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Students should be taught to accept, develop, and use their gifts in humble service to others within the classroom, for just as in real life, opportunities to use God's gifts and serve others do not take place in isolation.

- Rebecca De Smith

Discipleship & Servanthood in the Christian School

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Editorial

Pat Kornelis

The Heart of a Servant

The unthinkable happened out on the softball field last fall—a student caused me to cry. Now, I consider myself to be a pretty tough person, not one prone to showing great emotion, but the incident I witnessed caused such emotion to well up in me and I cried.

In our junior high school we begin each school year with co-ed softball during the intramural period as a way for students to interact with their friends and classmates and especially with students they might otherwise not know. We hope that this is a positive experience, one of camaraderie and fun. For most kids it is, but for the unathletic, uncoordinated preteen it can be excruciating. As it happened, on this particularly gorgeous day, I was the umpire when a gangly, fumbling student came to bat. This young student had not met many successes. He is academically challenged and socially inept. He tends to ostracize and criticize others in a self-protectionist sort of way. I dreaded his coming to bat because I knew it would be an opportunity for the floodgates of ridicule to be released upon him.

And then it happened. One of the "ultra-cool" students was pitching, and instead of wheeling in a high speed spinner, he called to the batter, "You can do it! Try holding your bat this way. That's it! Good try!" He even paused between pitches and trotted over to the plate to adjust the batter's stance, all the while murmuring encouragements.

I couldn't believe my ears. With no reason for being solicitous, this student offered the hand of a servant to the floundering batter. No one told him that this was the correct way to behave; no one cheered on his generosity. In fact, he was opening himself to ridicule through this act of kindness and servanthood. Somehow he knew this was the role of a servant—a role he could fill.

We instruct all our students in the call of servanthood. In fact, we have a service program in place in which junior high students can demonstrate their gifts by serving as teacher aides, peer tutors, library assistants, PE coaches, and the like. We encourage them to follow the example of Christ as he washed the feet of his disciples in service. But to see this genuine act of selfless love by a student whose age group is generally defined by self-absorption was, for me, a glimpse of the love of God.

Being a servant doesn't have to mean a trip to far off places to build houses or churches or buildings; it doesn't have to be structured and monitored and evaluated. Truly being a servant is a heart commitment—a reflection of God's unfailing love. While service projects and programs may indeed be valid avenues for instructing and providing opportunities for service, they are only tools. And while we in our noble profession attempt daily to live as models of servanthood, it does my heart good to be taught by a child what it truly means to serve. ■

A Discipleship Curriculum for Middle School

by Gloria Goris Stronks

Gloria Goris Stronks is a professor of education at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

"Well, what exactly is it that you students wanted to have happen in grades seven and eight?" The outburst of the frustrated principal was followed by a moment of silence until one of the eleventh grade boys answered. "Respect! We wanted to be respected by our teachers and by our parents!" And the eight other eleventh graders nodded in agreement.

It was the opening day of a one-week workshop for Christian middle school teachers and principals. The setting couldn't have been more lovely. We were at a Salvation Army camp in the hills above Manly, just north of Sydney, Australia. From the deck where our morning tea had been served we could see the ocean just below us, and beautiful green and yellow parrots sat on the railing, watching for crumbs.

Nine eleventh-grade students from the local Christian secondary school had been invited to hear the first presentation in which I described the physical, spiritual, and intellectual development of middle school students in Christian schools. The eleventh graders had been selected by their principal because they had successfully completed grades seven and eight and had gone on to become competent, articulate high school students.

When the second session began, these young people took their seats on the platform, looking wonderfully poised in their attractive school uniforms. I had agreed to moderate the session in which any of the sixty-five middle school teachers and principals, from all regions of Australia, were to ask questions concerning what these young people remembered from their experiences in grades seven and eight. I had spent a mere five minutes with the young people before the morning session, just enough time to greet them and to encourage them to be frank and honest with us so that we would know how to plan middle schools that truly meet the needs of that age group. The students had told me they were a bit nervous, and they smiled when I confessed that I was more than a bit nervous because I had only met the teachers and principals at breakfast and wasn't really sure just how the week would go.

After explaining to the participants that the second session was to be a question-and-answer session, I began with the first question and asked the high schoolers, "What do you remember learning in middle school?" The silence following my question was deafening, more agonizing for me than for anyone else in the room, until a girl said, "Do you mean what do we remember learning about academic matters?" I nodded.

"Well, I'm sorry," she said, "but I remember nothing at all that I learned then." I asked how that was possible. She continued, "You see, we passed tests and did our assignments, and our grades were satisfactory; but nothing we were being taught was at all relevant to our lives at that point." The rest of the students chimed in and supported her observation. Questions from the floor came at a rapid rate, and I could see the participants writing down the responses of the students. My role as moderator was hardly necessary, which was fortunate for me because now and then I completely missed what those quick Aussie exchanges actually were.

I doubt that I have ever been in a setting in which everyone in the auditorium was so completely and intensely involved in what was being said. The students were poised but firm in their agreement that it is possible to do satisfactory work, even outstanding academic work, in a traditional setting for seventh and eighth graders and still not be learning. The educators were leaning forward, trying to understand what it was these young people meant when they said that what they were taught should have been closely related to their life experiences. Finally a principal burst out with the question with which this article began, "What is it that you students wanted to have happen in grades seven and eight?" The answer, "Respect!" came from a boy who, until that moment, had said nothing at all. But every student on that platform backed him in his claim that seventh and eighth graders want to be respected more than they want anything else. And they want that respect to include respect for the knowledge and life experiences they have already gained up to that point as well as personal respect for themselves as people. The respect those young people were ask-

ing for is indicative not only of Australian Christian middle schoolers. North American students might word the answer differently, but the meaning would be the same.

Well, how do middle schoolers gain the respect they are seeking? Surely they must know that their parents and teachers love them. Surely they must know that we value them, not only because they are God's children and they are our own, but because they are made in the image of God. Isn't that the same as respecting them?

Not in their eyes. When we respect someone we have an appreciation of the fundamental worth of that person, of course. But, according to the dictionary, the word respect also carries with it something of the feeling of "having high regard" or "awesome regard" for the person being respected. Middle school students want their teachers and parents to have high regard for them, and, in their eyes, that kind of regard comes from their having done something worthwhile that has earned that regard. They are really not very much different from their parents and teachers in this matter.

There are different ways in which adults can gain respect, but ways to gain respect are limited when one is a middle school student. We might think they should know they are respected when they do their school work well and are a cooperative family member, but that often is not the case. Positive respect comes from knowing that there is a need and knowing that you have worked successfully so that need has been met. Most of us can remember a time when we were young and we helped someone who truly needed our help. We can remember the embarrassing pleasure we felt when the people we helped expressed their gratitude. No matter what our age is, there is a moment of splendid satisfaction for each of us when we are able to rise to the occasion and provide needed help.

The difficulty for many twelve- to fourteen-year-olds is that no one really needs them. Since the term teenager became part of our language along with the phrases, "Let the kids be kids," or "This is the best time of your life," few middle school students truly have been needed for their families' survival. Of course they have their household chores, but it is difficult to feel other people's high regard for you when you are weeding your parents' vegetable garden.

"Positive respect comes from knowing that there is a need and knowing that you have worked successfully so that need has been met."

We hear a great deal, these days, about "service learning" or "service requirements" or "community service" as part of the school curriculum. There is nothing wrong with some of those projects because students need to learn that to live as a functioning citizen in a democracy means that one will take responsibility for others in one's community. But Christian schools have a far more important reason to make certain students learn to act responsibly toward others. Those of us engaged in Christian education believe that we educate students so that they will understand that God's people live in relationships and that each relationship carries with it responsibilities. And we work at fulfilling the responsibilities that are part of each relationship because we are disciples of Jesus Christ. That is why I believe the curriculum of a Christian middle school could well be called a "discipleship curriculum."

Of what might a discipleship curriculum consist? I believe there are three parts to such curriculum. First of all, research supports the notion that, if middle school students leave grade eight with something of an idea of the area of life in which they might use their own particular gifts, they will go through high school and college or technical school much more successfully. Therefore, a discipleship curriculum should be planned to ensure that students come to know what kinds of responsibilities are involved in some of the different types of work that God's people do. Students must learn to look at their own gifts and to understand areas of God's world in which their gifts could be used. In helping them come to

know the different areas of work in the kingdom, perhaps it is time that we remove exploratory units from the Christian middle school curriculum and make certain that every integral unit we teach has a strong experiential component for students to come to know the kinds of work that God's people do in areas of life that are studied as part of that unit. For example, in a unit on justice the students might have assignments that require them to go into a courthouse, visit the courtroom when cases are being heard, and talk with or help people who have jobs connected with the law: attorney, judge, court recorder, police officer, social worker, and many others. In a unit on wellness they might go into a hospital or clinic and talk with or help people who are engaged in work that helps people stay well or cares for them when they are ill. In a unit on community they might go into community centers to talk with or help people engaged in supporting those in need. In a unit on marshlands they might meet with or help an environmentalist engaged in work on the wetlands and find out what kinds of jobs go with that area of study. I am not suggesting that schools have one week in which each student "shadows" or helps one adult in the work place. My suggestion is that we plan the units of the curriculum carefully so that students will be far better informed than they presently are concerning the many different kinds of work God's people do and some of the difficult issues they face while doing that work.

Second, a discipleship curriculum should ensure our taking more seriously that, in an affluent society, middle school students must have as part of their curriculum times when they help others who truly are in need. Sixth and seventh graders might help students in the lower elementary school who are having difficulty with reading or math. Together the older and younger students might write and publish books or do art work. Eighth graders might, during school time one afternoon each week, talk with and read to elderly people in a rest home or help in a food kitchen or work in a day care center. Perhaps they could have a partnership with an inner city school so that one afternoon each week they could read with their younger "buddy" in that school. These experiences would be integrated into the rest of the middle school curriculum in ways that would help them understand the needs of others in our society.

Third, a discipleship curriculum would mean that, in helping middle school students understand their responsibilities to each other in the classroom, teachers would use strategies for educational responsibility such as those listed by Evelyn Schneider in the article, "Giving Students a Voice in the Classroom" (Educational Leadership, September 1996, 22-26). Strategies such as setting up conflict negotiation in the classroom, designing creative restitutions and logical consequences, and having class meetings concerning the classroom community are very effective in helping students understand the effect their actions have on others.

Of course the middle school curriculum will consist of the knowledge and skills that we believe are appropriate for those grades, but the content must always be closely related to the students' lives. And interwoven throughout the curriculum will be the aspects of discipleship just described.

Pastors, Christian parents, and teachers often live with the assumption that if children study the Bible, they will be ready to do actions of discipleship when they are adults. Unfortunately, that isn't true. Discipleship is learned the same way we learn many other things—by doing. And in the doing of the acts of discipleship, such as learning about different kinds of work, helping those who need help, and taking responsibility for classroom climate, middle students will come to feel the respect, the high regard, that they are asking for. They will know they are respected because they will respect themselves. ■

My Life for Yours

by Dawn Wieking

Dawn Wieking teaches seventh grade English, is a part-time librarian, and is director of the senior service program at Sioux Falls Christian School in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

A youngish, elderly woman absently passes a red ball back to the teen sitting no more than two feet away, unaware of who she is or, maybe, what she is doing. A three-year-old petite girl who could steal your heart in a moment, tells the six-foot-six basketball star that he's too big to be in her class. By the end of the day, she is holding his hand on the playground. A tender-hearted high school teen cares for a baby who is dying a bit each day from the scourge of AIDS. Each of these teens and many more at Sioux Falls Christian High School have learned what "my life for yours" means to them.

Five years ago Sioux Falls Christian made the commitment to require each senior to participate in a service project. After a year of studying Scripture, praying, and discussing the program, Faith in Action became a requirement for graduation. Just as a Christian school is committed to train students to emulate the life of Christ in their prayers, in their studies, in their witness, a Christian school is committed to train students to emulate Christ in their service.

