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Inclusive Education

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Editorial

In His Image

Pat Kornelis

The newborn babe with red, wrinkled, chafed skin whose pleading whimpers bring a mother's milk; the brilliant, attractive, highly-successful student; the young child with Down Syndrome—all were created in his image. He who rules the universe and orders our days has made us each in his image. And as his image-bearers we are joined together in one community—the body of Christ.

For many years I did not experience what it means to live in a community. Having spent years living in large cities, I had come to enjoy and relish my sense of anonymity. I loved the fact that no one knew me, or my family, or my relatives. I felt free to be myself because no one compared me to my brothers or sisters; no one wondered about my history, my background.

However, more and more, I have come to realize that such anonymity allowed me not only privacy but also a lack of responsibility to my community. If I chose not to know my neighbor, I didn't feel responsible for the well-being of my neighbor. Not knowing my neighbor meant I didn't have to consider how my actions might affect him or her.

Being part of a community has joined me to people I might otherwise not choose. As members of the community of Christ, we don't get to choose the "most worthy" candidates. We don't get to set an IQ standard or an entrance requirement. We are made in the image of God—we are, therefore, part of his community.

What does that mean then for us? First, it means that we are blessed. We are enriched and deepened within ourselves by the contact and care we receive from and give to our community. When we celebrate the gifts of the many different individuals that make up our community, we grow individually. Being enveloped by the sincere love and affection of a child with Down Syndrome fills me with awe. Witnessing the struggle and courage of a child with cerebral palsy fills me with humbleness at the strength of individuals who live with impairments. Appreciating the creativity of a young artist or enjoying the musical talents of a budding musician fills me with amazement at the gifts God so richly displays among his image-bearers.

We are also blessed when we witness the love Christ so richly bestows on us. Several years ago my cousin, at age sixteen, was diagnosed with bone cancer. Despite the amputation of her leg, she was filled with the love of living. She had strength and laughter because she was confident of her place in Christ's community—his body. When she died a number of years after her initial diagnosis, her funeral was a celebration—a celebration of being part of the community of believers. Through her witness and profession of her love for the Lord, we grew. As part of the body of believers, we received strength through her witness.

Being part of this community of Christ also demands responsibility. We are called to love, encourage, and pray for each other. That's not just a suggestion, a concept we may accept when and where and for whomever we choose. It's a command, a reflection of our love for God and his love for us. I must love and encourage and pray for all the members of the community of Christ—those I admire, those I think critically of, those who struggle, those whose IQ is lower than average, those whose legs or arms or eyes or ears don't function as mine do.

As part of this community I am held accountable for the needs of its members. I give to and receive from this community as do its other members, and I must do my part to help this community live up to the potential for which God created it. As an educator, that means I need to consider prayerfully how my role in the community will aid its members. It would be presumptuous, however, for me to assume that I could meet the educational needs of all the members of a community. I may not be equipped to help the student with a severe learning disability. I may not be equipped to challenge the minds of gifted students. My school may not be equipped to meet the needs of students who are vision impaired, paraplegic, or suffering from behavioral disorders. That, however, doesn't negate my responsibility. We know that if we are all created in the image of God, are members of his community, we must seek ways for all to grow to their full potential.

I am also responsible for being an image-bearer. While God takes pleasure in our gifts and talents, likewise, he is pained by our sin and neglect. When we reject our calling, when we wash our hands of our responsibility to our community, we do so to him. Because we are part of him, everything we are affects him. How often he must grieve when we don't offer our best effort. How his heart must ache when we give lip service to our faith but don't accompany our profession with actions that reflect our adoration of him.

Finally, being part of the community of Christ puts us in communion with him. We see glimpses of his glory in the images he created. We know that we are precious to him and that he enfolds us in his arms with love and says, "You are mine, I created you." ■

The Ideology of Inclusive Education

by Alyce Oosterhuis

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Ever since U.S. PL 94-142 came into effect in 1974, school systems on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border have scrambled to provide educational services for the mentally and physically disabled that will enable every child to develop to his or her full potential and live a life of dignity, independence, and self worth. Since the mid-1970s, terms such as *inclusive education*, and *cascade of services* have become an integral part of the educational lexicon. And since the mid-1980s, when the American Association of Mental Retardation changed the parameters for the labeling of the mentally disabled, the 16% population pool of mentally challenged individuals was significantly reduced to 2%. In ten years the schooling enterprise had been expanded to provide services to most of both nations' children and to include in its range of academic achieving students an additional group of 14% of children who had previously been diagnosed as "slow" or "mildly retarded."

As day schools became increasingly involved in providing services to disabled children, state-sponsored full service institutions closed their doors. Parents, who previously had visited their children on weekends in the various institutions now took these children home to insist on their rightful place in the day schools. In the 1990s, all types of children, regardless of the extent of their mental disabilities, have been included in public day schools.

In many Christian schools, the demands of inclusive education have been embedded in concepts that are at the heart of the Christian day school movements: all God's children are his image-bearers; the school is a Christian community in which all children have a meaningful place and task; the Christian school teacher is "in loco parentis" for the duration of the school day; every child is gifted and the school's task is to unwrap those gifts; no child ought to be denied access to the Christian environment of the day school. These are concepts that wrench at the heart of the meaning of Christian education. Can anyone deny a child access to a Christian school because of limited cognitive abilities when these concepts are the pillars of the Christian school movement? And yet there are times when I feel we may have to say; "I'm sorry, but this school is not the best place for your child."

In its extreme form, the ideology of inclusive education is based on the belief that all children have potential for development of their abilities. Several other tenets are as follows. Mutual respect and tolerance of differences are promoted in a classroom of unique individuals who are bound by one common variable—their chronological age. Children learn best with and from their chronological peers, and every child needs to be made an integral part of that classroom. Children ought not to be segregated via resource rooms—the resource room teacher works in the regular classroom with the disabled children. The disabled child is never retained in a grade because other goals of the IEP (Individual Education Plan) have not been attained—the IEP needs to be reworked.

Ironically enough, it is not unusual to find that a moderately retarded child is passed on to the next grade with skills that are far below grade level, while another child with average potential is retained because of social and/or academic deficiencies. What bothers me most about the extremes of inclusive education are some glaring inconsistencies and the belief that the day school enables all children to develop their potentials. In view of the growing home schooling movement, these inconsistencies and beliefs strike at the very basis of education as we know it.

Many smaller Christian schools have not had the luxury of providing a cascade of services whereby some children are segregated for a specific subject while other disabled students are minimally included in the regular classes because they are learning life skills in their special education classes. In the majority of the Christian schools with which I am familiar, inclusive education is an all or nothing affair. Children are fully included with or without teacher aide, or they are excluded from being allowed to attend the school of their parents' choice. Thus I know of classes attended by profoundly retarded students with a full-time aide, while moderately disabled or behaviorally disordered students are provided minimal assistance or denied admittance. In the allocation of scarce resources I sometimes wonder what is the more stewardly use of time and energy?

Before inclusive education for all

God's children can become an attainable ideal in our Christian schools, it is crucial that we examine our classroom structures, grading practices, achievement norms, parental expectations, student diversity, and curriculum demands. Unwrapping God's gifts means that in any classroom there exists a range of abilities that increases as children progress through the grades. Whole class teaching should seldom occur when each child is challenged to develop his or her abilities because, for example, while two children are calculating with compound fractions, others are still struggling with simple additions. The fifth graders who can read at an eighth grade level should not have to be limited to the basal reader that is at the level of a few others in the class. If we insist that chronological age continue to be the criteria for grade appointments, then it is also time that we recognize that in any group of children there are some who are much more advanced in specific grade level skills while others are far below.

We could adopt other class organizational structures. I have been in a school where every teacher welcomed five-year-olds into the community of primary grade children who ranged from five to eight years of age. In this London, England, elementary school there were six such communal classrooms, and every year a number of students would pass on to a middle school while new five-year-olds were welcomed into every class. The one-room school house from the past was potentially more inclusive of a wide range of abilities than most schools today.

The problem, of course, is, "How many students can one teacher reach effectively with such extensive individualization and/or group work?" Those parents who, in past generations placed their handicapped children in institutions "for the sake of the other children in the family" at least recognized that there are realistic limits to what an adult can expect to do with a group of needy, developing children. For a fully inclusive education classroom I would recommend that no more than twenty children can be challenged to individual development by one teacher. And for every child in this class with more extreme needs than the range provided by the "normal" population, there would be a full-time aide assigned to assist the teacher in enabling all children to develop their God-given gifts. I choose the number twenty somewhat arbitrarily—it could be twelve or fifteen. Policy guidelines need to be set with flexibility and an awareness of diverse needs. Every classroom develops its own group personality, and I have seen experienced teachers in desperate need of assistance in classes smaller than twenty.

> "Before inclusive education for all God's children can become an attainable ideal in our Christian schools, it is crucial that we examine our classroom structures, grading practices, achievement norms, parental expectations, student diversity, and curriculum demands."

Until schools recognize that inclusive education—in which *all* of God's children are to be challenged to fulfill their potential—is an ideal that points to the need for a change of many of our schools' current practices, we will have to be content with achieving less than the inclusive ideals of US PL 94-142. Achieving less means that we will have to weigh costs, benefits, needs, potential, abilities, and vocation. Christian schools cannot be all things to all children in our imperfect communities, but they can strive to do that which is within their mission statements: to enable children to develop their abilities in joyful service to God. ■

Inclusive Education

–a Scriptural Remedy for a Weak-kneed Community

by Barbara Newman

Barbara Newman is a special education teacher for the Christian Learning Center at Zeeland Christian School in Zeeland, Michigan, and a teacher consultant at six schools in West Michigan for the Christian Learning Center.

Hoping to find more information about an educational model called "Inclusive Education," I phoned a variety of public schools in Michigan. The common threads among the ten schools on my phone list seemed to be that they used the words "inclusive education" to describe their program and were very excited about it. Beyond those two things, the descriptions ranged from including only children who are mildly impaired to programming for one student with autism at a high school level. Some schools had one assistant assigned to each special needs child, and other systems included only children with moderate to severe impairments. One school put a group of six children with disabilities into one classroom; others insisted on only one per class. Each time I hung up the phone, the picture of inclusive education was even more blurry.

It seems strange to me that the topic professionals hotly debate, the area parents will sue a school system for, and a reality for many children in our classrooms called inclusive education has no legal definition. We all seem to be discussing something different when the words come up. Each person speaks from the experiences he or she has had with inclusion.

A brief history

Hundreds of years ago, parents who gave birth to children with obvious handicaps would simply leave them in the field where they had given birth—turning that birthing spot into a grave. Eventually, more children with handicaps survived those first fragile years due to better parental care as well as advancing medical care. Sixty years ago, my father attended school in Taintor, Iowa, with a boy named Robert. Although they had no fancy name for it at the time, Taintor Public School was running an inclusive education program. Robert played with the others, ate with his buddies, and had his own special work during desk time. He was just as much a part of that classroom as my father. Soon, however, society started to become much more aware of people with disabilities. These children with handicaps who were either part of inclusion programs or hidden at a rural home were soon recommended for state institutions. These residential placements could house large numbers of people with impairments. Some institutions were later exposed for mistreating patients like my friend, Lois.

I met Lois when she was an adult. She has since passed away, but she was severely mentally impaired and had no hair anywhere on her body. Even those small hairs on her arms were gone. Lois had moved from an institution to a small group home where I worked. A co-worker in the group home explained to me that the institution had used Lois to test chemotherapy options. The staff administered drugs to the residents and recorded the side effects. This particular medication was never released to the medical market because it made all hair fall out and stay out. Lois lived her lifetime with that dreadful reminder of the status people with impairments held in our society.

During this same time period, there were also some Christian residential placements, which were run with great love and integrity. Some children and adults continue to be served in such places.

The 1970s was a time for human rights. This was also true for persons with impairments. Many institutions were closed in favor of community-based housing. Many communities were given money to build impressive, self-contained schools for children with impairments. Gradually, these buildings became less popular as children began to be educated somewhere on the property of a general education school. In the 1980s, mainstreaming was the popular phrase as more "able" children would leave the self-contained special classroom to spend a portion of the day with general education peers. At the end of the 1980s, however,

the concept called inclusive education became more popular. Basically, educators returned to the Taintor Public School model, but with more of the information needed to build successful programs.

