three. Some students learn best by seeing (visual), others by hearing (auditory), and yet others by touching and moving (kinesthetic). Some may not have a strong preference while others may vary; it depends on the learning situation. One of the ways teachers can begin to accommodate learning differences is by planning lessons or units to accommodate the different ways students learn. The Edmonton Public School District proposes the following plan (AB. Ed. 1995, p. TSD. 67).

Think about a skill, concept or process you will teach during the coming week and complete the following:

1. a. Identify and record what the intended learning will be.  
b. Write out an objective for your intended learning.
2. a. Briefly explain how you will introduce your lesson.  
b. Go back and look at your introduction. Did you accommodate visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning modalities equally? If not, prepare what you might say or do to adjust your introduction.
3. Brainstorm for activities you will include to accommodate a variety of learning modalities: Visual Activities, Auditory Activities, Kinesthetic Activities.
4. Generate alternate ways to evaluate for modality accommodation within your lesson: Visual Evaluation, Auditory Evaluation, Kinesthetic Evaluation.

The following strategies accommodate specific modalities or learning styles and can be used in various combinations in any particular lesson to suit the different ways in which students learn (AB ED, 1995, TAD.4). ©

Kinesthetic Style	Auditory Style	Visual Style
using classroom demonstrations	direct instruction, lecturing	using artifacts, objects, models
using experiential learning, simulation activities, field trips	having learners visualize tasks	using slides, transparencies, illustrations, graphics, demonstrations
painting, drawing, creating models, slides, videotapes, puppets, dioramas	using tape recorders; e.g. having students listen to a tape while they read	using abacus, color coding systems, rulers and number lines, visual symbols for sound
clapping or tapping out numbers, syllables etc.	reading to students, paraphrasing	using maps, charts, graphs, pictures, diagrams
lab work	providing listening centers	using microscopes
teaching students to take notes	allowing students to think out loud and spell audibly	using dictionaries
show and tell	using tapes, films and videos	using matching games and config. clues
acting, mime, charades, dancing, rhythmic movement	employing music, rhythm, melody	using visual clues on the board for verbal directions
using games, puzzles and manipulatives	saying syllables orally, integrating music, using choral speech, rhyming games, debating, radio plays and discussions	using visualization techniques (visualize spelling words)
using sandpaper or felt letters, writing in sand or clay, using three dimensional letters and numbers	giving verbal as well as written directions	using colored markers, pens or chalk on the overhead or board



# Book Reviews

Barbara J. Newman, *Helping Kids Include Kids with Disabilities*. Grand Rapids: CRC Publishing House, Faith Alive Christian Ministries, 2001. 95 pages. Includes reproducible diagrams, icons, illustrations.

Barbara J. Newman, *Autism and Your Church: Nurturing the Spiritual Growth of People with Autism Spectrum Disorders*. Grand Rapids: CRC Publishing House, Faith Alive Christian Ministries and Friendship Ministries, 2006. 136 pages.

Reviewed by Steve J. Van Der Weele (Calvin College, Emeritus)

Barbara Newman has been a teacher and consultant for 20 years, specializing in devising strategies designed to promote inclusivism in church and school for children with disabilities. In these manuals she provides basic information about how to recognize various impairments and suggests practical and imaginative ways of integrating the child into the life of church and school.

Her starting point is crucial. All children belong to a God who has created them, who loves them, and who charges the community with their nurture. Newman elicits nuances from biblical passages we do not ordinarily think of as applicable to the disadvantaged and “the least of these” — God’s criteria to Samuel for judging the right qualities of a king, and the Lord’s call to Abraham to leave his country and start over in a new one, for example. No two people are alike. All come into the world with some limitation or other; some of the limitations and impairments prevent the child from responding normally to life’s situations and pose challenges to parents and teachers entrusted with their education.

One response is to keep the child at home or send him or her to special schools. Newman’s books state the case for including the child into the classrooms of his peers. There the child will be exposed to normal pedagogical practices, and his peers will learn a great deal about brokenness and will, ideally, be challenged to deal with his less fortunate mates with sensitivity and compassion.

The *Helping Kids* manual begins with a discussion about the attitudes one should adopt towards children with special needs. Parents and teachers should be well informed about some basic physiology of the brain and understand the unique distortions of the child with disabilities. Moreover, the children in the class should also be taught such information appropriate to their level. Armed with such information, his mentors and classmates will avoid inappropriate comments and behavior and, instead, will display attitudes and communicate in a way that will enhance the child’s strengths and help him overcome the eccentric attitudes and behavior. All this requires resourcefulness and imagi-

nation. Communication is critical — between teacher and parents, with the parents of the other children in the class, and with the child himself — a dimension sometimes neglected. Letters and notes should flow briskly between all parties.