The mission and foundation of the program is as follows:

The mission of a service program at Sioux Falls Christian High School is to help the students come to know God's great love for them and to introduce them to opportunities to help meet the needs of others within our school, community, and abroad.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

It is important that the students at Sioux Falls Christian are shown the need to put our Christian faith into practical living experience. Christian education involves a variety of activities: classroom learning, music, drama, sports, and many more. It is the goal that through these activities the student will have an opportunity to develop and demonstrate a faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." (Galatians 5:6)

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the unbeliever. . . ." (1 Timothy 4:12)

After this mission was adopted, it was clear that a forum for the expression of faith needed to be provided. The community was more than willing to become partners in a lesson in faith. With little digging it was apparent that the need for students in service was great and there was no shortage of opportunities.

Agencies that have embraced the Faith in Action program include nursing homes, preschools, hospitals, refugee settlement groups, and the list goes on. Each year we have found that the need for volunteers far surpasses what we can provide in our program, and so the need for life-long service becomes acutely apparent.

Once students have made their choices and are assigned an agency, the real work begins. Students who once thought leaving school every Wednesday afternoon was an answer to prayer, are now not so sure they feel entirely comfortable with the arrangement. This is called "moving out of their comfort zone." This one simple aspect of the program has broadened students' views of their response as Christians to the problems of society. For example, helping a refugee settle into a strange community after leaving the security of his or her culture becomes clear when even simple communication is a barrier for relationships, jobs, and survival. Or, serving as a companion to an elderly nursing home resident who doesn't understand why he or she is abandoned to loneliness gives a student a whole new perspective of older people. The examples of faith responses are endless.

Perhaps the greatest reward of Faith in Action, both as a school and to the individual, is the change of heart that takes place over the course of the year. In September students are viewing the obligation ahead as one more requirement to achieve in a long line of graduation requirements. However, as the year progresses, students find that they start to care about the people they work with and for. One group of boys did a year's worth of "gopher" work for a group of home builders and never really felt as though what they did made a difference until one day they met the family who would be moving into one of the houses. When they realized their work helped a family with a basic need of shelter, they saw their work as giving a "cup of cold water."

Is a program like Faith in Action worth the effort and time spent away from class? Each year when the seniors write their response paper, the same theme echoes: don't ever stop this program. Students are able to see a culmination of many years of Christian teaching take form and become more than ideas in the classroom or a speech in chapel. They are given the opportunity to live their Christian lives as "my life for yours." ■

"Gifted" Discipleship

by Rebecca De Smith

Rebecca De Smith is a coordinator and teacher in the Discovery Program at Sioux Center Christian School in Sioux Center, Iowa.

The poster reads, "Your talent is God's gift to you. What you do with that talent is your gift to God." It's the first thing my students see as they enter my classroom. When I draw their attention to it, its message quickly sobers their smiling faces and puts an end to their hallway chatter. My above-average learners know that the poster is more than just a decoration in my room. It's a philosophy that permeates all of our learning in the Discovery Program—a program geared toward challenging and enriching academically gifted children in and out of the classroom. Many of my students can clearly articulate God's gifts to them, but the part about doing something with that gift invites long silences. Their quiet expressions ask, "How can my gift in reading or math or science or art be given back to God?" Just accepting the gifts God has given can be difficult for some students, but using those gifts, particularly academic gifts, to serve God and others can seem threatening, especially to children.

All children have been given gifts from God. All are filled with promise and potential. And all are responsible for using their gifts. The parable of the talents, in Matthew 25 and Luke 19, reminds us of the responsibility we have for the gifts God has given us. 1 Corinthians 12 speaks to the importance of each part of the body of Christ, assuring us that "God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be" (vs. 18). Paul's image suggests that we have all been given the appropriate gifts to serve God in this world. But Luke 12:48b also says, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." This verse worries several of my high-achieving students. Will God require more of them than is required of their classmates because they are good at reading or math or science or art? What should we require of academically gifted students as we nurture them to become disciples of Christ? These questions, whether asked by a student, parent, or teacher, suggest a larger one: how can we nurture discipleship in gifted children at all levels of education?

In *A Vision with a Task*, the authors explain how Christian teachers can lead students into "responsive discipleship." They suggest that "schools help students unwrap their God-given gifts not primarily for their personal growth and advantage. Rather, they develop their individuality in order that they may offer their unique gifts to the body of Christ and to society" (25). All of us are called humbly to serve God and others as long as we live in this world, and enabling children to embrace this task is part of our role as teachers. Since all of us are called to use our gifts responsibly, how do we respond to academically gifted students when they ask, "How can I use my gifts to serve God?"

As teachers, we play a key role in nurturing discipleship in our students. Accepting the outstanding abilities of our students, providing opportunities for those gifts to develop and be used in meaningful ways, and modeling for students ways of discipleship are all important avenues for gifted students to see that "learning is not for its own sake, but for the sake of being more effective servants of the Lord Jesus Christ" (*A Vision with a Task*, 276). How would this look in a classroom?

A group of fourth graders who excel in math learn about the stock market through research, a simulation game, and by watching selected stocks in the daily paper. After they are familiar with how the stock market works, they share what they learned with their classmates by giving them advice on how to select stocks and, then, by playing with them a modified version of the simulation game. This enlightens students on the stock market, preparing the entire class for a banking unit conducted by local bankers. In another instance, sixth graders with gifts of leadership investigate the original Greek Olympics in the context of their class' study of Ancient Greece. They share their knowledge with their classmates by organizing an Olympics based on the original events, in which the winners were chosen on their grace and style in performance, rather than speed. Third, an eighth grade computer "whiz" is placed in an after-school mentoring program with someone in the community where she is challenged in her knowledge and use of computers. She can share her capabilities with teachers, classmates, other classrooms, or office personnel by helping them understand and use various computer programs, or even by assisting

in designing an Internet homepage for the school. The common thread in these examples is that, not only are particular gifts nurtured, but the students involved also serve their classmates—they are both discipled and discipling.

As we work with and challenge high-ability students, we must remember that discipleship develops in community, not in isolation, and too often high-ability students are isolated, either by being pulled out or singled out. But when teachers and students work and learn together, appreciating and valuing each other's gifts, the kind of discipleship into which Christ calls us is fostered. This means that the classroom is the primary place gifted students should be enriched and challenged in the curricular areas in which their strengths lie. Students should be taught to accept, develop, and use their gifts in humble service to others within the classroom, for just as in real life, opportunities to use God's gifts and serve others do not take place in isolation. Pulling students out of the classroom should be done only when their special needs require it, and even then, what they have learned should be shared in an appropriate way so others can be enriched.

As teachers, our attitude toward, and acceptance of, our students' gifts is key to providing an environment that is safe and happy, one that allows students to take risks and confront both their strengths and weaknesses. As disciples of Christ in our classroom, we must respect the gifts God has given to all of our students, even if those gifts exceed our own knowledge and expertise. We must provide opportunities in our classroom for students to recognize their gifts, develop and nurture those gifts as servant leaders, and share those gifts joyfully in meaningful service to those in our community. We need to encourage sharing one's gifts in humble service to God and others, rather than allowing a "showing off' of one's gifts to glorify an individual. Our attitude of acceptance also helps to foster acceptance of high-achieving learners to their peers. We must show all of our students ways of using and celebrating each other's gifts within, as well as outside of, our classrooms.

"Students should be taught to accept, develop, and use their gifts in humble service to others within the classroom, for just as in real life, opportunities to use God's gifts and serve others do not take place in isolation."

Proverbs 18:16a says, "A gift opens the way for the giver." Judy Vos applies this thought to our classrooms: "If Christian teachers see the gifts of their students as a way to be opened for the Giver, they will realize the opportunities for service in helping these children develop their talents and gifts so that God receives glory and honor." Through our acceptance, nurture, and support, we can empower our high-ability students to use their gifts to joyfully build up and enrich the body of Christ so that God, the Giver, is glorified in all our work and play. And we must diligently surround our efforts with prayer so that we and each of our students "may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work" (Colossians 1:10). ■

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Musical Excellence as Servanthood

by Karen A. DeMol

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This article is an adaptation for CEJ of "On Musical Excellence," published in Pro Rege, XX/4 (June, 1992)

"Excellence" is a concept that one can hardly be against. Excellence is to education what the flag and apple pie are to American culture: of course, everyone stands up and salutes. However, when it comes to music, people can feel uneasy about the pursuit of excellence. For some, seeking "good music" is perceived as snobbery and elitism, or may imply impossible standards of performance. Others, in a culture influenced by individualism ("I like what I like") consider any musical values as merely personal taste and opinion. Excellence may go against our grain regarding democracy. For the concept of excellence implies that while some pieces of music or performances are good, others are mediocre, or even poor; to judge them so may strike us as intolerant and exclusionary. And some perceive achieving excellence in music and enjoying music to be mutually exclusive; if one seeks excellence in a school music program, it goes without saying that the students won't enjoy the program.

But as Christian educators, it would hardly be right to say we are for mediocrity either. What we could use is an understanding of what true musical excellence really is and what kind of excellence is appropriate for Christian educators to seek, as well as why we should seek it. Let's consider some of the issues. With a good understanding of excellence, we can reaffirm its legitimacy and seek it as an expression of servanthood.

Levels of excellence

Some perceive excellence to be an objective standard, often an ideal one. Others claim excellence to be any kind of growth. A good understanding of excellence embraces both.

> "Our culture does not much value such discernment, preferring to use as its standard those of personal taste and of commercial success."

We do acknowledge a sort of absolute or ideal excellence: the finest compositions performed with outstanding technique and superb artistic expressiveness. It is the best that has yet been done, the best that can be done. This excellence is an ideal, a goal, a destination. And we must acknowledge and also remind our students that, this being the limited and imperfect world that it is, the highest level of excellence experienced in this world is still not the best possible, the best that we will experience in the new heaven and the new earth. Nevertheless, it is important to hold up for our students examples of the earthly best, not as a club, but as an example, an inspiration, and a goal.

It is appropriate and important also to acknowledge a relative excellence. If we were to hold only to standards of absolute excellence, we would rate all seventh grade bands poor. Instead, we use a standard of excellence related to what younger adolescents are capable of. However, affirming relative excellence does not at all mean disregarding aesthetic norms or tolerating lack of growth. The excellence of our seventh grade band is a way-station on the road of excellence, a point on an infinite line; instruction and encouragement to grow along that line are the very business of education. If our players who do very well at the junior high music festival are still playing at the same level three years later, we would no longer call their achievement excellent.

In addition, we need to recognize that "doing one's best" may result in different objective levels of achievement from person to person. All of us operate within the limits of our own ability and resources. This is true even of the world's greatest performers and composers. This understanding is included in our confession that humankind is finite. All of us need to do our personal best, at whatever level that is, while at the same time we acknowledge, enjoy, and seek to emulate the personal best of the world's greatest artists. In addition, as stewards of our gifts, we need to be stretching them along

the line of growth. A school music program needs to find ways for all students—those with one and those with five talents—to develop their gifts, neither focusing only on nor abandoning either end of the spectrum.

The components of excellence

Technique

It is helpful also to consider what the objective components of musical excellence really are. How can one identify a good quality piece of music, a good quality performance?

In composition, excellence is craftsmanship. In our selection of music both for listening and for performance, we teachers should seek music of good craftsmanship that, like other well-made things, will wear well and wear long. Craftsmanship includes well-shaped melodies, rich harmony, engaging rhythms. Craftsmanship includes consistency in the handling of the musical materials (the themes, harmonies, rhythms). Craftsmanship includes observing the specific compositional practices associated with certain styles. Craftsmanship includes writing within the capabilities of the instruments chosen, even writing idiomatically for them. Good craftsmanship requires writing with a coherence of materials. Good craftsmanship does not necessarily imply complexity; we find it in the folk song "Greensleeves" as well as in Mozart's symphonies.

In performance, excellence is technique, getting all the notes right and singing or playing them in tune with good articulation on an instrument of fine quality, in a performing space that enables good performing and good listening. Music teachers are engaged in this pursuit, teaching students from the bottom up to sound the right notes, to develop an appropriate and lovely tone, to understand the style, and to improve all the other components of technique.

The challenging and delightful role of the teacher is to guide students in the gradual, careful development of technical skills, to help them as they sing and play to hear and to produce good tuning and correct notes, to help them as they write to hone their craftsmanship as well as their musical ideas, and to help them as they listen to discern music of good craftsmanship.