Our working definition

At Zeeland Christian School, where I am placed as an employee of the Christian Learning Center, we define inclusive education by describing the population we serve as well as defining two components. The Christian Learning Center has walked hand-in-hand with many other schools in West Michigan and beyond in starting similar programs. The Zeeland Christian program includes children with autism-spectrum disorders, all levels of mental impairments, physical difficulties, emotional impairments, and learning disabilities. Basically, we attempt to meet the needs of the children whose parents desire Christian education in the town of Zeeland. One child may be gifted, another have a visual style of learning, and yet another have unique needs because he was born with Down Syndrome. We attempt to put programs and people around these children so that each is challenged to grow.

We define our program as having two components. The first component is ownership. Ownership describes the place that children with special needs have in our setting. They are "owned" by or belong to the general education domain. The children are placed on general education class lists, have lockers in their classrooms, and if asked, "Who is your teacher?", the child will respond with the name of the general education teacher. The special educator is viewed as a case manager, an additional person in the child's life, but certainly not as a child's primary teacher.

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The second component is friendship. In many cases, children with disabilities have been denied the chance to have friendships. We set up a Circle of Friends for most children in the program. Both general and special education staff members solicit a commitment from general education students to befriend the child with special needs and be to him or her a source of learning, growth, and fun. The friendships, although initially very artificial, can become genuine and mutual. Ongoing activities promote participation in these circles.

A few examples

The story of Scott, one of our students, illustrates these two components well. This little boy with autism joined us a number of years ago after participating in a self-contained classroom for two years. We were a bit nervous about his arrival after observing him in the classroom at his previous school. Scott threw books around the room, screamed, and hid in a refrigerator box for a good part of the afternoon. There was significant discussion about whether we could meet the needs of this non-verbal, diapered, and very active child in our environment. We agreed to try a preschool placement for six weeks along with three extra half-days a week in my classroom to target language skills and other individual needs. Expecting the worst, we hired an assistant for the preschool setting. This assistant was out of a job within the first week of school. Scott noticed how the others were acting, and he followed suit. Scott comprehended the shift in expectations—he knew he was in preschool now, and he knew how to act by watching the

others. By the end of that year, Scott was toilet-trained, speaking in complete sentences, and beginning to read many words. He would occasionally have difficulty knowing how to act due to the social difficulties involved in autism, but his friends were committed to helping him through those times. Preschool is too young to begin a formal circle of friends, but I explained autism to the class so that they had a way to understand Scott's lack of language and his behavior. The new belonging Scott found in preschool along with the power of friendships allowed him to blossom.

Some success stories come packaged very differently. We had one child who was regressing rapidly due to a rare disorder called Landau-Kleffner Syndrome. His friends watched as this once speaking, happy peer lost all ability to hear and speak within the first three weeks of school. He became aggressive and unhappy—completely unable to participate in the class. A success story? YES. I watched in amazement as this child continued to be accepted and loved. They prayed for him, attempted to play with him, and loved him dearly. In a sociogram conducted by the classroom teacher, this child came out in the top list of children chosen by others. Top of the list? That's the success story. These children mastered, in three weeks, something it takes many of us years to learn. Each child learned to "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Romans 15:7). It must have been an awesome roar of praise in heaven evoked by this second grade class.

Success can also happen in watching as staff at a first-year inclusive school come from a place of skepticism about inclusion to a place of acceptance and excitement. One begins to see the awesome heart commitment of teachers and principals as they work together to meet the needs of some amazing image-bearers of God. Passages such as "God has arranged the parts of the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. . . . Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (excerpts from 1 Corinthians 12) become theme verses for the year. A teacher, who had been through some exhausting times with a student, beautifully illustrated why that school is "hooked" on inclusive education. When she collapses in a chair at night, she reminds herself that Jesus would have done the same things she chose to do that day. What an awesome colleague to have!

Scriptural guidance

We could talk about people with impairments, have movies on the subject, have a Disability Awareness Year, and call in a special speaker. These are all good things. We have found, however, that the best way to learn the multitude of lessons God wants to teach us is in everyday contact and living.

God has chosen time and time again to teach students and staff at Zeeland Christian School about himself and how he wants us to live through the eyes and actions of some children with impairments. If we had kept our school door closed to this population, we would have missed out on many lessons. Although an occasional reading lesson is interrupted by inappropriate noises, a teacher may have to spend a little more time with one student on a subject, or a class may take more time walking to music because of a slow-moving friend, God is teaching us life lessons daily. As we feel his compassion for a child, learn to pray for miracles, as we advocate for our friends and then see God answer those prayers, as we walk as Jesus did–beside, not above, those with impairments, willing to reach out with his healing touch—we are learning kingdom lessons.

"From him (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:16). How is your school growing? Do you have some "ligaments" missing? On the popularity chain, are those people who are wise, wealthy, and strong on the tops of the lists? For some reason, "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him" (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

You can't have a ligament attached to the body for a few hours and then removed. "Ligaments"—students with disabilities—sent to special schools are not connected to the body long enough to teach us to function with them. We only learn to hobble along without them. Using ligaments in a smooth fashion to produce a productive movement requires constant practice. If they are removed, the body is disabled. Amazing, isn't it? God somehow decided to arrange the body of Christ so that we need people with disabilities to make us fully functional.

If you believe that God has a plan for your school in this area, and if you have a heart commitment to launch this type of program, you are ready. Combined with some knowledge of schools who are already about this business, I believe you can say to your next family who walks in the building with a child who has Down Syndrome, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Luke 18:16). "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). ■

Reforming Christian Education

by Ron Polinder

Ron Polinder is principal at Lynden Christian High School in Lynden, Washington.

The following article originated as a speech to the high school faculty of Lynden Christian School in August of 1997 and has been edited for publication purposes. Its themes are particularly relevant to Christian day schools in the Dutch Calvinist tradition of Christian education, though they relate generally to the challenge of passing on a Reformed worldview to the next generation. To what extent do graduates and even teachers of our schools understand and articulate the great biblical motifs that the Reformed tradition has emphasized? And without proper theological literacy, how can we expect our schools to honor their commitments and our churches' to be vitally Reformed?

It has been my custom to present some thoughts and ideas as we come together for the first time in a school year. I consider it a part of my responsibility as a leader of this faculty to challenge, stimulate, provoke, and maybe even inspire. I take on the task this year more compelled than ever, having "pondered anew" some ideas and measured carefully my words. May the Holy Spirit breathe into them, for my topic is not one that immediately will bring a tingle to the spine. I fear these issues have become ho-hum, passe. [Yet, they merit revived interest today.]

Last May I was asked to participate in a pilot project, a colloquium on the Internet, sponsored by Calvin College. Dean David Hoekema, theologian Tom Thompson, philosopher Lee Hardy, and I each wrote an essay and thereby led the discussion around the question, "What is a Reformed worldview?" Fifteen participants from around the country, using our e-mail, proceeded to engage in a month of discussion. For me, at least three things happened:

1. I was challenged and deepened in my understanding of "Reformed" thinking.
2. I am again impressed by how hard it is to articulate.
3. I am intrigued by how difficult it is to pass on to a new generation.

This in turn prompts our topic for this morning, "Reforming Lynden Christian," one which I believe we need to attend to collectively in this coming year and beyond.

> "We affirm our Reformed character, and the high quality of our education. We are called to constantly be reforming–we are to be reforming our minds, the church, all of society, and certainly our school–to be conformed to biblical teaching to faithful Christian living, to the mind of Christ."

To be sure this is a dangerous title, for it hints that we are not presently Reformed. It may suggest to others that we have a list of deficiencies as long as that of American public education, and that we are in need of a massive reform movement. To the contrary, we affirm our Reformed character, and the high quality of our education. So we use this title to remind us of an old Reformed concept, that we are called to constantly be reforming—we are to be reforming our minds, the church, all of society, and certainly our school—to be conformed to biblical teaching, to faithful Christian living, to the mind of Christ.

Given that title, with this audience, it raises another set of issues. All of us have different experiences with the concept of "Reformed." These categories include:

- Those for whom this Reformed language and jargon, the talk of a Reformed perspective and tradition, is all rather new. You have heard the term but are just beginning to understand it. You probably don't dare to use it because you are not sure you are using it correctly.
- Those who have heard plenty of this Reformed talk, maybe too much to suit you, and you are yet wondering what it all means, how it fits. You are not even sure that you are a Reformed Christian. You may prefer simply "Christian," and you frankly struggle to know how this "Reformed" stuff should affect your teaching. You have not yet made it an integral part of your identity.
- Those who have heard it all, and who essentially believe it all. Of course you are Reformed, you have been for a lifetime, you can do a reasonable job of defining it, and you bring some of those concepts into your teaching from time to time. But this vision is not something you are passionate about. Your ardor in education is elsewhere. You are more practical and would prefer to get to your lesson plans, even as we speak.
- Those for whom this vision is their passion, people who claim this Reformed thinking as the core of their life and work. They get their satisfaction and joy out of seeing students catch glimpses of truth and meshing it with their worldview. Their spine does tingle when they get a fresh insight that they may be able to pass on to their students.

You decide where you presently lodge. Regardless, this is an important topic because this institution is founded

on and rooted in Reformed principles. The founding documents of this school are not mere opinions, but a theology that has huge implications for education. Everyone of us who has had the privilege of working here since its founding become trustees and stewards of that vision. We had better know and be able to articulate and pass on what that vision is. Our generation will need to have convictions for this place to stand. We owe that to our forefathers and mothers.

Additionally, there are substantial cultural conditions that militate against the Reformed vision. Let me identify two coming from diverse, but not necessarily opposite, directions. The first is our secular society with its materialism, consumerism, relativism, multiculturalism, scientism, egoism, conservatism and liberalism. These "isms" bombard us, our parents, our graduates, and our students. To think that we are not collectively influenced by that onslaught is to be horribly naïve.

Second, we are profoundly influenced by generic American evangelicalism, or of greater concern, fundamentalism. We are adopting their ownership style, their evangelism style, their youth group style. Not all of this is negative; indeed, some of it is very positive. But it is also true that we are therefore tempted to indiscriminately buy their church membership and their theology. And the theology issue is particularly bothersome, for theology is like buttoning your shirt—if you start wrong you will end wrong.

Further, there is this nagging historical reality. The Reformed community continues to do battle with itself, which so compromises our witness so as to prompt any discerning Christian, young or old, to seriously question whether they want to be part of such an outfit. So we have the unfortunate task of trying to teach a worldview and theology that for all of its richness, possesses a propensity to self-destruct. George Marsden notes that "too often Reformed people have been so totally confident of their own spiritual insights that they have been unable to accept or work with fellow Reformed Christians whose emphases may vary slightly."

In summary, we are trustees of a tradition. We can be easily waylaid from the left or from the right. And if that doesn't get us, we are capable of "turning on ourselves."

In spite of this touch of cynicism, I am declaring today with a boldness what heretofore I have not expressed, that at Lynden Christian School we must dig deeply to survey our Reformed roots and expound on our Reformed confession. I would caution, though, that such talk as we are engaged in may easily be interpreted as hinting that we have a corner on the truth. We don't! I hope you will remember previous opening school speeches in which we called you to consider the issues of the heart, issues of relationality, which the Reformed tradition, in my judgment, has often neglected. So we have spoken of the Roman Catholics, Baptists, Wesleyans, Charismatics, and Quakers, noting that all of these traditions and more have a gift that God has given them and that they each help us to more fully apprehend the truth. To our peril, we neglect what God in history has taught through these brothers and sisters.

Do we have a corner on the truth? Surely not, but most certainly we have a corner of the truth. Consider the difference that one preposition makes! The Reformed tradition has some insights, understandings, jewels that without, Christianity is impoverished, incomplete, unbiblical. Without our corner, a very substantial piece of the puzzle is missing.

Further, what do we call it? Do we use the "R" word? How strongly do we identify with the Reformed community at the risk of frightening others off? Can we teach the essence of Calvinism without calling it that, thereby being exclusive?