Chapter 3 points out how especially crucial this partnership is for churches. Specific impairments are discussed in the next chapter, ranging from autistic disorders to visual impairment. Chapter 5 discusses more general impairments, mild ones such as learning disabilities and physical impairment, and more severe cases of disability. Appendices include appropriate devotions and a list of resources.

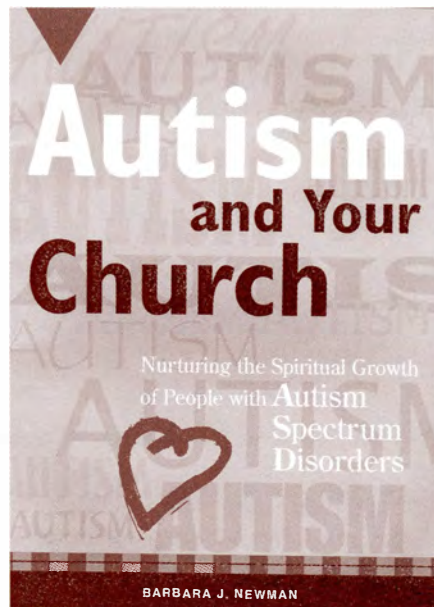
*Autism and your Church* is focused more narrowly on the spectrum of impairments classified under Autism. These manifestations vary widely, and the labeling must be done with great care — including an awareness of how terminology can differ from one state to another.

The manual starts out with the analogy of God as the knitter — the knitter of the child as it develops in the womb. And then the community must accept the child as it comes from the hand of God. That takes a

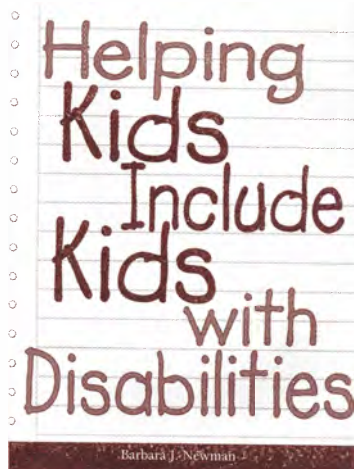
special set of spiritual spectacles. The second section describes the various forms autism can take and the difficulty, sometimes, of diagnosing these various disorders.

Section 3 is replete with brief case studies of students with various outcroppings of unusual abilities along with the stresses and strains the teacher needs to deal with when language skills are lacking and sensory responses are deficient. Once again, one needs to acquire as much information as possible and distribute it widely — always with the consent of the parents or guardians, of course. And then the teacher must resort to imaginative use of reinforcing visuals and other prompts to help the student anticipate new situations, and — very interestingly — teaching instead of reacting.

With respect to the last technique, Newman points out, try using the term “break time” instead of “time out,” and let the child decide when that period should end. All sorts of clues



should be visible to help the child understand the flow of activities and anticipate the changes that take place constantly. Section 5 suggests how the church should structure a plan of action to implement the spiritual formation of the child and the Church. Section 6 contains a number of reproducible documents that facilitate



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the educational program of the Church as it tries to include the impaired.

These books reflect the seasoned wisdom of an experienced teacher who affirms the value of every child that comes into this world. That commitment comes through on every page and provides credibility to the assistance she generously offers. ☺

Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*. New York Press: Free Press. 2006, 294 pages.

Reviewed by Steve J. Van Der Weele, Calvin College (Retired)

One of Pascal's observations reads this way: "Faith states clearly what the senses do not, but not the opposite of what they see. It is above them (the senses), not against."

Whether Francis C. Collins was acquainted with this phrase or not, he most certainly came around to this point of view during the process of his conversion from an agnostic scientist to a believing scientist. As he lived with his perplexities about the relation of science and faith, he came to see that the empirical method of investigation was not appropriate to deal with spiritual matters. But this awareness had to be fine-tuned. Faith does not contradict what we experience with our senses; we don't really believe in the absurd. Rather, faith has its own logic. Augustine said it well, We believe in order that we know.

How good to have Collins in the camp of Christian believers. He is a prize "catch." He is one of the world's leading geneticists, Director of the Human Genome Project. *Time* magazine acknowledged his stature when as one of its features it recently pitted him against Richard Dawkins, the world's most outspoken scientific atheist, in a debate, of sorts. As happens when two mindsets confront each other, each defended his position vigorously, and neither of them changed his mind. But one can only speculate about the blistering letter Screwtape must be writing to his henchman, Wormwood, at learning that Collins has slipped the noose and has moved over to the Enemy's camp. It is pleasant also to contemplate that it was through a book by C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, loaned to him by a Methodist minister, that Collins came to understand a dimension of reality he had not taken seriously before. He says, "I realized that all of my own constructs against the plausibility of faith were those of a

schoolboy." (21)