As we pursue good craftsmanship in performance, we need to recognize that it is not the same as perfection, as flawlessness. I wonder about the extent to which we have bought into flawlessness by the flawless but false recordings made possible by the patching techniques of modern recording technology, a flawlessness rarely possible in live music-making. A telling story is related by William Edgar:

> When the great pianist Artur Schnabel finished his monumental recordings of the complete Beethoven sonatas, the studio engineer came to him and explained that there had been a number of mistakes here and there. If Schnabel would come down to the studio he could play those measures and they could be dubbed in. Schnabel refused the offer. He even offered to do the entire thirty-two sonatas again, incorporating whatever new mistakes might be involved! But under no circumstances would he allow the studio to spoil the unity of the original performance, with the mood and ambience he had created. (*Taking Note of Music,*14)

What this reveals so aptly is that making good music is more than getting all the notes right. I wonder how many young musicians have been discouraged from music by an over-emphasis on technical perfection, which can be manifested in a no-mistakes approach in private lessons, or in an overly diligent hunt for technical errors coupled with a neglect of the gracious bits of musicality in the same pieces.

Expressiveness

And what this story reveals so aptly is that making good music includes the communication of the expressiveness of music "with its mood and ambiance" and the actual, live, hands-on making of music. Music-making is not the freezing of a perfect moment—although we want to preserve such moments when they do occur; rather, music-making is the dynamic here-and-now excitement of the creation or performance of a beautiful thing. We have all heard flawless performances that are wooden and have sensed that something essential to music was missing. And while a certain amount of proficiency is foundational to expressiveness, technique does not have to be flawless before expressiveness can begin.

In performance, expressiveness is

knowing, after getting all the pitches in tune, when to bend a pitch, and how much, and why. It is knowing how much to stretch a yearning note upward, how far to flat a blue note. It is knowing, after getting all the rhythms right, when to stretch a note, and how much, and why. It is that moment in a recent rehearsal of the orchestra I play in, when we were all tired and perfunctory, so tired that all we wanted was to get the right notes and then go home, when the bassoonist shaped a brief solo so exquisitely that every head turned and all eyes brightened.

In composition, expressiveness is nuance, subtlety. It is suggestiveness, shape. It is the choice of all the right materials at a given moment to achieve the desired musical effect.

Both as performers and as listeners, both as young students and as advancing professionals, we learn to discern and to produce expressiveness under the guidance of fine teachers and performers. We learn quality in musical expressiveness not from a lecture, but from exposure to good music, under the tutelage and/or encouragement of an expert in the field. One needs a teacher who says, "Listen to this now. Hear how the little twist in the melody here fits the hidden suggestion in the text, or sets us up for the next section, or keeps the harmony the same yet different. Here, right now, in this piece, this is evidence of expressiveness."

A good teacher, in person, is crucial to the development of both technical skill and expressive sensitivity—to musical discernment in performing, composing, listening, and even choosing music. That is the challenging and delightful role of teachers—to select examples that will illustrate the qualities of expressiveness, examples appropriate to every level of developing musical understanding and skill, and to have them played regularly for and by the students.

What is expressed

Another component of good music is the content of what is expressed. Developing discernment in this area is one of the most difficult challenges of the educator, for two reasons. One is that music is one of the most abstract of the arts. While it is comparatively easy to discuss the meaning of a story, it is much more difficult to pin down what a melody "means," especially when there are no words. In addition, our culture does not much value such discernment, preferring to use as its standards those of personal taste and of commercial success. A difficult but important challenge for Christian teachers, we who believe that culture, as well as people, is a mix of wheat and tares, is to help students develop discernment in this area. Is this piece a glitzy razzle-dazzle show? Is it substantive or shallow? Does it wear out quickly? Is its character ephemeral or will it endure to enrich us life-long? Serving our students well includes the selection of music worthy of that longevity, both textually and musically.

How the music is used

Another component of excellence is how the music is used. Music does not just hang on the wall. It functions in life. It has uses. It is for use. Music is for life, and life is not limited to sitting quietly and listening, to what Wolterstorff has called "aesthetic contemplation," although that is indeed one fine use of music. In his book *Music Through the Eyes of Faith* Harold Best has talked of the wonderful ability of music to be a partner to many occasions and activities. With music we highlight special occasions, such as birthdays, inaugurations, anniversaries, weddings. We move with it in processionals and parades, skating parties and ballet. We use it to enhance the mood and meaning of theater productions. Its expressiveness partners well with whatever carries emotion, be it funerals or celebrations. We connect it with our moods, energizing ourselves in the morning with bright brass fanfares, soothing a fussy baby to sleep with lullabies, even using it in therapeutic situations. We use music in worship, where singing flows off the pages of the Psalms, and where the shape of the music enhances the meaning of our praises and prayers beyond the words. And we simply listen to it, at home and at concerts.

Herein lies a further criterion in the evaluation of quality: how well does the music join that which it is partner to? How well does the music fit and serve the liturgical action? How well does it help carry the play? Can one march well with the parade music and dance well with the dance music—not to, but with? If its function is aesthetic contemplation—pure listening—it is only the technique and expressiveness, both in composition and performance, that count. If, however, the music is for an activity or function, it is not only technique and expressiveness, but also fittingness to the situation that count. For it is possible to use very fine pieces and play them well in an ill-fitted situation.

A question for schools to ponder in regard to the use of music is the relation of the music department and its curriculum to the role of music in the total life of the school. Is the music of the music department considered strictly a discipline and contained within the department, or is it engaged wherever music is involved in the life of the school? Is its product heard mostly or even only on the recital/concert hall stage, or does its influence and service appear around campus, in chapel, at dances, at banquets? When music departments focus only on concert presentations it is easy for them to forget about working for good music that fits other situations or even to consider that outside their realm or beneath their dignity. But if music is for use, their efforts and service should be campus-wide, working for excellence wherever music touches life.

For excellence we need all the above components. For if we focus only on the function and forget about technical and expressive quality, music becomes only a tool. We could claim that as long as people are entertained by the performance, or as long as we can dance to the dance music, or as long as the offertory music matches the time it takes the deacons to pass the plates, or as long as the choir music stirs an audience or congregation to "religious" feelings, or as long as the advertising ditty "sells" the product, the music "works" and is therefore good; what else could one want? What we want, of course, is also aesthetic excellence and technical excellence.

To be good, music should serve its purpose well and at the same time exhibit high musical quality, both technical and expressive. When we say music is bad, it may be because it is poorly crafted, or

expressively barren, or unsuited to its use, or all of these.

Excellence as servanthood

We seek excellence in music as the best way to be servants in this area of life. Our purposes are rooted in our task in God's world. Part of our task is to obey—enthusiastically, joyfully, humbly—God's command to tend and develop his world, the command we call the cultural mandate. God's world includes the world of sound, which he created just as surely as he created land and seas, plants and animals. To respond to this command we are not only interested in but committed to writing and finding high caliber music and performing it at the best possible level. All the qualities of musical excellence are related to this command.

Another part of our task is to be our brother's keeper, to serve our neighbor, to seek his well-being. To respond to the command to serve our neighbor we work not only to develop quality in the music itself, but also to develop and exercise pastoral judgment in music. We do this first of all because all God's gifts of talent and ability are to be used that way. For there is a wonderful match: each person, created in the image of God, has many aspects and many needs, including an aesthetic side and therefore aesthetic needs. Others have been gifted to meet and to serve those needs. These gifts have been given, not to mark us as superior, or to give us private pleasure, but to equip us for service.

My neighbor, the dietician, helps me tend my health needs and looks after my nutritional well-being. I, the musician, tend her aesthetic needs and look out for her aesthetic well-being. A good dietician (like our mothers) also expands our repertoire of foods as we grow, from one food (milk and cereal) to other foods, as we are able. Likely we get stuck at times, refusing to eat eggs when we are four, and disdaining all but pizza and potato chips when we are fifteen. But our good dietician never thinks that we can't grow beyond that. Likewise, we musicians are to tend and nurture our neighbor's well-being in the aesthetic area, to serve up music that is both "delicious and nutritious," both enjoyable and aesthetically building. Sloppy performance, ill-chosen music, mediocre instruments, and trite composition are unacceptable. Choosing music of high quality and performing it well is a way of being our neighbor's keeper.

In our fallen world, there is musical mediocrity and musical trash as well as musical greatness. We confess with sorrow that "all spheres of life—work and worship, our play and art—bear the wounds of our rebellion." (Our World Belongs to God, vs. 17) Since sin has spoiled everything, including our aesthetic artifacts and our aesthetic perceptions, we have the added task of helping to sort out the good from the mediocre and the downright poor. Seeing to the well-being of our neighbor includes providing some guidance in musical discernment.

Tension can arise, however, between musical excellence and Christian service when we do not keep a balanced picture in mind. We can become so focused on the "serving" that we ignore what we are serving with and neglect the other components of excellence we've been outlining here. We like to say, "It's the heart that counts." And it is. But the truly serving heart will serve up quality, not aesthetic stones. For example, some would hesitate to deny a questionable musical offering in chapel because the well-meaning but unprepared singer "is so sincere." And it's true that sincerity of heart in the giving musician is necessary. But that does not make good workmanship unnecessary. It is not true that sincerity of heart is so important that poor compositional craftsmanship, bad tuning, and unbalanced ensemble don't matter. As someone has said, "Holy shoddy is still shoddy." Yet, without the devotion of the heart, our most perfect music is but a "sounding gong."

Musical excellence and true service are mutually inclusive. Having the genuine well-being of our neighbor and community in mind will help us stand up for excellence and against mediocrity with no more fear of elitism than the nutritionist who advocates a low-fat diet. Seeking the genuine well-being of our neighbors may help achieve the balance between usefulness and aesthetic concerns when anyone wants music for a "function." Seeking the genuine well-being of our neighbors helps to match the type and level of excellence to the situation—a balancing act of musical and educational judgment.

All, says Paul, is to be done for the building of the body of Christ. We champion music of high technical and expressive quality not as an end in itself, but for the genuine well-being of our students and community. We seek good music not as a badge of our own skill and achievement, but to tend our neighbors' well-being in the world of sound, for we are our neighbors' servants, our neighbors' keepers in music. ■

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Reflections of a First-year Teacher: *Keys to Success*

by Michelle Wynia

Michelle Wynia teaches seventh and eighth grade language arts at Ontario Christian Middle School in Ontario, California.

"I remember my first year of teaching . . . ." Undoubtedly any educator can complete this phrase with recollections of humorous anecdotes, challenging students, and late nights spent grading or planning lessons. The first year is not to be forgotten, for in that first year, educators truly learn of what mettle they are made. Reminiscing over my first year of teaching, I, too, am flooded with memories. Some cause my brow to furrow while others bring smiles to my lips. As I muse over the experiences of a year so quickly gone, I find myself asking, of what does a successful first year consist? Here are a few of the elements I found to be true.

Facing seventh and eighth graders on a daily basis may seem a daunting task. As the year quickly passed, I discovered that one of the integral keys to being successful when communicating a concept to my students is showing enthusiasm for the subject matter. Tackling the task of sentence diagramming with eighth graders is not the most stimulating activity for them. Not only that, but it is by far my least favorite part of language arts. Somehow I had to convince them I was excited too. So, when we reviewed the steps of diagramming, I attempted to draw them into the lessons by saying, "Someone is really going to impress me by telling me the first question we ask when diagramming." One of my students grinned and said, "Miss Wynia, you could be a game show host." Maybe I sounded goofy, but they responded by being much more willing to answer my questions.

Enthusiasm for the students themselves should also be something we attempt to convey to our students. They must know that we are excited to see them and are interested in their lives if we wish to successfully teach them. I found that students were much more willing to try something new if I was excited about it and if they knew I had their best interest in mind.

Another way to be an effective teacher is to be genuine. Kids can spot a fake, as easily as an animal can smell fear. As educators, we have an enormous influence on our students' lives. With so many students with countless needs, we have the job of somehow reaching all of them. Last spring, one of the most memorable events of my year occurred when one of our seventh graders, Carlos, was removed from the school because his parents could no longer afford their tuition payments. Coming from a Christian home that often struggled financially, I was torn apart by his leaving. When Carlos came to clean out his locker, I happened to be in the hallway. As I told him how sad I was that he was leaving, the tears streamed down my face. I learned later from a friend of his that he, too, was close to tears because he couldn't believe that I cared that much. Many of my students saw how upset I was and in turn shared their disappointment and sadness at Carlos's leaving. Happily, Carlos was able to return to our school shortly after he left, and he came back this year as well. As a teacher, I cannot justify encouraging my students to be themselves if I do not allow them to see my personality.