Yesterday a graduate indicated that he could not recall hearing the word "Reformed" at Lynden Christian, though he acknowledged that possibly he wasn't listening. He says that he hears it all the time now, in his Reformed Christian college. And then he noted, "But nothing of what I learned at Lynden Christian contradicts what I am learning in college—there is full agreement."

I am proposing that we become more willful in our use of Reformed language, that is if we know what we are talking about. (And by the way, I think TULIP is largely an inappropriate way to talk about being Reformed to high school students). I think that we must find and use a "Reformed" lexicon that is clear, objective, and sensitive. We are a Christian school, but we are a Christian school in the Reformed tradition.

I close then, with my articulation of what is Reformed, though others would use a different listing. In my judgment it is first of all a theological understanding. It is something huge, cosmic, awesome, holy, mysterious, paradoxical. The words to describe it do not come easily for the lay person.

Sovereignty—We begin with the sovereignty of God. This is where Reformed people often start. We declare that "our world belongs to God," that he loves it (John 3), he preserves it (Psalm 19), he sustains it (Colossians 1). We say, "God directs and bends to his will all that happens in the world. As history unfolds in ways we only know in part, all things… are under his control. God is present in our world by his Word and Spirit. The faithfulness of our great provider gives sense to our days and hope to our years. The future is secure…" (*Our World Belongs to God*).

Creation—Reformed people take the Creation seriously, though many of their fellow evangelicals have an "underdeveloped doctrine of Creation" (Stott). And the Reformed understanding is not limited to the physical realm, but includes culture. We figure that if God invested that much effort into making it and sustaining it—"each little flower that opens, each little bird that sings"—then Creation must be important. And if he gave Adam the marching order to be fruitful, to cultivate, to subdue, it must be weighty and consequential. "If God does not give up on the work of his hands, we may not either" *(Creation Regained)*. And if he told Noah to build an ark and to bring in those pairs so they would not become extinct, those critters must be significant. So our students need to consider the Endangered Species Act in light of Noah's ark. Is Creation for our students "just a Bible story"? Do they get beyond the triteness to the awesomeness?

Fall—Reformed people comprehend the Fall [into sin]. But do students these days in this morally bankrupt culture

know how great their sin and misery is—how badly they need a Savior? Do they know how the Fall extends to every area of life and culture? Don't our students need a healthy dose of Romans as well as Neal Plantinga's *Breviary,* which explains how deadly those seven sins are?

Redemption—Even as Creation and Fall are cosmic, so too must redemption be viewed as such. "Redemption in Jesus Christ reaches just as far as the Fall" (*Creation Regained*, 71). If we are serious about teaching and applying sovereignty, Creation, and Fall, and other concepts [I list] below, why would we not also pay careful attention to whether redemption is occurring in our schools? We are confused about redemption. At times we readily consign it to "the task of the church" and ignore its implication for the individual and corporate life of a school. At other times we conceive of redemption in the "accepting Christ" sense, the task of the chaplain or the evangelist on staff. But redemption needs to reach just as far as the Fall in our personal lives, in the communal life of the school, but even as fully as the grand biblical vision of shalom, the redeeming of life and culture.

Covenant—Do our students know that God has visited not only our planet, but our family and wants to be in relationship with us? What does it mean to be a "covenant God"? I recall participating in the interview of a young history professor at Calvin College, from Baptist roots, who testified of sitting at the feet of a Reformed preacher and hearing for the first time a sermon on the covenant—and he wept. That is how much the understanding of the covenant meant to him! Does it mean anything to us anymore?

Kingdom—"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Reformed people are fond of quoting Abraham Kuyper, who claimed "there is not one square inch of creation about which Jesus Christ does not say, 'This is mine!'" Clearly one of the greatest gifts we can give our students is that there is no room for dualism, no dichotomy between sacred and secular, public and private, fact and value. That suggests our students will take up their calling in a wide array of vocations, from accounting to zoology.

Revelation—Sir Francis Bacon said that God has written two books, Scripture and nature. We ought to be reading them both all the time, and we certainly do at this school. We have a high view of both, though we say Scripture is inspired and infallible. And we believe those two books are not intended to contradict each other, and when it appears they do, we must get to work to try to figure it out.

I am pleading for some passion about these concepts, that you would take them into yourself and allow them to penetrate your head and heart and hands, and teach them to our children. None of us can do that by ourselves—I need some help in comprehending and applying this to my work. Do you?

Would you be willing to attend to some of these ideas beyond this hour, to engage in some reflection? Or better yet, would you be willing to participate in an ongoing discussion, or a book study, maybe after school for an hour every couple of weeks? Do you want to understand better, so that it might affect your teaching inch by inch, your goal-setting, your curriculum outline, your classroom applications?

If your answer is no to all of those questions, you really should be looking for other work!

If your answer is yes, we will trust the Holy Spirit to remove the dimness of our souls and give us utterance as we individually, corporately, and intentionally strive to ever more faithfully "reform Lynden Christian." ■

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George Marsden (Viewpoints) helps us understand this tendency of the Reformed community doing battle with itself. He observes that Reformed people tend to fall into three groups:

a. Doctrinalist—These are folks who define their faith largely in terms of doctrinal issues. To be Reformed is to believe in a certain way, and how you believe is vital to whether we can be in fellowship. Therefore, Reformed folks have had this strong theological tradition, but it also has meant that we have the Reformed Church of America, Christian Reformed Church, the Protestant Reformed Church, the American Reformed, Canadian Reformed, Free Reformed, Netherlands Reformed, Reformed Baptists, Reformed Presbyterians, the Orthodox Christian Reformed, and now, alas, of all things the "United" Reformed. You get the point!

b. Pietist—These folks defined their faith more in terms of lifestyle. To be Reformed was to behave in certain ways, and how you behave is vital to whether we can be in fellowship. Therefore, Reformed folks practiced certain family patterns. So we went to church twice on Sunday, had devotions at every meal, gave generously to Christian causes. It also meant that we avoided the theater and dancing. We had pretty long lists of what was inappropriate on Sunday. All too often we were known for what we didn't do as compared to what we did do, though we did do plenty that we should not have done, and we were known for that too.

c. Culturalist—These folks saw their Reformed persuasion largely in terms of the relationship between Christianity and culture. They affirmed the lordship of Christ over all of reality and viewed every calling as sacred. The real test was whether they supported Christian schools at all levels where the Reformed worldview could be exemplified and taught. This too led to some distortions including a separation from the certain aspects of culture rather than an engagement with it, and the "Christian organization for everything" that developed in the Netherlands.

Staying True Amid Changes

by Dennis and Lavonne Roosendaal

Dennis and Lavonne Roosendaal have taught at Shoreline Christian School (formerly Watson Groen Christian School) for a combined total of almost sixty years. Dennis teaches high school math and is involved in athletics, and Lavonne teaches kindergarten and coordinates K-6 curriculum.

Anthony sits next to Sean, his kindergarten classmate, whose mother is "helping" him figure out how to play "Math Blaster" at the computer learning center.

"No, you don't do it that way. You need to click the mouse when the little man is under the right number," Anthony corrects both Sean and his mother.

Somewhat discouraged that one five-year-old knows so much about computer games while she and her son wonder whether to push "Return," strike an arrow key, or click the mouse, Mrs. Y. decides to search for a program with more explicit instructions to help her son.

Several differences between today's education and that of the sixties and seventies flash through one's mind as a mental picture of this experience is "snapped." Renate and Geoffrey Caine, in *Education on the Edge of Possibility*, say that education is moving out of stability into disequilibrium because of more interaction with the environment, more intensive media coverage, more concern from political and religious groups, more demands from business, more special needs to accommodate, and more impact from technology.

Certainly, many changes have occurred in education, but we contend that our intentional, stated goals have been similar, though not always practiced in full. The goal of Christian education in our school—at least on paper—has always been to educate the whole child and to help students serve God in his world. Today, however, there is an expanding awareness of the necessity and actuality of applying our written Christian philosophy amid the changes we experience.

Technology

Certainly, technology has changed in the last thirty-five years, creating opportunities as well as demands. Surfing the web is the "in" thing today—being able to go to nearly any point on the surface of the earth and get information, needed or not. Teachers in Christian schools may feel that it takes technology to hone a well-educated student today. But teachers are often forced to make decisions about the relative amount of time they or students spend surfing compared to delving into more traditional academia such as studying works of Chaucer.

True, there is a need for computer activities, but the question continues to recur, "What is a well-educated student?" We seem to be willing to settle the question by giving a little of more rather than more of a little. Since the school day hasn't lengthened as more courses—many introduced by technology—have been added, some of the emphasis on the "basics" has had to go.

Expression of faith

Dr. Robert De Vries, professor of church education at Calvin Theological Seminary, says he believes students today more openly express their relationship to the Lord and their growth in faith. The openness of students is shown in discussing anything from integrity to immorality. What used to make a person blush is now matter-of-fact. That freedom to share also is seen in a positive way in groups of five- and six-year-olds: when volunteers are asked to pray aloud, a majority of the students participate. Older students easily discuss their various worship practices in their respective churches.

We need to openly discuss our faith. However, Dr. De Vries also believes "something has been lost in the process." That "something" is the classic language of faith. In our school, we have moved from teaching Reformed theology in our high school to more practical Bible courses and the sharing of faith in our actions. Our Bible curriculum is still undergoing changes as we assimilate our population of approximately 300 students from 72 different churches. In kindergarten alone, 13 churches are represented by 22 students this year, while in 1967, 2 churches were represented by 12 students.

An ecumenicity is truly sensed in our school. Still, questions arise in our minds about God's desire for us. How shall we strengthen the vision of God's sovereignty and his kingdom while increasing growth and fellowship with Christian friends who look at Christian education from a perspective other than "Our world belongs to God"? Such questions are now being addressed by our staff and education committee to help us build on our biblical Reformed heritage in a way that is meaningful to our students.

Methods and materials

In the expanding body of knowledge and technology, wise choices are needed in discerning what should be taught at any grade level to shape a responsive, well-educated person in God's world.

In trying to make our academics practical, we have accumulated shelves of manipulatives used for counting, patterning, and arranging in tens or dividing in thirds. Replicas of body organs or foods have replaced the traditional worksheet illustrations. High school students are working with math or mechanical drawing in the parking lot or grocery store instead of the daily textbook. What used to be entirely pencil-and-paper mathematics, which for some was a purely rote exercise, has been applied to everyday situations for every child using everyday objects. Now our students comprehend mathematical concepts and are better at problem solving, but sometimes they lack the quick recall skill for math computation.

Assessment of learning should match

today's "hands on" teaching style. If students do not use only paper and pencil in learning, we need to use media other than paper and pencil in having them share what they've learned. They may be expected to exhibit what they've learned or share the projects they've worked on or show their progress in a portfolio.

Our instructional materials may have progressed at a more rapid pace than our assessment strategies. Today we have an overabundance of educational materials and advertising—not the status quo in the 1960s or 1970s. A constant bombardment of the newest textbook editions, the latest conflict resolution techniques, technology helps, health and fitness updates, geography awareness activities, new writing processes or analyses, and brain-based learning strategies are among a host of current pedagogical materials and ideas that could keep a teacher reading eight nights per week.

The Christian teacher should "know what's out there" in order to make the best choices for developing instructional techniques to suit the classroom in today's society. But now the art of scanning has become an essential skill in order to sift and toss with Christian discernment! In bygone days when a person needed to turn the handle of the ditto machine once per sheet or pay the expense of sending material out to the print shop, teachers had only a trickle of materials to read, fliers to scan, and handbooks to review. Now, even though "save a tree" is a motto, we are flooded with print and paper, leaving teachers less time to peruse or prepare what seems appropriate for our pupils.

Family factors

Today's schools are different not only for teachers and students, but for parents as well. In our school parents are expected to volunteer twenty hours per parent per year with a choice of working on committees, supervising the playground, cutting out paper shapes at home, having students read to them at school, or accompanying students on a field trip. Some stay to help when they bring or pick up their children. Parents frequently are seen in the hallways and in the classrooms. The parking lot is a busy place, and communication happens there, too. Not so in the 1960s. Parents came for a once-per-year open house, or dads came to a society meeting, or families came to the all-school concert.