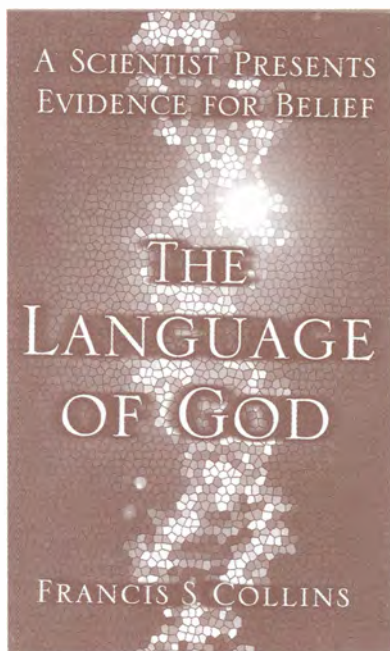
The book is a delight to read. Collins conveys both the passion of his religious quest and his awe at the wonders that science reveals. Though generous portions of the book are devoted to scientific explanations, he structures the book as autobiography. His childhood, he tells us, was not exceptional. In fact, it was conventional in this, that religious faith was not regarded as important in his family. But his parents provided ample opportunities for stimulating experiences, and they encouraged him in his quest to learn more and more about the workings of the world. After studying in a number of fields, he eventually became a doctor. A patient's question about his faith stirred him up to inquiry into religious matters. The encounter with Lewis's book set him on his heels. Is there really someone who stands behind the moral law to validate it, someone to whom he was accountable in some way? He came to realize that he was engaged in a battle of worldviews, and that he would have to participate in this battle head-on, "...ultimately facing a take-no-prisoner victory of one or the other." (31)

He was thorough in his questioning. Are religious ideas any more than wishful thinking? What about all the harm done in the name of religion? What about the problem of suffering? And were the miracles real? And where did the universe come from in the first place? He gradually came to see how the enormous body of information known about the life sciences can complement rather than militate against the Christian faith. He studied theology and determined that someone needed to bring the apparent contrary claims of the sciences and religion to the peace table for resolution. Not surprisingly, and pleasingly, he devotes



some sections of the book to an account — and his recital is very dramatic — of the drive to map the entire Human Genome, especially in the chapter entitled “Deciphering God’s Instruction Book.”

I hope that Collins will eventually distance himself somewhat from the evolutionary language he has retained even after his conversion. It is understandable, though a bit disappointing, that he remains committed to belief in natural selection and the survival of organisms as being dependent on an advantage gained in the struggle for life. I must do him justice. He believes in God the Creator of an awesome world as the theater of his divine purposes. He introduces the notion that since God is outside space and time, he could know every detail of creation in advance. Though to us it may seem that evolution could be driven by chance, “a random and undirected process,” God has no such limitations of time and space. I could accept this notion more readily if it were not for the fact that Collins has no truck whatever with the cause of Intelligent Design. He treats the proponents of this movement with respect personally but has harsh words for the movement. He contends that, though ID is presented as a scientific theory, “it was not born from the scientific tradition.” (184) He doubts that the linchpin of the movement — “irreducible complexity” — will withstand scrutiny. He calls Intelligent Design a sinking



ship. He is committed, as are methodological naturalists, to an unbroken gradation of life forms, and assumes that were we to possess the gift of omniscience, this gradation would be seen without gaps.

Though a layman in these matters, I have some questions. Why the fear of gaps, and the distaste with which many scientists view the prospect of invoking God to fill the gaps? Is it because they wish to fill in these gaps with their own efforts? God already filled one enormous gap — a cosmic one — when he created the world *ex nihilo*. Why close the door to the possibility of

intermittent intervention when the whole venture is one gap-filling creative act? Doesn’t an anti-gap position reduce the flexibility of scientists in their work? We assume and encounter

design every day and everywhere. Why do we suppose that design needs to be proved and discovered within the rules set by the Darwinists? Scientists assume the law of uniformity in their work — or how could Collins and his diligent staff have accomplished the great coup — the mapping


of the human genome? Granted, the enormous progress in mastering physical reality — much of it driven by commercial motives — has been accomplished without introducing intervention strategies. But why proceed as if at the deeper levels of inquiry we can detach creation from its Creator, or mind (God himself), from his work in the world? Are such scientists really searching for truth? Don’t they risk living life in a scientific ghetto?

Catholic scholars, including the present Pope, are addressing these matters very urgently. The Catechism of the Church says, “We believe that God created the world according to his wisdom. It is not the product of any necessity whatever, nor of blind fate or chance.” And at his installation, the new Pope said this: “We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is willed, each of is necessary.”

The book is enormously significant and needs to be read widely. Christians should be jubilant at the decision of this gifted scientist to embrace the wisdom of the Christian faith. Of the various current labels available (and much work needs to be done with definitions and formulations of issues), Collins calls himself a theistic evolutionist. He is not wholly content with this word, however, and proposes a new one — *Biologos*. It may take some getting used to, but it may well work its way into the scientific discourse of our time. ☺

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