Probably the most significant benefit of my first year was connection with experienced teachers. I was very fortunate to have several individuals on staff from whom I felt very comfortable seeking advice regarding issues such as discipline, lesson planning, and troubled students. A listening ear is an invaluable asset to a first-year teacher, as is a guiding hand. At one point last year, an eighth grade student was continually making rude comments in my class. He had been ushered out of my classroom twice as a reprimand; but apparently I was not getting through to him. At this point I consulted another teacher, and he recommended calling the student's parents. Such a simple solution, but well worth it because I had no problems with the student again. A supportive mentor can make the difference between a successful and a miserable year.

Unfortunately, school administrators and veteran teachers seem to expect that their first-year teachers know the ins and outs of their whole system. No matter how many questions you have asked, ask more. Sometimes this will be your only means of finding the facts and uncovering the "hidden agenda," as it was once explained to me. For example, our school's mailbox hung just to the left of the entrance to the school—or so I thought. When sending a note home to one of my students in September, I realized that I had sealed the wrong information in the envelope and asked our principal if he could open the mailbox for me. He looked at me strangely. As he walked up to the "mailbox," he informed me that the silver box attached to the building

was not a mailbox, but a drop off box for tuition. He opened the box and found inside letters, bills, and the note I was sending to a parent. Every piece of mail had my return address.

As a new teacher trying new things, you will often be asked to explain your actions to parents. Topics may range from the appropriateness of assignments to disciplinary actions or your choice of curriculum materials. Almost all parents question a teacher because they have their son's or daughter's best interest in mind, not because they are questioning your integrity. Realize that you may not always see eye-to-eye in a situation. This is also an excellent time to consult other faculty members for advice. Know what steps your school expects you to follow when discussing such matters with parents. Don't feel you have to manage the situation on your own.

When I was contemplating a teaching profession while still in high school, one of my favorite teachers made the comment that teaching was a "noble profession." Quite often I think of his comment and realize the truth of it. Very few careers are motivated almost solely by a desire to serve. Teachers have made the choice to touch the lives of those they teach. I don't know any teacher who does not want to make a positive impact on his or her students. Our motivation is not self-serving. We simply want our students to grow up to be educated, responsible, Christian servants, ready to make an impact in the world they must face as adults.

The first year is one of learning. When you have earned a college degree and a teaching certificate, you only have scratched the surface of the knowledge you will need for competence in a classroom. The phrase "learning by doing" is applicable not only to students, but to teachers as well. In James 1:19, we are instructed "[to] be quick to listen [and] slow to speak." One of the best ways to gain knowledge your first year of teaching is by listening to the words, advice, and encouragement of colleagues. Their many years of experience serve as a strong foundation from which first-year teachers can structure their own teaching.

The beauty of a first year of teaching is two-fold. First of all, every teacher has one—it is inescapable. Secondly it does end—although February seems an eternity. To those of you tackling your first year of teaching, take heart. This too shall pass, and soon you will be among the realm of those who can reflect on the first year with laughter, tears, and a sense of relief. ■

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Selecting Software for Use in the Learning Process

by Barbara Fennema

Barbara Fennema is currently user services coordinator at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa.

Paging through a computer software catalog, a person can be overwhelmed with the vast amount of choices. How is the Christian educator to make wise, stewardly decisions about the software to purchase for her classroom? Which software will assist the teacher in carrying out the school's mission statement most effectively? Three areas must be addressed in order for the educator to make these decisions wisely: types of software, the learning process, and the application of software in the learning process.

Types of software

By identifying types of educational software teachers can give themselves a starting point in discovering the intricacies involved in each software program. Although the following descriptions are neither exhaustive nor all-inclusive, they isolate dimensions that can be used to characterize most existing software.

Tutorial

This software guides the learner through a new concept, providing information and support for the learner throughout the process. A tutorial is often used for assisting students in a skill or concept that can be easily broken into steps, such as learning to type on the keyboard correctly.

Drill and Practice

This software provides immediate feedback and reinforcement to learners as they work through specific examples or problems. The educator often uses this type of software when practicing and reinforcing a skill such as multiplication facts.

Edugame

This software employs a definite set of rules and strategies to win, while addressing a basic skill. The educator often uses this type of software to increase the motivation of a student to continue to practice a skill.

Simulation/Problem Solving

This software allows the learner to change variables, repeat procedures, make decisions, and explore situations or environments that would not be accessible otherwise. Using a simulation allows the educator to immerse the learner in an environment that encourages the learner to synthesize and analyze information that has been learned.

Tools

This software includes word processing, databases, spreadsheets, and other tools that allow the teacher or student to store information, organize it, and manipulate it. Software such as a CD-ROM encyclopedia is placed in this category because the information can be accessed and then stored, organized, and manipulated.

Graphics/Draw/Presentation

This software includes all applications that permit the learner to create visuals and presentations. The educator often uses this type of information to assist the learner in the presentation of information.

The learning process and using software

For educators it is important to understand the process that the learner walks through. Numerous theories about the learning process are bantered about in the field of education. Bernice McCarthy has done extensive research in the area of the learning process and has published extensively. In her writings she describes a system that she identifies as the 4MAT system, using a quadrant model. In a similar way, Jack Fennema, a professor of education at Dordt College, has defined four phases of the learning process. The two descriptions of the learning process seem to be compatible, but the Fennema description emphasizes a Christian perspective.

Fennema pairs the first and second phases as the *revelation of God's created reality*. In the first phase, which he calls *romancing reality*, the learner is immersed in a new experience. Mc Carthy's first quadrant, *learner motivation*, is defined as the time when the learner is engaged in and "immersed into a real life experience." The reader can quickly identify the similarities in the definitions of the first phase of learning. Fennema takes this understanding to a further dimension by identifying that the reality in which the student is immersed is God's created reality.

Using software in the learning process requires the educator to understand how each phase of the learning process is enhanced by specific types of software. During the first phase, when the learner is romancing reality, the Christian educator needs to encourage the learner to look at God's created reality and identify situations and environments as belonging to God. During this phase it is beneficial to use simulations and tutorials, permitting the learner to explore new situations and to become immersed in the environment that is being introduced.

Fennema describes the second phase, *unfolding the structure of knowledge*, as the time when the learner is looking at the parts of the new experience, compre-

hending and analyzing the "what is." During this phase the learner is guided into an uncovering of God's truths found throughout the creation. Mc Carthy labels the second quadrant—looking at parts and skills—*conceptual mastery* and considers this segment as demanding the largest share of a teacher's time with students.

Software that encourages the learner to look at the parts of the new experience includes simulations and drill and practice. Using a simulation during this phase requires the teacher to expect the learner to begin to pull facts and skills from the simulation. An example would be the simulation *Oregon Trail* by MECC. Instead of permitting the students to "play the game," the teacher requires the students to extract specific information about the details of the westward movement. During this phase of learning it is very appropriate to use drill and practice software to reinforce skills after they have been taught. Commonly, drill and practice software is found in the areas of mathematics and foreign language.

As Fennema describes the third and fourth phases, he develops the concept of *responding to God's created reality*. The third phase, *constructing a worldview*, is described as the time when the student is asking how this new knowledge can be used. The educator's task at this time is to guide the learner into an understanding of how to use this new knowledge in her or his response to God. McCarthy describes the third quadrant, *application of ideas,* as the period in which students are able to work on the reinforcement of concepts, master the skills being presented, and explore relationships between concepts.

Software that encourages students' response to knowledge includes edugames, simulations, and tools. Students can be expected to apply skills to complete a simulation successfully. One example is *SimFarm* by Maxis, which requires students to apply information to successfully plant and harvest a crop. Christian teachers using such software can then extend the learning by asking students to apply their store of information and skills in response to situations in other areas of God's created reality. A Christian worldview should affect both the *how* and *why* of their responses.

Fennema's fourth phase, which he calls *transforming reality*, is described as the time when the learner responds to the new knowledge and uses it to advance the kingdom of God. McCarthy concludes her model with the fourth quadrant, *creative synthesis*, in which the student evaluates and analyzes concepts and applies these concepts in sharing and celebrating learning. Presentation software or tools such as desktop publishing would enhance this learning phase. With them, students can advance God's kingdom by sharing ideas and information with others. They can use desktop publishing to design a newspaper, flyers, or posters. Presentation software enhances student presentations, from a simple slide show created with *Kid Pix* by Broderbund to the more advanced options available with *PowerPoint* by Microsoft. A middle school class might create a slide show for younger students following a unit about mammals. This project would require the older students to organize, analyze, and synthesize new information, respond to the new information by applying a Christian worldview, and communicate the information to others in a concise and coherent manner.

Selecting software wisely requires the Christian educator to go beyond merely picking software that is appealing and motivating for the student. Stewardly choices must be based on numerous factors; cost, usage, applicability, appropriateness, educational benefits, and compatibility with hardware, just to name a few. When the educator considers how learning takes place through a Christian worldview, identifies the types of software available, and then applies this information during the selection process, she can make software selections confidently.

Further information and a model lesson plan can be accessed at the author's web site.

http://www.fcae.nova.edu/~fennema/cai-mcai/slctsftw.htm ■

Phase 1: Romancing Reality (J. Fennema) or Learner Motivation (McCarthy) Learners are immersed into and engaged in a new experience of God's created reality. Simulation Tutorial	**Phase 2:** Unfolding the Structure of Knowledge (J. Fennema) or Conceptual Mastery (McCarthy) Learners look at the parts or the skills and use comprehension, analysis, and evaluation. Simulation Drill and Practice
Phase 3: Constructing a Worldview (J. Fennema) or Application of Ideas (McCarthy) Learners use internal synthesis, define concepts, and add something of themselves. Drill and Practice Edugame Tools	**Phase 4:** Transforming Reality (J. Fennema) or Creative Synthesis (McCarthy) Learners respond to God's created reality through application of their learning and by sharing it with others. Tools

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A Time to Laugh

by Ingrid van Varsveld

Ingrid van Varsveld is presently teaching English, French and Home Economics at Enderby Christian School in Enderby, B.C.

I believe that God allows us to struggle through trying times in order to mold us into more loving and wise people. Sometimes I wish that I could bypass the experiences and just learn the lesson in a painless way, but God knows what he's doing. Becoming a teacher has placed me in many situations where he has been able to teach me something important, and this particular subbing assignment was no exception. After that early morning call from the vice-principal, a stab of fear shot through my heart. I was a French and English teacher, but I was going to teach science—for a whole week!

As a teenager I was never a big science fan. I finished Chemistry 11 and gratefully ended the torture of invisible atoms, the measuring of strange liquids into grimy beakers, and the stress of keeping my long hair away from the bunsen burner flames. I was happy knowing that I'd never have to do another science lab again.

Now, many years later, I was hoping to portray confidence as a teacher in the Science 9 classroom. I was hoping for easy, written assignments, but I suppose Mr. Hordyk believed me to be capable of this level of subject matter, for he assigned labs to do. I believe now that it was done in wisdom. Grade 9 students, if left only questions and written assignments to do, will be climbing the walls within a few days let alone a week.

I remember that Tuesday morning very clearly. I arrived half an hour early, pleased that I would have ample time to read over the given assignments. The room was quiet in the dusky shadows of the early winter morning. The teacher's long desk was spread with papers, texts and left-over lab equipment. As I read the messy scrawl under the heading Science 9 my heart began to beat faster. "Do Lab 12 on page 259, as well as. . . . ." Lab 12. What was Lab 12? I nervously thumbed through the pages until I found it. "The Rate of Diffusion in Hot and Cold Liquids." My brain searched for the meaning of diffusion, and it came back to me as I looked at the pictures and skimmed the text. "You will need 2 grams of potassium permanganate, two beakers and ..... My first thought was, 'What is potassium permanganate?' I didn't even know if I was pronouncing it correctly. 'How do I know how much 2 grams is? And where do I find all this stuff?' As I began to panic and breathe heavier, I saw a note scratched faintly on the bottom of the sheet. "Ask Dave next door for help".

Dave. Next door. I hurried out and popped my head inside the other science classroom. I saw a teacher at his desk, organizing powders and unknown paraphernalia.

"Dave?" I said in a confident, assured voice as my knees trembled within my voluminous skirt. "I'm in for Leon today, and he left a note saying that you could assist me in locating lab materials."