Communication occurs more frequently with parents today because they are in our classrooms more frequently. They receive more newsletters and bulletins. They conference with teachers more often. And they attend more open houses and school programs. The multiple vehicles for communication may have developed because parents are now too busy to spend time receiving the information in more bite-sized pieces from their children. Also, they are out of the home much more, so they stop at school more easily.

Societal and family values have also influenced schools. The number of children in K-2 in our school from families in which divorce has occurred averages about 10% per classroom this year, and in grades 10-12, the average is 11%. In 1967, there were no children from families of divorce in grades K-2, with an average of 2% in grades 10-12. At school, the need for teachers "parenting" and caring for students' emotional development has increased as has the need to protect ourselves via added documentation and supervision in cases where parents may be litigious. The latter exudes a paper trail.

The use of childcare facilities at the school as many families transitioned from a one-parent to a two-parent income has been another change experienced by students, parents, and staff.

Affluence

Is there a difference in affluence? We think so. Standards of "necessary" items today include money for snacks, birthday gift funds, hot lunch money, fad toys, and entertainment budgets. Is the gap becoming larger between the "haves" and the "have nots"? We think that also may be the case even in our relatively middle-class constituency. Media has greatly influenced our families to buy what some consider needs and others consider luxuries. One boy "needs" a new pair of tennis shoes because his are not in style even though he already has eight pairs in his closet.

Although affluence seems greater, the norm has not changed: teens still desire to be fashionable whether it is emphasized by casual dress or oversized shirts or short skirts. All the while, Christian school teachers are urging an attention to inner beauty and a "countenance" code that emphasizes that our Christian character is evident in all aspects of our being and living.

Family income varies so greatly today that a person hardly dares to suggest an average. It was shocking, however, to compare costs per student based on total budget figures for 1967 and 1997. In 1967, the cost for one student was $425.11 while today it is $5002.25. In 1967, a teacher's base salary was $4520 while today it is $23,535. Expenses have grown; salaries have risen; lifestyles are more sophisticated; educational techniques and understandings and theories have changed.

Applying our philosophy

The most important thing in Christian education has not changed: God's Word with its norms remains the lens through which all forms of response can be discerned, and God's world continues to be the workplace via our classrooms for all students to be challenged for service. Whereas we previously used the "three forms of unity" to substantiate our school's constitution, we now use an updated statement, "Our World Belongs to God," as our foundational creed. We've always claimed God's sovereignty but perhaps didn't share it. We've always believed in educating the whole child but didn't have the specialists for teaching art and music, physical education, and foreign language. We've always believed that our students should be in the world and not of it, but we didn't practice sharing our love and faith with them in the ways we do—thankfully—today. ■

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Shared Praxis:

Where Content and Process Meet in the Classroom

by Trent DeJong, David Loewen, and John Van Dyk

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What do you stress in your classroom: content or process? Is covering the material your overriding concern, or do you think it is more important to get your students to think critically and solve problems? Well, if you see these questions as posing a legitimate dilemma that forces you to choose between one or the other, read on. Shared praxis may well be the way to lay this pseudo-problem to rest.

Although not a household term in most Christian educational circles, shared praxis has made a modest entry into western Canada. Here is how it happened. In April and May of 1996, John Van Dyk of Dordt College teamed up with three creative seventh grade teachers in the Abbotsford Christian schools. Intrigued by the idea of a college professor wanting to test his theories in the classroom, the three teachers—Trent De Jong, David Loewen, and Tim Van Brummelen—agreed to teach their social studies unit on the Hellenistic age the "shared praxis" way.[1] The principals of the schools involved, Lloyd Den Boer and Ed Noot, enthusiastically encouraged and supported the project.

Some background

"Shared praxis" is a teaching approach first introduced by Paulo Freire, the late Brazilian Roman Catholic educator. Clarence Joldersma wrote about it in this journal a few years ago.[2] So what is shared praxis? A short definition might go like this: Shared praxis is an interactive process in which the teacher and the students, using appropriate resources, share their insights and experience through structured dialogue, thereby building up each other's knowledge, and thus come to the desired learning.

Freire's Latin American approach has been adapted and extended by Thomas Groome of Boston College. His book *Christian Religious Education* is a landmark in the development of shared praxis. Groome applied this method largely in the context of church education, where he experimented extensively with students whose age levels ranged from kindergarten to young adults.

The basic model

In Abbotsford we adapted Groome's elaboration of shared praxis by transforming his model into a six-step procedure:

Step 1. The teacher introduces the unit or lesson topic or theme to be studied and invites the students to report their experiences with it. In a high school unit on government, for example, the students might tell personal stories about traffic laws and speeding tickets.

Step 2. The students question one another in order to probe and to clarify their initial understanding of and experience with the topic or theme. Cooperative learning methods, designed to get students to interact effectively, are useful at this stage.

Step 3. The teacher provides further information about the content of the lesson under discussion. This can be done by lecturing, video, or reading assignments. Note that it is not until this point that the teacher actually teaches specific content.

Step 4. The students demonstrate their new, enlarged understanding of the concepts learned. They could, for example, paraphrase, describe, compare, recreate, or redefine what the teacher has presented, or they might practice newly learned skills and techniques.

Step 5. The students and teacher check each other's understanding of the content learned. We call this stage "mutual checking." The objective of this phase is to ensure that everyone in the class has understood the new concepts or has acquired the newly taught skill.

Step 6. A critically important step!

The students now consider how they can carry what they have learned in this lesson back into their daily life. They articulate how the new learning has affected them, and tney commit themselves to letting the new learning make a difference in their lives.

Your first reaction will be: Wow! What an inefficient and cumbersome process! How can I ever teach my students anything this way? How would I possibly cover my subject matter? We shall return to these questions in a moment. First, allow us to describe how we applied this method to our unit on the Hellenistic Age.

Our unit on Hellenism

Remember, we are talking about a seventh grade social studies class. Before we began the shared praxis program, the students already had studied the ancient Greek world and were ready to engage in an investigation of the age of Hellenism, that anomalous period of history between the collapse of the Greek city-states and the establishment of a full-fledged Roman Empire, a time when the comfortable security of the small *polis* was forcefully replaced by the fearful uncertainty of a far-flung cosmopolitan, Hellenistic world.

We looked at this phase in history and selected a number of themes that characterized this entire period. In the thematic statement or overview of our unit we put it this way:

> This unit explores several themes dominant in Hellenism and compares them with their parallels in contemporary society. The unit is designed to provide opportunities for students to learn about these themes as they occurred in the ancient world and are echoed in our culture today, to discern both normative responses and sinful distortions, and to propose redemptive alternatives.

Some key themes we selected were hero worship, immediate gratification, cultural and personal pessimism and alienation, and the development of the idea of a common, universal rationality (pretty heady stuff for seventh graders!). Clearly these themes find powerful echoes in our own age.

Our objectives for the unit help clarify what we had in mind. A central goal, of course, was that the students learn about the Hellenistic Age—its history and culture—just as in any other social studies or history class. Equally important, however, were objectives such as the following:

The students will be encouraged to

- exercise and enhance their powers of critical discernment
- practice and develop their debating, listening, and communication skills
- develop appreciation for the positive aspects of Hellenism
- cultivate a critical stance toward Hellenism in our own society
- experience and express anger and dismay about the presence and power of Hellenism in our own civilization
- practice and enhance discipleship skills such as patience, respect, helpfulness, and cooperation
- commit themselves to struggle against the sinful influences of Hellenism in their personal lives, their communities, and the world around them.

Armed with these objectives, we set the students to work. Although we adopted a flexible time frame, we planned to allocate one entire block—about ninety minutes—each day for nearly three weeks.

A sample lesson

To give you a better idea of what we were doing with these unsuspecting students, we now present you with the lesson plan we used for one of the themes, hero worship. We began with this theme because it can be identified readily both in the Greek and Hellenistic world and in our own society.

Step 1: *(The teacher introduces the topic and invites personal experiences.)*

We explained to the students that we were going to study the Hellenistic Age, the period following the time of the heyday of ancient Greece. To get us started, we wrote a question on the chalkboard and asked the students to write personal responses in their journals. The question: "If you had the opportunity to spend an evening of dinner and conversation with anyone in the world, who would that person be?"

The question quickly generated much interest among the students. They had no trouble writing a variety of responses in their journals.

Step 2 *(Students question each other.)*

The students already had been organized in cooperative learning groups of four. They had gained considerable experience working together. So sub-dividing each group into pairs and asking them to share their journal entries were not intimidating procedures. On the contrary, the students were eager to discuss their proposals. We encouraged them to press each other for reasons for their choices. Some of the heftiest debates of the entire unit occurred at this stage.

Step 3 *(The teacher provides input.)*

Then came the time to display our teaching skills. How could we link these vigorous student discussions to the theme of the unit without traipsing off into irrelevant tangents? We explained to the students that the issues they were discussing were quite similar to what was going on in the Hellenistic Age. The shift from the stability of the earlier Greek world to the uncertainties of the Hellenistic Age prompted folks to look for heroes to emulate. Such hero worship was but one expression of a search for meaning. Hellenistic folks felt alienated and alone, like sheep without a shepherd, and needed models to look up to and follow.

We included numerous learning activities in their pivotal step in the shared praxis lesson. For example, we had the students read and listen to selections of *Pageants of the Past: A Day in the Life of a Greek Athlete* as well as various other articles. They also researched the heroes in Greek myths and legends, examined a variety of Hellenistic art and sculpture, and came to grips with powerful stories as found in the chapter "In the Gymnasium" in James Michener's book *The Source.*

Step 4 *(Students demonstrate their new, enlarged understanding of the concepts learned.)*

Now we asked the students to respond to all this learning and show how it relates to our own late twentieth-century civilization. Some more cooperative learning worked well here. Individually students made a list of the people they believe to be the idols and heroes of their own age group. Then in groups of four they determined the top five candidates. Here again, some vigorous debate ensued. Then, on their own once again, they explained in their journals—using specific examples—the similarity between Hellenistic and contemporary society. They discussed, for example, whether these heroes were admired for their abilities or their character.

Step 5 *(The students and teacher check each other's understanding of the content to be learned.)*

We found this step to be the least successful in the process, at least in this particular unit. Our intent was to provide greater opportunity for students to take responsibility for each other's learning. After all, we were working on establishing and maintaining a collaborative classroom.[3] We asked the students to share their journal responses with their teammates and to dialogue to check each other's understanding. At some points in the unit this step proved to be easier than in others. We still recommend that this step be retained and practiced, but more experimentation will be necessary.

Step 6 *(Students articulate how the new learning has affected them, and they commit themselves to letting it make a difference in their lives.)*

Now the process reached a critical point: what are the students going to do with what they've learned about the Hellenistic Age and its echoes in our own

world? Simply pass a test and erase the stuff from their memories? Get an A on their report card and then press their "delete buttons"? To avoid such a dismal ending we posed some more questions: As a result of what you learned in this lesson, how has your thinking changed? Has what you believe about the Christian life been affected? What does what you learned in this lesson have to do with living a life that benefits our society? You personally? Your family? Your neighbor? What will you do differently given this new knowledge? The students then compared our cultural heroes to criteria established by Christ in John 10:11, and they told stories about ordinary heroes—heroes of character.

The results were encouraging. Here are samples of what students wrote in their journals[4].

> "God has given me pretty good abilities in sports: I play soccer in the fall, basketball in the winter, and baseball in the spring. I also play quite a bit on Sunday. I think this is ok though, if I don't worship sports, but use my abilities for God and have good sportsmanship."

> "I can see where it's kind of silly to worship athletes and movie stars just because of what God gave them in the first place. My grandfather helped hide Jews in the war, and my aunt is a nurse and takes care of sick people. These are real life heroes. I want to be like them."

Conclusions

A cumbersome process? Time-consuming and inefficient? A warmed-over version of the old, stale "relevance movement"? Clearly, the shared praxis approach would soon be insufferably cumbersome if we were to suggest that every single lesson we teach has to be cast into an iron grid of six steps. But this is not necessary. The summary structure of shared praxis is much simpler. It is to do what all good teachers have always said we should do: tie the lesson material to the students' experience, both at the beginning and at the end of the lesson. Such linkage to student experience is not some outmoded Deweyan idea but makes plain good sense.