My calm voice echoed in my ears, and I was pleased with the effect.

"Of course. What do you need?" Within a few minutes I had a jar of purple crystals, a special weigh scale, and detailed instructions. "But be careful that you don't touch the crystals or get them on your clothes. They're corrosive."

I looked down at my elegant silk blouse and matching skirt. "Of course. Thank you very much." After closing the door I scampered back into my classroom and reread the lab five times, organizing my thoughts and instructions. When the first bell rang and thirteen year-olds started invading the classroom, I prayed that God would help me.

I watched them all with outward calm and a serene smile, unsure whether today would be a breeze or a tornado. The second bell rang, and I immediately started the class.

"Good morning, everyone." I pointed to the board. "My name is Mrs. van Varsveld. Mr. Hordyk is ill, and I'll be teaching you for the next week."

"What's he sick with?" A voice shot out from the back.

"I think it's a serious flu."

"Yeah, right. I bet he's on a holiday."

After discouraging such remarks I plunged head first into explaining the lab.

My job was to measure two crystals of potassium permanganate into each group's beakers of hot and cold water. Their two samples needed to be exactly the same size, but the crystals in the jar were all different shapes. As I tried to dig them out with a metal scoop, the pieces broke into fragments. I didn't want to touch them, though, since I didn't know just how corrosive this stuff was. To make my job more complicated, each of their two samples of potassium permanganate had to weigh exactly two grams. I dumped a tiny pile of crystals onto the weigh scale that Dave had given me, and it read .27. All of a sudden my brain froze. Was that too much or too little? I completely lost the meaning of the period in front of the 2.

1 stared at it dumbly for a second, but mechanically started measuring out samples of .2 grams of potassium permanganate. About five minutes later after everyone had their samples, my normal level of intelligence returned to me, and I

realized the mistake. I had given .2 grams instead of 2 whole grams, only ten percent of what they needed. I remembered my former science teachers always insisting on accuracy. Accuracy was essential when doing labs to get the right results.

I started to laugh as I imagined the horror on Mr. Hordyk's face if he would have witnessed this blatant disregard for accuracy. I walked casually around the classroom to check the students' success in doing the lab. Some students in their haste had spilled most of their tiny sample and were left with only powder; I gave them some more. Other students had a hard time judging the difference in color between the hot and cold liquid. I encouraged them to get really close to their beakers. I tried to not notice whether their results were accurate. I just assigned the lab write-up for homework, and hoped I could leave it all behind me.

When the bell rang I had only a few wet beakers and soggy papers to put away. I rubbed purple off of some of the desks and organized my notes. I breathed easier; I had just taught my first science experiment.

I conducted three more labs that week which went much more smoothly–except, perhaps, for the beginning of the lab on "separating a mixture." Because we could find no clean sand in the back room, he had given me a beaker full from the old long-jump pit behind the school. As soon as I added water to the sand, ants started crawling frantically in every direction. All of the students begged for an ant in their samples, and in their enthusiasm they completed that lab especially well. Aside from the ants, the classes went smoothly. I was pleased to see that students' lab reports were methodical and accurate. What a change from the first day! Friday afternoon soon arrived, and I tidied up for the last time and locked the door behind me.

Weeks later I reflected on what I could have possibly learned from that experience, and the answer came quickly to me. My thoughts had been, "I could never teach science", so the Lord gently reminded me that I should be leaning on his power in every situation, for "I can do all things through him who gives me strength." (Phil. 4:13) ■

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Kids under Construction

by Eleanor Mills

Eleanor Mills is a learning assistance coordinator at Abbotsford Christian School in Abbotsford, British Columbia.

"The point of school community is the construction of a healthy community for students. The tool that adults use to form this community is their invitation to students to belong. Adults create an atmosphere that invites students to belong to the school community, to embrace its commitments, to serve its members, and to share in its leadership. At its deepest level, this invitation to belong is an invitation to belong to Christ" (Den Boer, 13). In order to expand the sense of community at the Heritage campus of Abbotsford Christian School, Principal Lloyd Den Boer, the administrative team, the teachers, and the students have been working together during the 1997-98 school year with a school theme: Kids under Construction.

Pre-planning: Near the end of the previous school year, the administrators designed several staff meetings in which teachers could brainstorm and prioritize issues and concerns they felt needed attention in areas such as student behavior, teacher modeling, mutual respect, discipline, and communication. A workshop for teachers during the orientation week in August addressed many of these issues. Teachers role played typical student-teacher interactions, using ideas from *How to Talk So Kids Can Learn.*

Bulletin Board: A bulletin board illustrating a theme song, "Kids under Construction," greeted children and parents on the first day of school. Teachers challenged each class to write goals on construction-paper building bricks to show how the class would be busy during the school year in building community. Words and phrases such as caring, encouraging, including, respecting, and listening became part of the display. Each class also posted a brick containing the names of all the students in the class as an indication of commitment to the goal.

Chapels: Chapel services have introduced the theme and continue to remind students and teachers of the theme in a number of different ways. Bricks for the bulletin board were introduced in chapel and completed in classrooms. Students from a grade seven class described how they were planning to implement their classroom goal by providing service to teachers and other students:

The grade sevens have the ball! They are taking a lead. It's the grade seven kickoff. They're good kids with a good attitude making a difference at our school. Each student has been asked to sign up for a job of their choice. These jobs are to help in many ways throughout the school. These kids with positive attitudes will be serving the school from now until January. Then they will choose a new job to do from January to the end of the school year. To start this kickoff we got a free pizza lunch and Mr. Den Boer volunteered to lead us in a devotion about service's value by telling us a story from the Bible. We finished the afternoon by playing games. It's the grade seven kids who won the game by being servants to the school.

—Laura Friesen and Vanessa Brink

During another chapel a grade six class presented a skit, "The Legend of Black Breath," (Ferguson 61) complete with sets and costumes, which illustrated in a humorous way how bad mouthing others steals the joy from their lives.

Evidence of the effectiveness of a school-wide theme of this sort is seen in examples such as incidents of kindness on the playground and in messages that children are conveying to parents. "Shaping student behavior through community is neither a sure-fire technique nor a quick fix. Instead it is a response to the Gospel's call to love one another as we have been loved. Love is the yeast that can leaven the whole lump" (Den Boer 13).

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Men and Their Toys

Ron Sjoerdsma

Ron Sjoerdsma teaches in the education department at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Bill Hamilton had to admit it, he was hooked. It was one thing to acknowledge it to himself, but now he was going to have to explain this new fascination to his Hillendale Christian Middle School teaching team. The Monday morning planning meeting, replacing the postponed regular Friday meeting, was just a few minutes away, and Bill was having trouble tearing himself away from his new toy. He had made his purchase on an impulse at the Mathematics Association of America Conference. He had taken two days off from school–a first if his memory served him correctly–to go to Baltimore with a Hillendale Community College instructor he had taught high school math with some twenty years ago.

Jim Sooterma would give him an especially hard time about his purchase, but at least he couldn't call Bill a "technology curmudgeon" anymore. He thought he had even found a way to get Sara Voskamp interested. Up to this point, their friendship had developed around their mutual hesitancy to embrace the new computer stuff that Kate Wells and Jim were constantly throwing at them. But Bill's new discovery connected math and science in wonderful ways that promised an even closer working relationship with Sara—wasn't Sara always talking about how his math classes and her science classes ought to integrate their content more?

Bill had to remind himself that his relationship with Sara was strictly a professional one. She was, after all, just twenty-four years old, having come to HCMS right out of college. Bill was pushing toward sixty and beginning to think about early retirement, but maybe this tool would keep him in the classroom a little longer. Besides, he didn't have specific goals for retirement, especially since all the travel plans had gone out the window when his wife died. Was it already three years she had been gone? No, it was really four--but sometimes he still expected to see her when he walked in his back door.

"Good morning, Bill. Glad you're back. Don't tell me you forgot about our meeting. Having too much fun in Baltimore?" Sara was standing in his classroom doorway.

"No, I didn't forget. I'll be right there. Just let me shut this thing down." Then, "It's good to see you."

"Same here. What you got there?" Sara moved into the room "Wow! That's some calculator?"

"Yeah. I saw it demonstrated at MAAC. I don't know what got into me, but I just bought one on the spot—must have been the special conference price; I bought all three pieces. You know, I think this could really be great for science, too."

"Looks way too expensive for my budget. Still got college debts you know. What is this thing anyway?"

Bill knew they should be heading to the meeting in Kate Wells' room, but he couldn't resist the question. "Well you probably recognized the graphing calculator from your college calculus class—this is the latest model. And this is called a calculator-based ranger. At the conference they just said 'CBR'—took me a while to figure it out. It's also made by Texas Instruments, like the calculator."

"And you think your kids are going to get something out of this?"

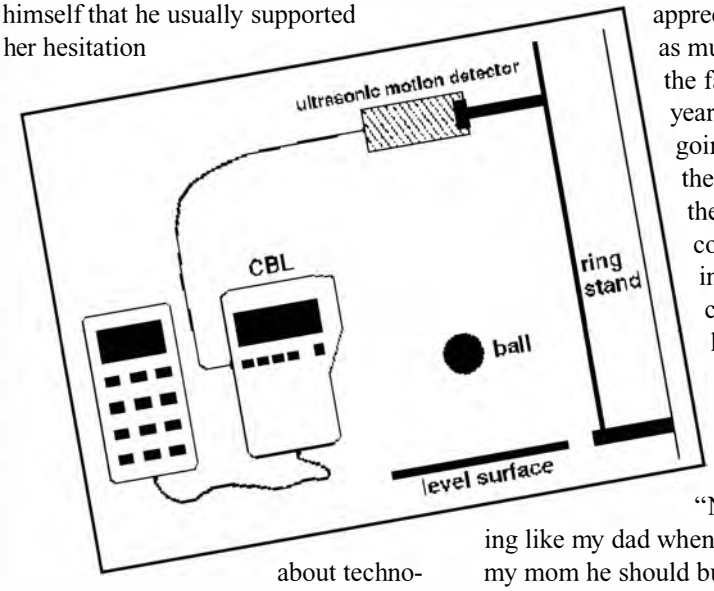
"The guy presenting this at the conference was a middle school algebra teacher, and he told me all kinds of things he did with it and had his students do with it—even had handouts describing them all. Everyone in his class has a calculator and he has four of these CBR things. It's great at connecting the real world to an abstract concept like slope. For example, if I move my arm back-and-forth in front of it, it graphs the slope of the motion. You're the one who's always telling me I need to connect math to the real world."

"And I suppose I could show velocity and acceleration."

"Exactly. And there's another device for collecting all sorts of physical and chemical data." Bill pulled the calculator-based laboratory out of the box. "This one will really do some amazing things. It takes a while to set it up. But here's a

diagram that shows how you could collect bouncing-ball data."

"Cool enough. But who's going to pay for all this stuff?" Sara's tone told Bill that she was having trouble getting past the dollar signs, and he reminded himself that he usually supported her hesitation



about technology costs.

"Well, I've been thinking about that. Right now, our students go on to Algebra II in high school and have to buy graphing calculators. We could just have them buy them a little earlier. And the real beauty is that we can get a lot of this other stuff free or at a reduced price if twenty of our students buy the calculators. There's even an LCD panel that you could put on an overhead projector."

"What are we talking about? Maybe a hundred bucks per calculator?"

"Around there." At the conference, Bill had been told he could get them at discount warehouses for $110, but he figured it was better not to be specific.

"And you think we should ask our eighth grade parents to buy these for their kids who have trouble hanging on to pencils?"

"Look, Sarah. I appreciate the cost issue as much as you do. But the fact is that in another year our students are going to have to buy these anyway. And in the meantime, we could really be helping them understand concepts that, at least in my class, most of them don't get. They memorize formulas and that's about it."

"Now you're sounding like my dad when he tries to convince my mom he should buy their neighbor's little red pickup truck. She just rolls her eyes and says, 'Men and their toys.'"

"Come on, Sara, you know me better than that. When have you seen me interested in all the other toys Kate and Jim want us to get? I think I can really use this to help my kids understand algebra. This morning I checked out the Internet addresses I got at the conference. There are some really great middle school activities that integrate math and science using this equipment. I printed them out. I think I could really get the students to see the big picture for once."