Our shared praxis unit on the Hellenistic Age turned out to be huge success. The students were totally involved in their learning and, as we soon discovered, presented enthusiastic reports to their parents. The kids were talking about Hellenism at home around their dinner tables! Meanwhile, Trent, David, and Tim, though possibly somewhat skeptical at first, soon agreed: Shared praxis works! Though it takes careful planning, the method is very "teacher friendly." Shared praxis does not require extensive resources; the kids themselves are your best resource.

Shared praxis generates the sort of motivation among students we teachers often wish for. The students take ownership of their learning and, consequently, learn better. At the conclusion of the unit we asked the students to evaluate the experience. Here are some of the things they wrote[4]:

> • "I liked learning about Hellenism because we got to think a lot and learned a lot about other civilizations. I liked the fun we had…"
>
> • "I liked the way we got to debate. It was fun to argue with the other people in your group. You really got to know the people in your class differently, their view of life and culture and the world. It was a fun way to learn."
>
> • "I liked it that we could get our feelings out if they were good or bad. . . ."
>
> • "I liked how I got to say my personal response and not have to feel that my opinion was wrong or right. I also liked how the whole study of Hellenism opened my head to the things that surround us daily and that affect our living."

For John Van Dyk the entire effort was fully rewarded when a student wrote, "I liked that someone with a PH degree [sic] was teaching us."

Shared praxis is a way of getting content and process together. Try it. For more information, contact the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia for a complete text of the entire unit. If you are interested in helping test experimental teaching approaches, contact John Van Dyk at the Dordt College Center for Educational Services. ■

NOTES:

[1]Although a participant in the experiment, Tim Van Brummelen accepted a teaching position elsewhere and was unable to contribute to this article.

[2]Clarence Joldersma, "Shared Praxis: Interchange of Words." *Christian Educators Journal.* Apr/May 1990.

[3]Cf. John Van Dyk, "The Collaborative Classroom: An Old Idea with New Legs." Guest editorial, *Christian Educators Journal,* Dec/Jan 1990.

[4]Samples are slightly adapted to protect the privacy of the students involved.

Integrating Technology

by Elizabeth Zylstra

Elizabeth Zylstra teaches grade two at Abbotsford Christian School, Heritage Campus, in Abbotsford, British Columbia.

Everyone seems eager to get on the technology band wagon. But many questions need to be addressed before schools hop on. What are our responsibilities as Christian educators? Is fund raising necessary so that we can buy the fastest, fanciest, and newest computers? Or is it more responsible to make do with our old "dinosaur" computers that seem fine for teaching students typing skills and enabling them to word process a report? With technology changing so quickly, in a six-month period the new, fancy computer can become outdated in a hurry. Some schools may have labs of old computers; others may even have machines that have some math or spelling drill and practice software. Make the best of what your school has to offer and use it to reinforce skills for your students.

Skill training, however, is just a very small part of what technology is all about. Being satisfied with only this part of technology will leave a gap in the education of your students. We need to find a balance between keeping current and being responsible with our resources. We will never be able to keep up with the current trends in technology, but we do need to provide our students with the best computer education possible.

In my second grade classroom I use computers in three main ways: large group instruction, center activities, and simple writing assignments.

I hook up the computer to a larger TV monitor when I want to explain software or to present a lesson to my entire class. For example, in our animal unit in grade two, I use the computer with research or animal software to generate discussion and apply content. My class may be involved in listening as a I use the animation and information on the computer to present my lessons, or students may be divided into pairs or small groups for cooperative learning games, using the computer to gather the information or "play" a simulation game. A grade five class at our school used the software "Journey of the Zoombinis" in a cooperative learning setting to reinforce attributes and patterning that was emphasized in our new math series. Teachers will see many possibilities when they carefully research available software.

At the primary level, most teachers at our school organize center activities. I divide my class into six groups, with four students per group. Each group spends about twenty minutes at each learning station. The stations vary from week to week depending on the concepts and themes being taught. One station is the computer center. I choose software that fits our second grade curriculum. Maybe I want to reinforce regrouping in math, so I choose a math software program that deals with this concept. I will even make a specific task card for students, such as, "Click on the sea lion, then Level 4 to work on borrowing and carrying. This reduces the students' "wandering" and "exploring" with the software. I may have another center with manipulatives such as unifix cubes and place value mats with a task card that develops the concept of regrouping even further. The idea is to integrate what students are learning on the computer with the other areas of the curriculum.

Since the other grade two class has a Pentium on a cart, I schedule my computer center times so that I can borrow their computer. That way I can have four students (two at each computer—pairs work well) at the computer station. Then the other class borrows my computer during their computer time. This seems to be an efficient way for us to use our computers.

Another suggestion that has been very helpful for me is to train a couple of my students to "know" the computer—how to start the programs, simple troubleshooting, and other basics. I instruct my class to ask one of these students first if they need help. If that person cannot help them, they come to me for assistance. My two helpers usually learn very quickly to solve many of the questions, and it keeps me free to work with other centers.

Third, the computer is used for students' individual writing assignments. Since it takes a couple of weeks to rotate all the students through to complete their assignment, thinking and writing a rough draft off the computer saves time. Once the rough draft is on the computer, the editing process becomes easier for my students. They become very excited about deleting, checking their spelling, and making changes without the usual tedious eraser.

We do not work on keyboarding skills at this grade level, so the assignments are usually short; but my students are beginning to see how the computer helps them with the writing process. Sometimes I use software programs such as "KidPix" or "Kidworks" so students

can also draw using the computer. Other times I use "ClarisWorks" or "Microsoft Works," and students type with the computer and do their drawing later at their desk. Completing writing assignments with only one or two computers in your classrooms is not ideal; a lab situation where everyone has their own computer would be better, but we learn to work with what we have.

Some other options are group stories. Have your small groups work on a story during center time. Or try a class story: one person starts with a sentence or two (give a time limit, maybe five minutes), and the next person reads what is written and carries on with the story. Continue this until the whole class has rotated through. This gives students practice with their reading, with story structure, and with writing skills.

I have individual reading time in my class every day. During this time groups are scheduled at the computer also. So, each student usually gets on the computer twice a week for a twenty-minute session. Interest is high while at the computer.

More and more good educational CD-ROM titles are coming on the market. It takes quite a bit of time to preview and get to know the software, but if each teacher gets to know one or two titles in a year and really uses them in classroom, you can build on that in future years.

Can you only afford one computer? Don't let that stop you from buying it. We started with only one Pentium for four primary classrooms. We attached two headphones so two students could work on it at once and made a rotated schedule. We didn't get to use it as much as we would have liked, but that single computer generated a lot of interest and excitement in the students and the teachers. Three years later we have one Pentium computer in each of more than half our classrooms. You have to start somewhere.

The computer is one more tool that creates a stimulating learning environment for our classrooms. Our school now has a computer for every classroom in grades K-4. We also have a computer lab that mainly reinforces typing skills, offers word processing, and has some educational games. Due to scheduling and because the keyboarding component of our curriculum begins in the fourth grade, this lab is used mainly by students in grades four through seven. The upper grades also have a Pentium on a cart that they sign up for when they need it. Our goal is to eventually put a Pentium in every classroom, but, due to money constraints, we are working on that goal gradually. Because the upper grades have first priority in the lab, we decided to begin on Pentium purchases for the primaries and build up from there. All our Pentiums have a special video card that enable them to be cabled to a TV monitor for large group instruction. This large group instruction capability allows us to use a piece of software and one computer with a whole classroom, making integration easier to handle with a larger group.

> "We will never be able to keep up with the current trends in technology, but we do need to provide our students with the best computer education possible."

To keep your goal of integration current and running smoothly, it is helpful if you have someone on staff who has an interest in computers and is willing to help train teachers and keep them informed of what's happening in the computer world. It is also helpful if you have someone who is "techie" minded and can troubleshoot and fix your computer if you have problems. Our school hires, on an as-needed basis, someone trained to fix our problem computers. This has been extremely helpful. After all, you don't expect your teachers to fix the photo copier machine when it goes on the blink, do you? So get someone trained to help you in this area. It will probably save you money in the long run and will alleviate a lot of frustration. If the use of computers becomes too much of burden for teachers due to technical problems, insufficient training, or not enough software that they can integrate, they won't use the computer to its potential.

Integration of technology is not difficult, but may take some time. We as teachers try to make other areas of the curriculum more meaningful to students by integrating concepts and subject areas. If used thoughtfully, technology can be one more tool that enables us to make this integration an exciting learning experience for our students. ■

Why Am I Here?

by Ellen Freestone

Ellen Freestone teaches social studies and English to middle school students and is vice-principal for grades six through ten at Vancouver Christian School in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Do you ever stop and ask yourself, "Why am I in this profession?!" Do you find that this question suddenly becomes pertinent after a day of dealing with grumpy students, scads of paperwork, and rainy day recesses? So . . . what is your answer? Great pay, promotion potential, quiet working conditions?

During various times in my career, I have had different answers to this question, but this week my answer is, "Jeffrey Cheung!" Yes, he's the reason I'm in this profession, and he makes it worthwhile. Jeff doesn't know this, of course. In fact, this very minute he's probably sitting down doing the grammar homework I assigned to the grade seven class this morning and grumbling about the fact that he can't watch Bart Simpson until he is finished (even though he has memorized every episode ever aired).

Jeff constantly provides interest to my days. Yesterday, he told me he hated me; last week he wrote me an extensive apology expressing regret for every offense he had ever committed. Two weeks ago, he studiously taped a pencil to each finger and then proceeded to stalk about the room alternating between mimicking Edward Scissorhands and Freddy Kruger (during a class discussion, no less). Last week, each lesson (every day and each hour!) was punctuated with his reminder to us that he was extremely nervous about his upcoming piano recital in which he would perform "Cat and Mouse Rhapsody." This past Monday, he reported he had missed the entire recital due to arriving at the wrong time.

You must be wondering at this point how Jeffrey could possibly make my profession worthwhile . . . but stick with me.

When Jeff first arrived at our school eight years ago, he caught our attention right away, long before his unique personality emerged. A very obvious physical deformity made him appear different from the other children. As he began to settle into his grade one class, his disruptive and anti-social behavior set him even farther apart. I cannot count the times I walked past his classroom and saw him ensconced in his usual spot outside the door, mumbling explanations about why he had been sent there.

Concerned parents of more "typical" children occasionally wondered whether Jeff should be in our school. After all, wasn't he interfering with the education of others? Children in his class regularly complained about his antics. But Jeffrey remained a member of our school community.

In spite of his substantial needs, a remarkable evolution developed over the years, and his change has had very little to do with Jeffrey himself; his classmates began to accept and love Jeff. They looked past his physical appearance and his inability to effectively interact socially. The children grew increasingly protective of Jeff and demonstrated their loyalty to him in numerous ways. When Jeff refused to come on our sailing trip this year due to his fear of germs, strange toilets, and ocean waves, his classmates pleaded with him to change his mind. He didn't come, but he knew they cared. When we all trooped into the music room so that he could practice his doomed recital piece, they clapped, whooped and hollered in spite of numerous mistakes. (I actually got a little misty-eyed at the end of his mini-concert.) Jeff's ongoing monologues and jokes don't always make a lot of sense, but everyone laughs anyway. When he is too disruptive during class, he comes to me after class with his head down, "Sorry about being disruptive today, Mrs. Freestone. I didn't mean it. I'll do better tomorrow."

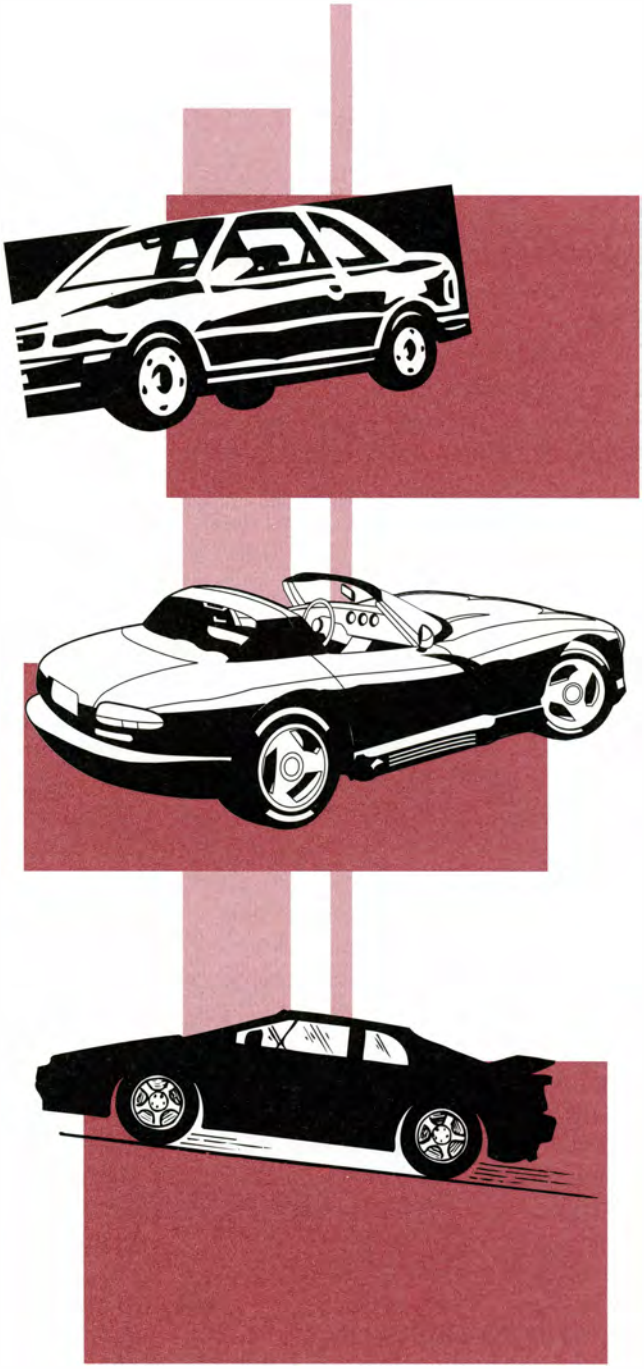
The students in my grade seven class are far from perfect, but through Jeffrey Cheung, they continue to remind me of why I'm in my profession. Their unconditional love of Jeff has made our small community a better place to be, and God has been glorified through it. All the paper piles, meeting agendas, and long hours seem to shrink in importance when I reflect on what is really valuable about my job.

Jeff has come a long way from his days in kindergarten, largely due to what others have given him. But tonight, as you are growling your way through grammar, thank you, Jeff, for keeping me on track. ■

Putting French into Gear for Middle School

by Sally Van Geest

Sally Van Geest teaches French in grades one through seven and teaches Bible in grade seven at Abbotsford Christian School, Heritage Campus, in Abbotsford, British Columbia.



Motivating middle school students to learn French is critical in building a successful program throughout the year. In order for students to learn new vocabulary and to be willing to take the risks involved in practicing French in the classroom, materials that appeal to their interests are necessary.

I begin the year in grade seven with a unit on vehicles. I ask students to bring a vehicle brochure to be used for the upcoming French unit. This brochure becomes the starting point for many language-based activities throughout the unit. Even students who think that they do not like French become involved because they are interested in cars.

Through varied activities, students can develop their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills as they work at communicating about the topic of vehicles. The activities are interactive, usually done in pairs or small groups. This provides many opportunities for each student to become involved in the activity of communicating in French in order to develop an ability to communicate effectively. Since the topic of vehicles is of interest to the students, they are eager to participate in the activities.

In the beginning stage of the unit, students choose a vehicle from a brochure. After some work with the unit vocabulary, the students design a poster featuring their chosen vehicle and label the parts in French. The poster should include added information and details about the vehicle. Once these posters are completed, they are used for a variety of oral language activities.

Some of these activities include simple oral descriptions of the vehicle, giving oral clues so classmates can guess which vehicle is being described, practice with large numbers by comparing prices, and asking questions about vehicles for information. As a final activity, students write a script and prepare a short skit to be presented to the class.

This unit is a great way to start off the year. The students are very successful with the work. The posters look great, and the skits are a wonderfully fun culminating task. The material appeals to the students and proves to them that French will be fun! ■

Raking and Internet Gleaning

Ron Sjoerdsma

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

The winter gray had lost out to the afternoon March winds, and students rushed from Hillendale Christian Middle School that afternoon with new hope. The brilliant sunshine was begging history teacher Jim Sooterma to grab a rake and attack the gouges around home plate on Hillendale's softball field. But the memo from his principal, Helene Peters, stood out from the other clutter on his desk like a dark cloud.

When Helene had first approached him about representing the middle school on the new K-12 technology planning committee, he felt honored. Now he suspected that this was her way of getting back at him for all the trouble he'd caused by his constant requisitioning this or that for the computer lab. He wondered how Kate Wells, his English colleague, managed to stay on such good terms with their principal when she was at least as responsible for the past year's technology spending. Wasn't she the one who pressed so hard for headphones? The debate that followed almost broke their eighth-grade teaching team apart. The team's working relationship seemed to have improved lately, especially after Helene approved Bill Hamilton's graphic calculators. Sara Voskamp still seemed bothered by something. She was constantly jumping all over his ideas, but Jim didn't have a clue what that was about.

Helene's current memo asked that Jim chronicle the kind of projects and other teaching and learning activities that had been connected to the computer lab and classroom computers during the past two years. She was asking for information about the entire middle school, not just Jim's anecdotal evidence—"I don't just want stories about your wonderful Mayan unit" was the way she put it. And on top of everything else, she wanted a Christian perspective on technology, but Jim thought he could work on that once he'd gotten his data. He would have to come up with some sort of questionnaire; supposedly that's what the other technology team leaders were doing at Hillendale's elementary and high school buildings. But where to begin?

Faced with where-to-begin questions, Jim almost always headed to the Internet. He was just opening his navigator when Jake Hammersmith, the middle school's aged but meticulous custodian, meandered into his classroom.

"Excuse me, Mr. Sooterma, but are you going to be wanting this rake for today?" Jake was standing halfway from the doorway to Jim's desk, leaning on a large aluminum rake. "It's not like you to miss a good raking day. I found this back in the corner while I was getting the hoses. Looks like it's still got clay on it from last fall—I'll bet the last time you used it was after that big storm we had in October—I should've cleaned it. Remember how we all had to sit in the halls during the tornado drill?"

"It was more than a drill, Mr. H. The real thing had everybody hopping. That was something wasn't it?" Jim realized too late that Jake would interpret his last question as more than rhetorical. Now he was trapped in a conversation that he had invited. On the other hand, it would provide a pleasant distraction from the memo.

"Certainly was! I remember calling Jo and telling her to get in the basement. And she said she couldn't find Missy—that's our old collie—and I said, 'Missy can take care of herself—you just get down.'"

"And you were the one to tell me about disconnecting the computers. That reminds me, I never asked you, how did you know to do that—you got a computer at home you haven't told me about?"

"Wouldn't touch those things. I even hate cleaning in that lab room. I think I must've read something in the paper. Sure glad we had one circuit breaker for that room."

Jake's quick thinking had perhaps saved Hillendale their $1000 insurance deductible when lightning struck the school that afternoon. He had shut down power to all the classrooms, leaving only hallway lights to break the storm's darkness. Of course, a few teachers had complained about losing documents they were working on when the tornado siren had sounded.

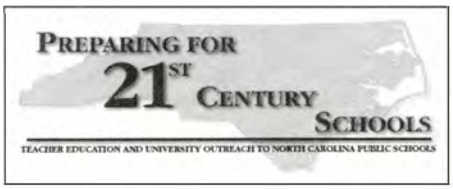
"So, you want this rake?" Jake apparently had other things to do.

"Not today. But thanks for thinking about it. I've got this project to work on for Mrs. Peters—about computers. You know how she is when she wants something done."

"See what happens when you know

too much about something? Just more work. Maybe you'll want this tomorrow. I'll put it right around the corner in the broom closet. Okay?" Jake was out the door and Jim called out a farewell as he turned back to his computer.

With a flick of his mouse, Jim exited his screen saver and found his Internet navigator ready to go. Within another thirty seconds he had a list of over a thousand web sites that referred in some way to "educational technology planning." His searching skills had been refined through countless hours of Internet searching. But contrary to his wife and many of his colleagues, Jim would never call them wasted hours. A site from the University of North Carolina was his first selection. He was attracted by the innovation implied by the URL: http://www.ga.unc.edu/21stcenturyschools/.



It didn't take Jim long to realize that he wasn't quite ready for this much future-casting. But a little exploring of his original search list led him to the National Council for Technology Planning. A quick click on the red, underlined address (http://www.nctp.com/) did not produce the immediate response he'd hoped for. He waited impatiently as all the active graphics downloaded. The school really needed faster access to the Internet, but he knew he was going to have to justify it with solid learning goals—a perspective that Sara Voskamp was always hammering on during the daily eighth grade planning meetings. He glanced outside; the sunshine tantalized. He stood up, walked over to the windows, and pushed out an upper one. The immediate cool rush was overwhelming.

Jim hurried back to his computer. This technology planning site was clearly what he needed to proceed with his survey, but it would have to wait for another day, preferably a cloudy one. In his haste, Jim almost forgot to create a bookmark for his latest find. Then, without another thought, Jim shut down his computer, grabbed the completed history worksheets from his desk, flicked out his classroom lights, and headed toward Jake's broom closet. ■

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Deconstructing Hitchcock's *Psycho*

Stefan Ulstein

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

This is the second of three articles on deconstructing film. In the previous CEJ, Stefan Ulstein demonstrated how to use the chase scene from the film Bullitt to teach basic film literacy—such as camera angles and focal lengths. In this segment, he examines Alfred Hitchcock's use of the psychological stimuli to increase the viewer's fear reactions.

When word got out twenty years ago that I was deconstructing the shower scene from *Psycho* a number of parents and administrators were understandably concerned. One woman said to me, "I saw that film back in college and I'm still bothered by it. I don't know if you should expose the kids to that sort of thing."

Surveys of my students' filmgoing habits indicated that they were already seeing films like *Psycho* fairly regularly, and that, like my colleague, they remained bothered by them long after leaving the theater. I invited the woman to sit in on the class since the whole purpose was to explain how Hitchcock had used subliminal techniques to create fear and dread.

To experience a film, we willingly suspend our disbelief; but if we are being manipulated in ways we don't understand, we may not be able to regain our disbelief after we leave the theater. Hence, psychologists reported treating many women who were afraid to take a shower years after seeing the film.

To begin our consideration of *Psycho,* it is important to understand that Hitchcock is widely admired and imitated by current filmmakers. The whole idea of a scary film is a bit like riding a roller coaster or bungee jumping. We do it precisely because it will scare us. We seek the thrill, the adrenaline rush, the pounding of the heart—and also the assurance that we'll not be harmed in any real way. The roller coaster is a *faux* train wreck, the bungee jump a make-believe fall to the death, and the scary movie an encounter with unspeakable evil.

Hitchcock was more than a provider of thrills, though. He was a deeply troubled man with a cruel sense of humor, a dread of authority, and a hatred for women. When Tippi Hendren, star of *The Birds*, rebuffed his sexual advances, Hitchcock used his clout to end her career.

In an interview, Hitchcock described his fear of the priests in his boarding school. When he misbehaved in class, the teacher would say, "Hitchcock, go for three," and resume teaching without further comment. This meant that before the end of the day the lad would have to report himself to the headmaster: "Hitchcock here for three, sir!" With little or no comment, the headmaster would administer three blows with a leather strap. The horror was that no amount of pleading or repentance would change the sentence. From this, Hitchcock developed a sense that in life terrible punishment is meted out, drastically out of proportion to the crime, and that no act of contrition will change the sentence.

In *Psycho* the protagonist, Miss Crane (notice that her name is that of a bird), steals money from her employer and leaves town, smugly imagining his surprise at being duped. She mistakenly wanders off the main road. It is a dark, rainy night when she pulls into the Bates Motel. This is where I begin deconstructing the film with my students. We watch from this point through the end of the murder in the shower, then go back and analyze it scene by scene. It's important to see it through once without analyzing much. Otherwise, the impact is lost and students won't get the skills they need to deconstruct films they see in the future.