"Okay, I'm willing to listen to this if you argue from a learning perspective. You know that's my 'weakness'—but don't forget that I would rather have my students get it themselves or with help from others, or from me if they have to. I would rather not just give them models on a calculator. By the way, when did you get so excited about stuff on the Internet? Jim would be proud."

As if on cue, Jim walked into the room. "What would I be proud of? Certainly not you making us wait ten minutes. Are we going to meet or not? I've got lives to mold in a few minutes."

"We're coming," said Bill. He didn't have the same enthusiasm for sharing his newly discovered teaching tool with the history teacher.

As they moved out into the hallway, Sara got the last word, "You guys are just going to have to get together this afternoon so you both can play with Bill's new toy." ■

Stefan Ulstein

Deconstructing Bullitt– The Chase Scene

Stefan Ulstein teaches media and English courses at Bellevue Christian Junior High and High School in Bellevue, Washington.

This is the first of three installments on teaching film literacy. Just as we teach written literacy with terms like noun, verb, sentence, and paragraph, we can use the basic terminology of film to teach our students how a film communicates, persuades, and manipulates. The purpose of teaching film literacy is not to spoil the fun, but to help students understand how film works, and how it can manipulate us if we are not in control.

Begin by watching the chase scene all the way through. Just say, "Here's an interesting piece of film about a cop who is trying to find two hit men. The hit men find him first." Suspend your disbelief and just enjoy it as a piece of film. Students hate it (and they won't learn much) if you begin by starting and stopping the VCR every ten seconds. After you've gone through it once, go back and deconstruct it using the pause button.

This film is a somewhat routine cop drama, with Steve McQueen playing Detective Bullitt of the San Francisco Police Department. But what made it a monster hit in 1968 was the ten minute chase scene that took a crew two weeks to film. The scene contains no human voice, yet it tells a very effective story, building characters as it goes. Think of the two cars—Bullitt's green Ford Mustang, and the bad guys' black Dodge Charger—as the main characters in this piece. Listen to their "voices."

Begin where Bullitt gets out of a taxi and walks toward his parked Mustang. Listen to the soundtrack. You'll hear a human heartbeat, slightly elevated. Pay attention to the way the filmmakers use the music to build to a crescendo as the story progresses.

As Bullitt gets into his car you'll see a streak of dirt behind the front wheels. That dirt will not be visible later because the sequence was not filmed in chronological order. Often a film crew will have a continuity checker whose job it is to see that everything looks the same from one day to the next. Continuity problems include ties that are knotted differently from scene to scene, buttons and zippers that go up and down from moment to moment, glasses and watches that appear and disappear.

But on with the chase. The black Charger pulls up and stops. This is an establishing shot. It establishes that these are the fellows who will soon be chasing our hero through the streets. Remember that most people went to the theater because their friends told them about the chase in great detail. So the basics are not really a surprise to most viewers.

As Bullitt drives under the overpass you'll notice two bystanders pointing to him, probably saying something like: "See, Bob. I told ya! There's Steve McQueen!" A moment later you'll catch a glimpse of a camera man under the overpass. He has a shoulder-mounted unit. Did you see him the first time? Most people don't, because they are not looking at the peripheral objects, but at the cars.

Listen to the sound. You'll notice the heartbeat getting a bit faster. Also, the music starts to flow in a dreamy sort of way, with an abundance of strings. This is especially evident as the cars pull a u-turn and the camera also gets rather fluid and unsteady. What mood is the director trying for here?

As the cars stop at the intersection, you'll see a white Pontiac Firebird and a yellow cab. These cars will appear several times in the film because they are on the payroll. Most people don't catch that fact right away.

Listen to the soundtrack right before the black car makes its break. You'll notice that it is reaching a climax. Then, as the cars begin to race, listen to the sounds of the motors. How are they dif-

MEDIA EYE

ferent? The Mustang is very high pitched and staccato. If you know music at all you can explain this sequence using musical terms. Staccato, for instance is Italian for the stabbing strokes on a violin. The black Charger has a deeper, more rumbling tone. Which is more anxious? Which is more assured? How does that build character and plot?

The filmmakers used no special effects (FX) but they did use some basic camera angles very effectively. Notice the distance between the telephone poles. When a telephoto lens is in use, the poles look like they are set right together. That's because the telephoto lens compresses the foreground. When a wide angle is in use, the telephone poles look much farther apart than they really are. When the cars screech around a corner, a wide angle is used, because it has the effect of making the distance—and therefore the speed—seem greater. The telephoto is used on the most famous scenes in this film: the jumps down the steep hill. But the telephoto makes the hill look steeper than it really is because it pulls the top of the hill proportionately closer than the bottom of the hill. You can see this clearly when the camera zooms back to a wide angle for the cars to turn at the bottom of the hill. All of a sudden the hill is less steep.

As you watch the cars go down the hill, notice how fast that Volkswagen Beetle is going. And notice how many times you pass that VW, and the white Pontiac. We go down the hill several times because it was shot several times–with the camera in various positions. For example, on one run the camera is in the Mustang; on another it's in the Charger.

Now, as we zip through a narrow, curved roadway . . . Hey! There's that white Pontiac again! We also lose a couple of hubcaps. Have someone count how many hubcaps are lost by the Charger. I get six or seven.

As the cars pull out onto the open road there is a scene where the heat waves off the pavement are very visible. Look in the lower left corner and you can see a police officer with a walkie-talkie. He's waving the cars to come through. Then as the cars speed along the open road they pass several slow moving cars. Freeze the frame and you'll see that there are no drivers in the cars. They are parked in one lane of traffic to heighten the impression of speed.

After the Mustang nearly hits the motorcycle, and spins out in the dirt, the bad guys smirk. But then our hero catches them again. Listen to the sound of the engines. The tone becomes high and anxious in the Charger and more assured in the Mustang. Subliminally, we know the coup de grace is coming.

Keep an eye on camera height. The closer to the pavement, the faster we seem to be going. Listen to the sound of the Mustang as the bad guys start shooting. Finally, note the position of the camera in the ditch, waiting for the front wheel of the Mustang.

Bullitt is a great piece of film. It does everything it is supposed to do without resorting to cheesy special effects. Yet it's highly manipulative. We think we are seeing two cars racing through the streets of San Francisco, when in fact, we are seeing a highly structured series of stunts and set-up shots. What happens to a young driver who suspends his disbelief during this sequence, but doesn't regain his disbelief when he gets behind the wheel of his own Mustang? ■

(Next Issue: Deconstructing *Psycho*—the shower scene)

Jeff Fennema

Community, Covenant, Commitment: An Exercise in Self-Discovery

Jeff Fennema teaches eighth grade language arts at Timothy Christian Middle School in Elmhurst, Illinois.

Last spring I joined a group of church members in activities meant to help us discover our traits, styles, and gifts. After completing the questionnaires, filling in the graphs, and reading analyses, I gained a deeper understanding of how I relate to the world around me, especially those people with whom I interact.

However, the process did not end there. Watching others discover their particular traits, styles, and gifts rekindled the pathos needed to embrace the diversity of the Christian body. Suddenly these revelations about others made sense. I could understand why one of my Christian brothers micro-analyzes all of our decisions in a meeting, or why a Christian sister is so kind and understanding to people who do not seem to deserve her compassion.

Soon my thoughts turned to my students. Is it possible for eighth graders to reflect upon themselves in a method that foster self-analysis? Absolutely! These young adults spend much of their time engaged in self-discovery. And so the challenge was delivered: how to recreate these surveys in a way that eighth grade students might gain insight into how God had created them.

At the beginning of each year our eighth grade students, teachers, and brave parent-chaperones travel to a camp in Wisconsin. The two days spent together foster a sense of Christian community, not only through recreation, but also through small and large group activities. The retreat sets the tone for the rest of our year together.

During this year's retreat, the parent-chaperones operated as small group leaders. Each student and adult received a packet of materials. Included were surveys, graphs, questions, analyses, and even a covenant. In addition to horseback riding, archery, swimming, and the occasional tossing of teachers into the lake, the students met in their small groups to unfold their personal traits, styles, and gifts. Whether he or she was structured or unstructured, task or people oriented, each student learned something new about himself or herself. They found names for the things they already knew they were good at: creative communication, encouragement, mercy, and other gifts. Affirmation from others in the groups added to the self-discovery process.

Once the students absorbed this knowledge, group leaders guided them toward a biblical response. Too often middle school self-discovery activities culminate with a "look at me" celebration, which fertilizes an atmosphere of self-indulgence. One of the major defining elements of the Christian middle school is that it is God-centered rather than student-centered. Guiding students toward self-discovery is an important part of our calling as Christian middle school teachers. Yet when the process simply ends there, we have diluted our distinctiveness and sold out to a "feel good" egocentrism.

The question presented to the students was, "So now what?" How was God going to be honored through their learning about themselves? The first discussion centered upon understanding and accepting the diversity within the body of Christ. Some young adults fear being different, yet other young adults thrive on it. We noted the danger of placing a higher value upon specific traits, styles, and gifts, and pointed to 1 Corinthians 12:12-30 as presenting diversity not only as a *good* thing, but also *necessary.* To stress the point, Paul offers us silly images of the human body being one big eye or one big ear. Likewise, the students discussed and heard the need to appreciate those around them who were different, and the value these people added to the

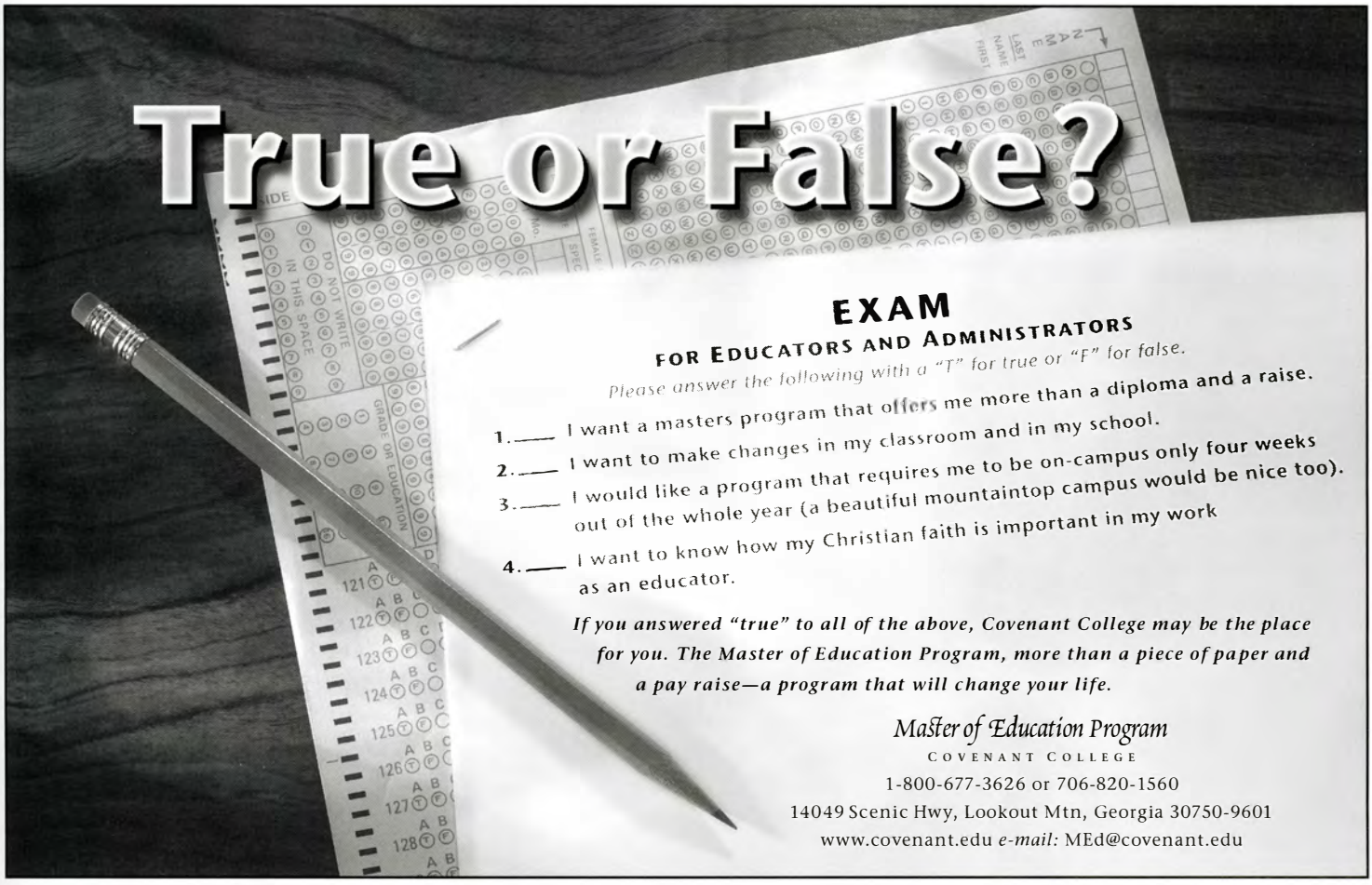
completion of the Christian body.