Here are some questions to ask as you go through it the second time:

What do you notice about the lighting in the beginning of the film segment?

The headlights are invasive. The windows in the motel are too bright. The lights in the windows of Norman's house resemble the "eye-like windows" of Poe's House of Usher.

Describe the sound track. Could you hum this music?

It is tuneless and discordant, emphasizing minor keys and a jump from high to low notes.

Who were you expecting to see when Norman came down to the office?

Most viewers expected to see Freddy Kruger. Norman is like Mr. Rogers, or Wally from *Leave It to Beaver*. This allows the audience to step back from their dread over what is coming.

What subliminal message is sent by Norman's hesitation over which room key to choose?

Norman is a conflicted personality. He almost puts her in a safe room, then decides to put her next to his office where he can spy on her. The viewer senses this momentary lack of decision and then resolve.

Notice the body language exhibited

MEDIA EYE

by the two characters.

In the early encounters, Miss Crane is dominant. Norman is slouchy and unsure of himself. This changes as he asserts control.

When Normal says "in there" referring to the bathroom, what do we surmise about his character?

Many sexual deviants are deeply repressed people. Most viewers are uncomfortable with Norman's unease over such a simple thing. Also the lighting is way too bright in there. Many students say it looks like an operating room.

When they move to the parlor, notice where Norman sits. Notice where Miss Crane sits.

He is in the corner, his face half in shadow, half in light. She is in the center of the room, bathed in light. His lighting comes from the side, hers from above.

Notice the pictures on Norman's wall. How do you feel about them?

Both paintings are scenes of rape. Nude women are being assaulted by clothed men. Since they are reproductions of classics that could be found in a museum, we don't comment on them—even though we know what is about to happen to Miss Crane.

When does Norman's lighting change? What happens to the music? What happens to the camera angle?

When Miss Crane suggests he put his mother in an institution, Norman leans forward aggressively. We see "catch light" in his eyes. The music begins again and the camera drops, showing the stuffed birds of prey hovering above the now-menacing Norman.

What is Norman telling us when he asks, "Have you ever seen the inside of one of those places? The cruel eyes studying you . . .?"

Just as he recently let it slip in an oblique way that he killed his mother's lover, he is now letting us know that he's been locked up on a psycho ward, and that he "goes a little crazy sometimes."

At several points, the audience is silently screaming, "Get out of there, you ditz!" Hitchcock knows when to pull back so that the audience doesn't start laughing or making comments. Just as Norman seems about to go off, he mellows out, and the camera shows him sitting, below Miss Crane, in an unthreatening pose. He is smirking, however, and the subtle body language shows us that he has formed a plan.

What is it about Norman's peep-hole that unnerves you?

Everything Norman has done so far is controlled and tidy. We would expect him to drill a neat hole in the wall, but the jagged hole suggests that there is a bizarre, out-of-control side to him that we haven't seen yet. Watch the stiffening in his body as he strides purposefully up to the house. We know he has decided to take action. But then, as he is climbing the interior stairs, his shoulders slump and he ambles back to the kitchen. The audience relaxes, even though they are still on edge.

Listen to the sounds of the flushing of the toilet, the closing of the shower curtain, and the unwrapping of the soap. What is going on here?

The audience came to the theater knowing that Miss Crane gets killed. In most movies, when women undress, they are in danger. Since the audience is expecting something terrible, Hitchcock gives us the jagged clanking of the toilet, and the ripping sounds of the shower curtain and soap wrapper. Just as we begin to relax, he gives us the murderer. You can see this "one-two-three" technique in many suspense movies.

Notice the shower head and the running water. Why these elements?

Hitchcock said that the best way to frighten someone was to begin with their rational fears. Most women are somewhat uneasy about traveling alone and staying in a room to which any number of people might have a key. So, Hitchcock begins there and adds a creepy clerk who leaves the window open ("for air"). The shower head is a familiar object we see at least once a day. Hence, many women responded with dread when they saw a shower head later on. In psychology this is called an elicited response. Teenage slasher movies often begin with a girl babysitting in an unfamiliar house, or hitch hiking, because these familiar and believable scenarios already are more frightening than Godzilla stomping Tokyo.

How much blood do we actually see in the murder scene?

About the equivalent of a quarter cup. There is no nudity and we do not see the knife touch Miss Crane, nor do we see any wounds on her body. At the time the movie was made, the Hayes Codes forbade such images, so Hitchcock had to frighten his audiences psychologically. Interestingly, the one scene he had to fight to keep in the movie was the shot of the toilet bowl when Miss Crane flushes the note. The Codes could allow the savage murder of a woman, but not a close-up of a toilet bowl. Go figure.

Examine the scene that begins with Miss Crane clutching the shower curtain and ends with a view of Norman's house.

What do you make of it? From whose perspective are we watching?

Miss Crane falls. We see the blood trickling counter clockwise down the drain, then we see a fade dissolve to Miss Crane's unblinking eye. The camera switches to a clockwise rotation then backs slowly away. It "looks" at the toilet, then "walks" over to look at the newspaper. (It—who? —knows that she has hidden the money, which she intended to return, there). Then we see the house and hear Norman scream, "Oh God, Mother... blood!" This is the eye of God, who sees all but does not intervene. Similar shots exist in most of Hitchcock's movies. Miss Crane stole, and even though she thought better of it and resolved to go back to face the music, she is punished—cruelly, impersonally, and without mercy.

It's worth spending some time on the psycho-sexual themes in this segment, too, because they are typical of most slasher movies. When women begin to assert authority or autonomy, they are murdered. I spend time examining the effect this has on girls who watch these movies. As I write this, I have several students who are deeply bothered by having watched *Scream, Scream 2,* and *I Know What You Did Last Summer.*

I won't have these girls in class for another year, and there are many more girls much younger who have seen them but won't study the anatomy of these films for four or five years. That's because many parents labor under the delusion that their daughters don't see such films and shouldn't be "introduced" to them in school. Or, having seen them at a friend's house, they should just forget them and put them out of mind—if only it were that simple.

A survey of college men asked, "If you knew for sure that you could get away with it, would you consider raping a woman?" One out of four replied yes. Lintz and Donnerstain examined the fusion of sex and violence in the media in a landmark 1984 study. A two-page summary can be found in the November 1984 *Psychology Today.* Clearly, the effects of sexually violent movies need to be addressed in Christian schools—to the students who are watching these films. In my school we teach it too late, but at least we teach it.

As for the colleague who visited my class: "That was the cheapest therapy I've ever heard of," she told me a week or two later. Now that I know how I was being manipulated, I'm no longer bothered. I don't jump when my husband comes into the bathroom when I'm taking a shower." The following year another woman approached me. "Could I sit in on your *Psycho* class like Mary did last year? I saw that movie when I was younger and..." The next year another mother came and asked the same thing. ■

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Query

Marlene Dorhout

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

I find most of the teenagers I teach to be extremely self-centered. Out of obligation, the students bring money or canned goods for service projects, but they still spend more on personal items in one day than they donate. I feel that I should try to change this, but I do not know how. Do you have any suggestions?

I referred this question to Carol Ackerman, the assistant coordinator of the Denver Diaconal Conference. She has arranged many service projects for our students at Denver Christian Middle School.

Recently I was housebound in a blizzard. After a day of hearing only about the weather on TV and the radio, I realized how easy it is to become self-centered when your world is so small. Too often we try to shelter our kids from the reality of society. The suffering which is so difficult for us as adults to understand is not something that we want our kids to experience.

By giving our young people opportunities to "put a face on poverty," we open up their world. When we encourage one-on-one encounter with those who are living in poverty, we allow our kids to see the "poor" as individuals, as God's creation, people just like us. Service projects such as those you mentioned are certainly needed, but they serve to sanitize benevolence. Encountering people at soup kitchens, homeless shelters, homes for the aged, or day care centers can be life changing experiences for anyone. The best way to change attitude is through experience. Person-to-person service projects can help make change possible.

Our school now offers a foreign language in fourth grade. I think this is much too early. The students don't even know the correct usage of the English language yet; I thought that was a prerequisite for foreign language study. Is this common practice elsewhere in Christian schools? Shouldn't foreign language study begin in junior high or high school?

I am not aware of the teaching of foreign language in the fourth grade as a common practice in the Christian schools, but it is not uncommon for public schools. Usually small Christian schools are unable to fund the additional staff necessary and offer only some introduction to another language. That, however, does not negate the import of this pedagogy.

The United States actually lags behind many other countries in requiring foreign language training in elementary schools. Nancy Rhodes, associate director for English language and multicultural education at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C., advocates starting foreign language study when a child is young. "After age 12 or 13, it is very difficult to learn a language and be able to speak it like a native . . . and develop a high level of fluency," she says.

Perhaps at an older age the student can memorize lists of words and phrases and comprehend the mechanics of grammar, but "young kids like playing with language, they like making strange sounds," says Rhodes. Therefore the elementary level is an ideal time for students to learn a foreign language. Furthermore, she adds that children immersed in foreign language programs actually score better in English by fifth or sixth grade than their peers who have only studied English. Such results should allay any fears about the need for more English first.

Our shrinking world and multicultural communities will force changes on education. Perhaps your school is already preparing for the twenty-first century in such a way. ■

Jeff Fennema

Do You Love Me?

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

A few years ago at a teacher orientation our guest speaker asked us to form small discussion groups and reflect upon the educators who taught us. One colleague in my group remembered the name of every teacher she had from kindergarten through high school. The rest of us, however, could only recall the names of teachers who had impact on our lives in a memorable way. A few of us even shared the name of a specific teacher who had provided such a distinctive influence that it led us to consider the education profession for ourselves.

Through further examination of this list of pivotal people in our lives, we discovered a common source to their appeal: they *really* loved us. Some of them possessed radical teaching styles; others demonstrated a familiar, conventional manner in their teaching. Yet each of these teachers had somehow touched us at our core, and they did it through love.

I am convinced that human beings stand before other people in their lives asking the question, "Do you love me?" Of course we would like each answer to be a resounding "Yes!" Fear of a negative or even conditional responses fosters intricate defense mechanisms within us. Faced with this terrifying exploration, middle school students, because of their distinctive stage of development, must supply an excruciatingly vulnerable addendum to the core question: "Do you love me *even though I'm different, changing, unsure of myself, and prone to drastic personality swings?"*

Recently I asked some former students about their experiences during middle school. A couple mentioned academic achievement; they worked hard and learned good lessons from this. A few students recalled extra-curricular events that provided opportunities for growth in their lives. One student cited experiences with athletic teams as being very positive and worthwhile. Another student even mentioned being involved in a middle school dramatic production, and how it provided an opportunity to learn some valuable life lessons. However, the one recurring theme in their responses centered upon relationships: relationships with peers and teachers.

One of my former students recounted the cliques during his time in middle school. He was disgusted with the ritual exclusiveness they perpetrated. Another student agreed. She realized how shallow she and her friends were in middle school as members of the popular crowd. "It pains me to know that I was cruel to people—even if I didn't care at the time, it makes me sad now." Another student described her involvement with the unpopular crowd, a conscious decision on her part. She found those students to be much nicer than those who were members of the popular crowd.

We teachers continue to discuss and debate our roles in student relationships. Some arguments suggest this factor is beyond the scope of our influence, much less our job description. But then we appear callous and uncaring. Other arguments promote aggressive involvement in student relationships. Then we begin to view ourselves as youth group leaders. While our role of teaching and guiding students in God-glorifying peer relationships continues to undergo exploration and examination, we can approach teacher/student relationships with greater confidence and clarity.

Students stand before us in various ways asking the question, "Do you love me?" If we answer with a resounding "Yes!", we leave a life-long imprint upon their souls, and we are able to do this because God answers "Yes!" when we ask him if he loves us.

One student mentioned a teacher who spent an enormous amount of energy trying to break up student cliques. This teacher always had advice and words of encouragement—"a great Christian example." Another student commended a former teacher for being a role model, authority figure, and friend. A separate response from a former student noted a teacher who "always respected what I had to say." More praise in one of the responses included appreciation for being pushed to perform, even though it was difficult. These were some ways in which teachers greatly influenced the lives of their students.