The group leaders then challenged the students to think of ways they could use their gifts to build up the body of middle school students throughout the school year. Some students just wrote down something to complete the assignment. Others carefully considered potential opportunities to serve those around them by using their specific discoveries.

In the final activity students completed a covenant—not an agreement between two equal parties, but rather between a stronger party and a weaker party. God has created these young adults with their particular uniqueness. As an act of gratitude, they were asked to write specific ways they would serve others throughout the school year. Once we returned to school, we asked the students to display one copy of the covenant in their lockers to serve as a reminder of the commitment they made to God during our retreat.

Has it worked? Yes and no. The process needs some fine-tuning, and some minor changes are already being considered for next year's retreat. The follow-up is a key element that needs more work for our situation, and we will develop a better strategy for that in the future. Yet, generally speaking, this class appears to possess attitudes of service to one another. A great deal of credit goes to our seventh grade teaching staff, who developed and implemented many community-building activities with this group last year. This retreat might be best viewed as merely accepting the torch that was lit and passed on by them.

Self-discovery can be healthy, especially at this age. Self-discovery in the context of how God created each of us is even better. It still remains incomplete if we ignore our response to the God who created us. It is crucial to guide middle school students in looking ultimately outward and upward, not inward, in all they think, say, and do. Even through self-discovery activities, God can and must be praised. ■



Query

Marlene Dorhout

Marlene Dorhout teaches at Denver Christian Middle School in Denver, Colorado.

Every year I find it more difficult to get students to complete homework assignments. Consequently, I am assigning less for them to do, hoping they will at least accomplish what I ask. Some parents also complain if I assign too much. Several of my colleagues simply do not give any or give very little homework. If I resort to no homework, my class will include more student work time and less will be accomplished. What is your opinion?

Homework is a skill that requires time and instruction. Elementary school teachers can lay the groundwork; middle school and high school teachers need to progressively establish guidelines and limits to assure success.

Parents' opinions vary greatly, and we cannot be unduly swayed by them. Some want less homework because it interferes with their busy lives, and they are unable to spend the time at home required to supervise or help. Others want more because they equate the amount of homework with achievement and excellence. Attempts have been made to standardize the amount of time students spend on homework, but such standards do not take into consideration the differences in learning styles and abilities of the various students. As educators, we do not assign more or less homework to please parents, but we make certain homework is relevant to the learning process and the individual learner. Keeping parents informed and enlisting their cooperation prevent future attacks on homework practices.

Homework teaches responsibility, and responsibility builds self-esteem. However, the focus of a quality education should not be on homework or the amount of information accumulated, but on the curriculum's challenging the present and future learner. The discovery and mastery of learning techniques may better serve the student given the onslaught of knowledge and technology today.

Rather than bemoan the students' doing less work than I did in school, I think of the tremendous avenues of learning available to them today. Certainly they experience more opportunities from a variety of sources than I did from the hours spent with textbooks. Thus, I don't always know the most meaningful kind of homework to assign, but the challenge of educating today is certainly exciting. As a teacher I have to do my homework in order to be a responsible facilitator of learning and a knowledgeable leader into the unknown twenty-first century. The journey is the joy in education!

Teachers are beginning to understand the academic benefits of the Internet—virtual museum tours, anatomy online, maps of the world—but they also know that use of the Internet can be dangerous for students. How do Christian educators encourage their students to explore the Internet when lewd, vulgar, and pornographic material is easily accessible?

(I referred this question to Tyler Amidon, PE teacher at Highlands Ranch Christian Elementary School in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. He serves on the Denver Christian Schools technology committee.)

There are three primary options for teachers to consider. First, teachers can closely monitor student access, trying carefully to check each site that is hit. Second, teachers can take a hands-off approach and leave students to use their own judgment about questionable material. Third, schools may employ an Internet service provider (ISP) that uses a Web filtration system to block obscenities.

The advantage of close supervision is that students will not inadvertently hit inappropriate content sites because teachers can anticipate potential problems and help guide student searches. For example, pre-planned searches can be used for large groups. Unfortunately, close supervision shrinks the freedom that the Internet symbolizes. Allowing students to feel the power of investigating the Internet and seeking the wealth of healthy material it has to offer is hampered by this approach. Exploration is part of the Internet's excitement and appeal. The pride of independently learning about the bugs in South America or the weather in Chicago is lost.

However, leaving Internet access totally up to students puts young people in charge of decisions they may not be technologically or cognitively equipped to handle. Temptation to access inappropriate sites can be great and accidental hits may easily occur. For example, students studying the affects of the atomic bomb

at Hiroshima using "bomb" as a search word might find bomb-making recipes or hate group Web sites. Students can be taught Internet savvy and skills to help them self-monitor Internet use, and with this approach the Internet remains an adventurous place. This option takes teacher commitment, parent trust, and student cooperation to be successful; and there is still a fine line between controlling a student's search and maintaining his or her safety on the Internet.

Using a filtering system may be a compromise that allows relative autonomy and safeguards students at the same time. There are Christian ISPs that offer such filters. For example, in Denver, Colorado, a Christian ISP called Power-online uses a filtration system called SafeSurf, which monitors a large database of Web sites containing adult material. SafeSurf blocks sites that contain words or phrases that research shows indicate the presence of sexually explicit or otherwise inappropriate material. Filtration systems give student users control of their own safe Internet adventures while enabling teachers to be assistants to the adventure rather than the dictators of it. Unfortunately, filters may block material that teachers or parents deem educational, such as a collection of art work. However, most ISPs will allow subscribers to make limited adjustments in their filtration.

Regardless of which solution Christian schools implement, careful consideration of problems and potentials, educated teachers, and eager and responsible students are essential components for rewarding experiences on the Internet. ■

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Ken Bergwerff, M.A.,
a middle school teacher for 19 years, Sylvan Christian Middle School

Jim Voss, B.A.
a middle school teacher for 9 years, Sylvan Christian Middle School

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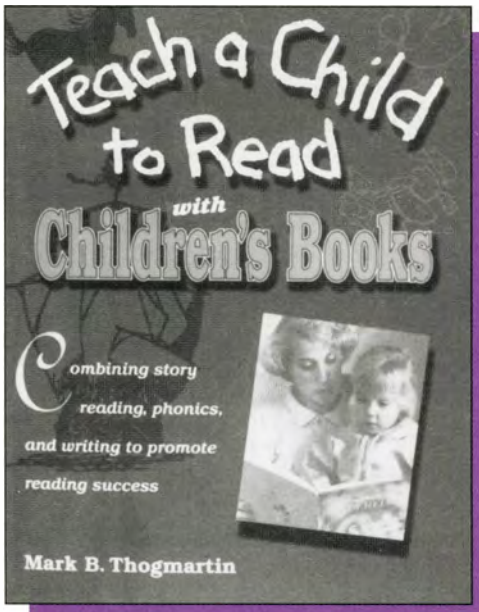
BOOK Reviews

Editor Steve J. Van Der Weele

Mark B. Thogmartin *Teach a Child to Read with Children's Books: Combining Story Reading, Phonics, and Writing to Promote Reading Success.* Bloomington, Indiana, ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication and EDINFO Press, 1996. 200 pages, soft cover.

Reviewed by Robert Bruinsma, chairperson in the education department at The King's University College and Western Canada regional editor of CEJ.



Many times in the more than twenty-five years of my career in the teaching of literacy—from elementary grades to the university level—I have been asked by parents of young children what they can do to help their children become not only successful but joyful readers. I wish that I had had Mark Thogmartin's *Teach a Child to Read* to thrust into their hands and their hearts years ago. With the publication of this book we all have an ideal resource that, if used as intended, will help to develop not only the skill but also the will to read.

As the title suggests and as the preface by Carl B. Smith makes clear, the primary market for the book is home-schoolers and other parents facilitating the reading and writing of children. In truth, however, that aim is too modest, for the book has other uses as well, including (1) serving as adjunct college text for methods courses in the language arts, (2) providing a resource for any elementary teacher needing reminders about issues related to the teaching of reading and writing, (3) its use as a comprehensive guide to ideas and strategies in the teaching of language arts.

The first five chapters serve as a prolegomenon to the remaining five chapters—the instructional heart of the book. The first chapter describes the three-decade "Great Debate" between code emphasis (phonics) and meaning emphasis in the teaching of reading and what the implications are for literacy instruction. Thogmartin wisely concludes that "it is unlikely that any consensus will ever be reached on one best approach to reading instruction" (8). What is important is that children learn both the skills of reading and the life-long desire to read.

Chapter 2 sets reading acquisition firmly within a developmental perspective by relating how children learn to speak to how they learn to read—a most helpful series of insights. Many of the expensive packaged phonics programs being marketed are not only unnecessary but are based on a faulty understanding of the literacy acquisition process.

"Early Readers: What can they teach us?" is the title of Chapter 3. A careful study reveals that the ability to read is related to the total speaking and writing environment in which the child lives. For example, early-reading children spend much time in the company of people who talk with them and with each other. Again, adults often provide support by responding to children in ways that take the risk out of their attempts to use the language they are still struggling to learn. Moreover, the sheer quantity of experience with the printed word contributes greatly to early fluency with the text. In short, it is in the context of experiencing good literature—reading materials that are both pleasurable and non-threatening—that a child is introduced to all the facets of reading and achieves the motivation to become a life-long reader. The chapter concludes with suggestions for reading aloud with children and stresses how important it is that the child learn letter names and their sounds.

In Chapter 4 Thogmartin draws on his specialty as a Reading Recovery instructor. The program by that name is currently one of the most successful early intervention programs for at-risk young readers. He provides general principles that can be used in designing reading lessons for all children.

What are "real books" in a teaching program? Chapter 5 answers this question: they are books written and illustrated for children by children's authors, as opposed to those designed for basal readers and other explicit instructional purposes. An appendix to this chapter lists over 400 book titles arranged according to difficulty, from pre-primer through

Grade 2. This list alone is worth the price of the book!

The remaining chapters deal with the pedagogy of the teaching of reading. The titles indicate both the content and the approach. Chapter 6 is titled "Preparing for Formal Lessons"; Chapter 7 is called "Book Reading and Strategy Development"; Chapter 8 is headed "Learning about Letters, Sounds, and Words"; Chapter 9 is titled "Story Writing in the Reading Lesson." All of this is summed up in Chapter 10, the final one, "Putting It All Together: A Sample Lesson." The book includes many reproducible examples of charts, skills checklists, and other forms useful for both individual and group teaching and record keeping. The tone throughout is informal and conversational, and the text includes many concrete examples of instructional strategies. All in all, the book provides a well-balanced combination of principle and practice in the instruction of reading and writing.

Every primary teacher should own this book personally. And every principal should order one copy for the library and another for the reading resource center. The book will help not only the teacher but eventually the student, the parents, and the broader community as well.

Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Survival and Success in the Twenty-First Century
Edited by Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997. 461 pages.
Reviewed by Peter P. DeBoer, professor of education, emeritus, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

A few years ago the education department at Calvin received a letter from a Christian school superintendent critical of those seniors who had offered themselves as candidates for jobs in his school system. He wrote that he had asked each of twenty candidates "to define a Reformed world and life view" and to "explain how it was specifically articulated in the classroom." He went on, generously I thought, to suggest that he was sure the students knew the answers; they simply had difficulty putting it all into words.

Having just finished another term as elder of a church council, and having witnessed some of the halting and imperfect professions of faith of dozens of well-meaning young people—even when the pastor carefully pitches a home-run question that ought to be hit over the wall—I can empathize with both the superintendent and his candidates.

When it comes to matters of faith and how it affects our teaching, we often do come up tongue-tied. I've often thought that those who teach young children have a considerable advantage over those of us more deeply involved in our disciplines. Though they may still have difficulty verbalizing what they are doing, elementary teachers seem to interact rather naturally, almost naively, but, withal, with children and ideas in ways that honor the Lord. For all those of us who teach at the middle school level and above, I think the matter becomes much more problematic, perhaps because our efforts to honor the disciplines often seem to get in the way of faithful integration.

Hence, for all those Christian elementary and secondary teachers who are interested in "world views" and how they can come to expression in a variety of religious-denominational circumstances, here is a potentially helpful book because it is larded with ideals, concepts, lofty goals. Be forewarned, though: when it comes to applying them in specific classroom settings, you'll have to do much of that on your own.

This important book does raise—and seek answers to—such fundamental questions as these: how is it possible for Christian institutions of higher learning to have first-rate academic programs that are, at the same time, expressive of faith commitments? How do such colleges and universities avoid the shoal of a too generous accommodation, an attitude that leads eventually to an abandoning of religious roots or the shipwreck of an overly narrowed Christian worldview that limits the search for truth?

With fiscal support from the Lily Endowment, Inc., and with the help of a distinguished panel of advisors, editors Hughes and Adrian (both associated in part with Pepperdine University) chose to attempt to answer the questions posed above by identifying seven faith traditions (Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Mennonite, Evangelical, Wesleyan/Holiness) with two institutional examples in each case of what they call "success stories," that is, brief narrative histories of those Christian colleges and universities that reputedly both are strong academically and continue to operate within the context of their historic faith commitments.

They also, given the shaping force of denominational roots, chose to preface each narrative with an analytical essay in

which a representative from each faith tradition seeks to define what that tradition is and what, in fact, it contributes to the task of Christian higher education.

Although the institutional narratives are more interesting, the theoretical analyses are more useful, I think, because they lift up some stunning ideals for Christians in education at all levels to attempt to achieve:

• Take Roman Catholicism with its great respect for the "cumulative wisdom of the Christian generations [which] have gone before" including reverence for the heroes of the tradition—the martyrs; with its recent impetus worldwide toward a doctrinal and practical concern for peace and social justice; for its "sacramental principle," which dictates that one's love for God must "incarnate" itself in a way of life, thought, and worship that can be fully felt.

• Take the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition which, if maintained in keeping with John Wesley's teachings, would refuse to separate a concern for saving souls from a focus on transforming the social order. Hence "holiness" becomes not merely personal but social in nature, evident in ministries to the urban poor and women (including their ordination).

• Or observe the Mennonites who, in spite of a doctrine of the church that still leads to degrees of church-world dualism, have moved from a one-issue international agenda of preparing missionaries for "foreign" assignment to a pluralist identification with peoples in other cultures, especially the weak and the poor, through service projects and overseas work-study programs.

As the book makes clear, I think, the Sumo wrestlers in this faith/learning arena are wearing the colors of either Wheaton in the Evangelical or Calvin in the Reformed traditions. These heavyweights have won their laurels by what, at least in this volume, would appear to be a more self-consistent articulation of the issues than any of the other traditions, providing leadership and influence that extends far beyond the bounds of their own faculties. The analytic chapters by Harold Heie for the Evangelicals and James D. Bratt for the Calvinists are worth the price of the book.

Bratt's chapter is particularly compelling, and I invite all Christian school faculties to study it at length. For one central example, we who operate Christian schools are often prompted to make claims about distinctiveness. We ought to be, and indeed often are, different in ways intended to honor the Lord. But such a quest often induces a self-righteousness that tends to trash "the works and wisdom of 'the world'" (read, perhaps: the way they do it in the public schools).

But if our salvation gives us no intellectual superiority over the "unregenerate" (remembering that many who are Christian teach in public schools), if in spite of our redemption we still "see darkly," are there any intellectual advantages to being "in Christ"? Or does our "differentness" lie mostly in school uniforms or vegetarian lunches?

Bratt's answer is freshly crafted to capture old echoes. The advantage lies, he writes, in "a special revelation . . . that corrects [the vision of the faithful] so that they can start to see creation aright; the promptings of the Holy Spirit who is promised to lead into all truth; and a sense of the right paradigms, an apprehension by faith of the deep patterns of divine action which will prompt believers to at least ask the right questions" (129).

That, plus a right understanding of "law" in Reformed theology, should help us come to know "ideal patterns" for the life that Calvinists are called to try to restore. "Their notion of law has made Calvinists," writes Bratt, "knights of King Jesus or caretakers in the ruined temple, commissioned to scout out error or polish the mirrors of glory" (130).

No easy task, this effort to integrate faith and knowledge; and phrases, such as "apprehension by faith of the deep patterns of divine action" may even threaten many us into inaction.

It may be that, in addition to philosophers and historians represented in this volume, we should turn for help to the poets. One of them once wrote with utter confidence: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1 KJV). Another, suggesting, I think, that seeing the hand of God in the midst of our living, including our academic life, ought not be so difficult, is Francis Thompson. In "In No Strange Land" he said it well: "The angels keep their ancient places;/Turn but a stone, and start a wing!/'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces,/That miss the many-splendored thing."

Finally, maybe we can now appreciate just a bit better what Paul had in mind when he wrote, "If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation . . ." (1 Corinthians 5:17 NIV). Paul suggests that for those in Christ there is a new look to life. We see things differently because, for the believer, they really are different.

No room for intellectual superiority here, but for the sake of faithfully understanding and doing Christian education at all levels, this legacy provides an enormous advantage.■

Reader Response

Dear CEJ readers,

I went up a mountain road recently and looked back at the city of Merida, my home for a year. The whole valley seemed solid with red-tile roofs. I couldn't see the numerous little arepa stands, where vendors sell the little hot doughy biscuits filled with cheese or meat. I couldn't see the piles of yesterday's unsold bananas and tomatoes waiting for the garbage truck. I couldn't see the gaping manholes whose covers have disappeared. I couldn't see the squatters' laundry draped across their open-ended shacks. I saw only the striking red tiles packed into the canyon below snowy Pico Bolivar, the highest point in the Andean range. The sight was marvelous.

Back down in the city, at Universidad de los Andes, I looked out my office window and up. The campus snuggles up to the base of the north range, and every view is breath-taking, at least for me. The natives forget to look. "What are those brilliant orange trees that are in full flower?" I asked. And nobody knew if the trees are called bucare or something else. They haven't really thought about the trees lately. They're busy finishing the term—the spring term, because last spring's strike put everything off schedule. They're busy holding committee meetings and recording grades—business as usual.

As a visitor, I breathe in fresh Andean air and smell the rain that washes softly down the mountain after dark. Some mornings I venture into the little roadside fruterias where colorful melons and mangoes hang from mesh bags laced up between bunches of plantains. I drink little cups of rich Venezuelan coffee offered by students during breaks—no, I'm not a coffee drinker, but the red beans ripen right here on the mountainside. I need to see and feel and taste with senses sharpened by my alien status.

I know, you can't just move to the Andes. You can't leave a calling. But I urge you to find refreshment of perspective, to step away from the leftover piles and the potholes and the frenzied rush, to find beauty in the color and patterns and rhythm of your work—to the glory of God.

In Christ's service,
Lorna Van Gilst

It was with interest that I read the responses by three individuals to the article "How Big Is a Dinosaur?" However, only one of the three respondents (Daniel Vander Kooy) offers constructive criticism noting that "It is an individual's personal belief of Genesis, not the scientific evidences, that determine what they (i.e., students) will or will not accept." The other respondents imply that the scientific facts, or the "abundant physical evidence," proves that creation science is "unsubstantiated speculation" and "utter and complete nonsense." They may be correct in reprimanding your journal for publishing an article suggesting that creationism is Christian and evolution is not, but they make unfounded statements against creation science. They have failed to take into consideration a phenomenon happening among present-day proponents of evolution—to admit that evolution is based on "several unproven philosophical assumptions" (I refer you to Dr. Michael Ruse's address to the 1993 annual AAAS meeting).

As a Christian biology professor and researcher, it is my goal to teach the scientific theory of evolution in its entirety, and to show to my students the merits and the flaws of this theory. This, in itself, is teaching them to think scientifically. To assume that the proof for evolution is beyond criticism is to remove one of the basic freedoms needed to pursue the scientific enterprise. This freedom allows us to criticize established scientific theories. Unfortunately for evolutionists living in the 1990s, the biological evidence against evolution has become so overwhelming that many biologists now believe that evolution does not occur today because our environment is no longer suitable (so much for the theory of uniformitarianism upon which much of our geology is based). So in the light of modern scientific findings, creationism becomes an attractive alternative to the theory of evolution. Unless theistic evolutionists alter their approach to educating students about evolution, I am convinced that evolutionists may become extinct like the dinosaurs.

Sincerely,
Dr. Gary Chiang, B.Sc., M.Sc., Ph.D.

I was provoked to think deeply by Stefan Ulstein's opinion piece in the October *Christian Educators Journal*. No doubt there is a type of indefensible prudery surviving in places; it influences the way that some schools and homes address or fail to address sexual themes. But I am left unsatisfied by his treatment of the subject for two reasons. First, all of the explicit examples cited come from the Old Testament Scripture; none come from the New Testament. It is not obvious to me that the candor of the Old Testament teaches the Christian anything in particular about the handling of sexual themes. The New Testament is more explicit in another direction—that of marked understatement in handling such subjects—whether by allusion to particular behaviors (Rom. 1:26 ff, 1 Cor. 5:1) or by the inculcation of habits of careful and deliberate speech (Eph. 5:3-12). According to Paul, some themes are too shameful to be mentioned. How would we maintain such

distinctions following the approach Ulstein proposes? Second, our discussion of these matters must take into account that our surrounding culture is in transit. Behind us is an era in which there were subjects termed "blue"; before us is an era in which no subject material is deemed unfit for disclosure or display. The lines on the playing field called "public taste" are shifting even as we reflect on this question. Evidence is not lacking to suggest that North American Christianity is simply riding this wave without very adequate reflection. So please, can we carry this discussion further? The question cannot be simply one of whether we will deal with sexual themes and issues; it is a question of how to do this in a distinctively Christian way.

Ken Stewart, Dept. of Bible & Missions, Covenant College, Lookout Mtn., GA

Professor Stewart makes several valid points [in the letter above.] I used the Old Testament references because they are explicit. The Old Testament is primarily a realistic narrative of God's people. The narrative in the New Testament is mostly concerned with the life of Jesus. The bulk of the rest is letters from the apostles to the churches. Could it be that the difference in genre offers an explanation? As an English teacher, I often meet parents who don't like the way we study narrative, e.g. novels, stories. When I point to the Old Testament. passages, they act as if I have made an embarrassing gaffe. One lady assured me that the passage I read from Ezekiel about harlots and their activities wasn't in her version.

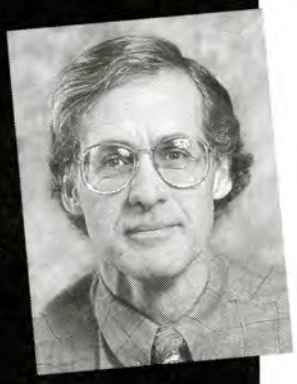
While we live under a New Testament covenant of grace, we are instructed to read and reflect on all the scriptures, just as Jesus did. A dialogue on the difference in candor would be helpful as we struggle to be clear in what we teach.

It is true that we live in a shifting cultural landscape, and that is the most compelling reason to examine carefully what we are doing and not doing. Anyone who has read Martin Luther's kitchen wisdom knows that he'd never pass muster in most modern evangelical schools. All those jokes about flatulence and sex would sink him like a Mercedes in a mud hole. Culture is always shifting. We must hold on to that which comes from God and be ready to change the rest.

Stefan Ulstein,
CEJ Media Eye columnist

Editor's note:

In the October issue of *Christian Educators Journal* we incorrectly indicated that a reader response letter was written by Daniel Vander Kooy, principal of the Hamilton District Christian High School. Mr. Vander Kooy is not the principal at Hamilton District Christian High School, but rather, a biology teacher at Holland Christian High School in Holland, Michigan. We regret the error and any misunderstanding it may have caused.



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