A number of these students offered bits of wisdom for me and other middle school teachers to consider. "Never give up on a student." "Try your best to relate to each student on a personal level." "Be open and honest." One final challenge: "Be an adult students can depend upon." Being authentic, compassionate, and per-

severing are some of the many ways we can say to students, "I love you!"

We enter dangerous territory, however, when selfish motives become the driving force behind our acts of love. They may consist of pride, ambition, or self-indulgence. They may originate from our need for control, recognition, or approval. These and other impure motives actually generate the message, "I love you . . . because of what you can do for me." It is a conditional statement that dilutes God's unconditional love for us—the same love we are called to share with our students. Because of our sinful nature, we cannot love our students unconditionally. However, through God's grace and work of the Holy Spirit, our blemished offerings of love to our students can be made pure and acceptable in our Lord's eyes.

My former and present middle school colleagues possess a myriad of teaching styles and techniques. They answer the question posed to them by their students—"Do you love me?"—in many different ways. Yet, the answer from each of them is a resounding "Yes!" They can do this effectively because of God's love, which is evident in their lives. I suspect Christian school teachers around the world can see the same response in their colleagues. What a blessing!

Our middle school students stand in front of us each day asking the question, "Do you love me?" They often ask this in a variety of ways. On our own, the best response we can offer is "Yes, because…" With God's help, we receive the power to answer "Yes . . . period." When this message is understood by our students, let us remember to give God the glory. We are able to do this only because God first gave a resounding "Yes . . . period." ■

Van Dyk, in a masterful and accessible way, has captured the essence of what it means to be a Christian teacher. You will want to savor the chapter you've just read, yet move quickly to the next.

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BOOK Reviews

Editor Steve J. Van Der Weele

Bible Crossroads Series. 1997. CRC Publications, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560.

Reviewed by Gloria Goris Stronks, professor of education, Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

I know that reading material meant for middle schoolers is effective when the thirteen-year-old that remains hidden inside of me is deeply moved as I read. That's what happened when I read through the student copies of the Bible Crossroads Series. One would not normally think of looking to a denominational publishing house for materials for school, but in this case it serves us well. The courses in this series, written by people who know middle schoolers well, were developed for seventh and eighth graders in church school. If the churches your students attend do not use this series, you might consider some of the courses and lessons for use in your Christian middle school.

The Crossroads series consists of eight short courses developed to acquaint students with great biblical themes (discipleship and covenant, for example) while they deal with critical areas we teach about in middle school, such as identity, freedom, responsibility, authority, morality, faith, and ethics. Each course consists of twelve lessons. Titles of the eight courses are

Honest to God: A Study of the Psalms; author: Dan Vander Ark
A.D.: A Study of Church History; author: Ken Kuipers
One of a Kind: A Study of Christian Identity; authors: Steve and Joan Huyser-Honig
Family Ties: A Study of the Covenant; author: Robert De Vries
Fit to Follow: A Study of Discipleship; author: Dan Vander Ark
Live It! A Study of James; author: Dan Vander Ark
Connecting: A Study of Relationships; author: Arie Knoester
Break Out! A Study of Acts; author: Amy Jo Van Es Hawley

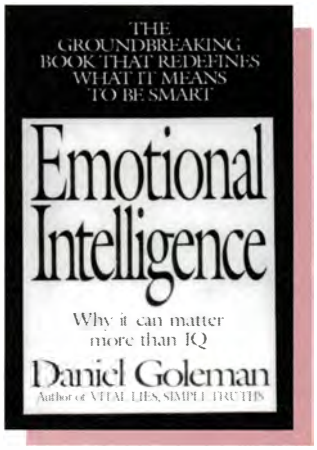
The student books are written in a way that is interesting to readers of this age and are wonderfully illustrated through photographs, cartoons, and water colors. The back of each student's book has pull-out pages containing the memory work and personal devotions for students to use at home. The teacher's manual is clear, including for each lesson a passage of Scripture, part of which may be used for memory work. The lesson truth, stated in one sentence, comes next; it is followed by the lesson aims, which reveal the instructional objectives.

These books might be used in different ways in a Christian middle school. They might become your Bible curriculum at this level, or sections could be used for devotional times. Different topics might be appropriate for the advisor-advisee segment of the day. Perhaps a better way to use them, however, is as part of the integral units teachers develop in the critical areas identified. It is sometimes difficult to integrate biblical teachings into a unit in a way that keeps the students' interest. These lessons will help teachers do so. Teachers who instruct with disciplinary units will, for the most part, find that the list of additional activities accompanying each lesson can be used for an excellent bridge between disciplines.

These materials are surprisingly inexpensive. The student books cost only $7.35 ($9.99 CDN), and the teacher's manual costs $13.05 ($17.60 CDN).

Daniel Goleman. *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ.* New York et all: Bantam Books, 1995. 242 pp., $23.95.

Reviewed by Steve J. Van Der Weele, professor of English, emeritus at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



In one of his early poems, Wordsworth disparages our "meddling intellect" and recommends that we cultivate instead "a heart that watches and receives." Daniel Goleman, a science reporter for *The New York Times*, though in a different context, also wishes to realign the intellectual and emotional components of human behavior. The SAT and other tests we use to measure educational potential are, he argues, incomplete instruments; any experienced teacher can tell you of students who squandered a rich intellectual endowment and of others whose performance on tests was only mediocre but who nevertheless live rich and fulfilling lives.

So, has Goleman written a book about a truism? Don't we already know that a Harvard student can earn A's in Moral Philosophy I and II and still be an obnoxious person whose life goes into meltdown? That professors and doctors

lent Hitler and the Nazi Party their support? And that intelligence by itself is a neutral trait, capable of leading to both sanctity and terrorism?

But Goleman does contribute to our understanding of intelligence. He writes in excited terms about some new research on the brain, particularly findings about the amygdala, an almond-shaped mass of gray matter located in the front portion of the brain. Using the findings of Joseph LeDoux, a neuroscientist, he explains that whenever a person encounters a threatening situation, the signal eventually proceeds, to be sure, to the intellectual area of the brain, the cortex; however, we know now, he tells us, that a portion of the signal goes directly to the amygdala, where, in a neurological short-cut, the stimulus rouses the emotions before the cortical centers have processed the data. Thus, a person's response to, say, a loud noise or to a stick that initially resembles a snake, will be both emotional and cerebral. The fear or anxiety triggers the body's reaction before the "lazier" rational process sorts out the details in the developing situation. And in all this, the amygdala is indispensable: "Life without the amygdala is a life stripped of personal meanings" (15). Goleman's illustration (19) explains this behavior, and the surrounding pages provide further physiological information about the total body response—eyes, nose, mouth, muscles, and the rest.

It is in the process of realigning these forms of behavior that Goleman develops the concept of emotional intelligence. A person who possesses this quality has learned self-control, the discipline to postpone instant gratification in favor of more distant reward, the arts of social behavior, and a disposition to be optimistic about life.

There is much to approve in all this. He takes us beyond B. F. Skinner's behaviorism and rightly chides those still reluctant to give the affective side of human nature its due. Through numerous scenarios taken from everyday life, Goleman demonstrates that intelligence is a composite quality, and that the non-rational—and even the irrational—plays a crucial part in reasoning and in human affairs generally, as physiology suggests.

But we learn after the first thirty pages that Goleman's agenda is not first of all to update us on physiology of the brain. His agenda addresses the social crises of our day. In a disturbing litany of examples he reminds us of the psychological and physical violence enacted daily in our schools and of the dehumanizing forces rampant in our society. After refining his definition of the relationship between thought and feeling, he documents the disasters that can occur to those who lack awareness of their vulnerabilities to the surges of passion in their behavior. It is, thus, self-control rather than innate intelligence that constitutes the master aptitude. The chapters that follow address the resentment and incivility generated in society, in marriage and the family, in industry (insensitive managers), in doctor-patient relationships, together with the impact of traumatic events on the lives of children especially. Remaining chapters discuss the high price individuals and society pay for emotional illiteracy.

So, how can our better understanding of the amygdala serve a social purpose? It seems that, as the child's brain develops, teachers and parents are given an opportunity—which they must learn to seize, when it is possible to nurture the emotions—to discipline and tame the violent passions through various forms of behavior modification. It is experience which molds the neural circuits, experience which prunes and sculpts the brain. Close a child's eye with a patch for any length of time and that area of the brain will develop few neural connections. By non-confrontational coaching, gentle persuasion, strategies, and variations of group therapy, the child will learn to react appropriately and achieve an emotional maturity that, apparently, few schools set as a high priority. Early intervention can reduce the level of anger and belligerence in our world and make it a more civil society; and to intervene early is far more efficient than dealing with a feckless youth who has never been taught self-control and appropriate social conduct.

Again, we must applaud these strategies insofar as they work. But Goleman's examples are not convincing. Must a teacher really change the meaning of the word disruptive to assure a child that his classmate meant nothing negative by defining his behavior in those terms? Is "talking it through" a sufficient response? And are disputes to be settled by games and votes and bending backwards to affirm some sliver of good in an aborted brawl?

My problems with the book relate to a lack of thoroughness. Discourse about human nature will ever be skewed if it fails to acknowledge that, as image-bearing creatures of God, we inhabit two worlds—the world of the physical (and how we are bound up with it!) and the world of spirit. In this we have learned to understand nature better and humanity less since the renaissance. What is lacking in Goleman's book is the role of the autonomous personality, the presiding agent—a spiritual force—that directs the amygdala, the neocortex, the cingulate gyrus, the hippocampus, and the other mechanics of emotion. It is as if a doctor decides to treat a patient who weeps uncontrollably by removing the tear ducts. The role of choice, of decision, of will, gets short shrift. The truth that one's destiny consists of a chain of interrelated choices in terms of his or her priorities is not acknowledged. Goleman mistakenly regards the emotions as neutral entities. He assigns them no moral value. What needs to be addressed, for example, is the role positive models play—either real or fictional (the author says nothing about the importance of literature)—or motives, loyalties, and priorities.

What is needed more than early behavior modification, thus, is for the parent and teacher to point the child to people and spiritual qualities outside himself or herself if he or she is not to remain an emotional adolescent. In all fairness, Goleman does list altruism and empathy as desirable qualities—but only as desirable qualities among others. He does not provide a basis for these qualities nor sufficiently challenge self-interest and calculation. The only reference in the book to a transcendent world appears in a quote by Martin Seligman, who has stated that a belief in God and an after life—among other beliefs—will give a person a vision by which to measure his temporary frustrations and disappointments (241).

Goleman hardly seems to have noticed the implications of this observation, so quickly does he move on to another subject. The higher reaches of moral life, after all, require commitment, moral attentiveness, integrity, some reflection on the nature and destiny of man. To impart these requires a different kind of energy than intervention at the level of the amygdala. Authentic moral heroism cannot be acquired so readily.

The case of Ruby Bridges comes to mind—the six-year-old girl, flanked by federal agents in New Orleans, who had the public school all to herself during the beginning of school integration. With great poise and fortitude, she withstood those who screamed and brandished their fists in her face, praying for those who would have killed her if they could. Daughter of illiterate share-croppers, she and her family attended their church regularly, where she encountered a Sunday School teacher who held up before the children in an unforgettable way how heroes of the faith received their strength from belief in God and in his purpose with the world. Cardinal Newman sums up the different approaches in his statement that "In morals, as in physics, the stream cannot rise higher than its source. Christianity raises men from earth, for it comes from heaven; but human morality creeps, struts, or frets upon the earth's level, without wings to rise."

Interestingly, Goleman begins his book with this quotation from Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: "Anyone can become angry—that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—this is not easy."

Goleman refers to this passage several times, and expresses the hope, in some concluding remarks, that Aristotle would approve of his efforts to improve human conduct. Goleman needs to re-read that passage. The quality missing in his book is that acknowledgment of rightness. The book is laced with vocabulary derived from the mechanics of emotion: template, neural imprints and branding, encoding, "emblazoned in emotional circuitry," and the like. But rightness, in its fullest sense, has obligation built into it. The notion that one ought to behave in such and such a way is ultimately indispensable in any discussion of behavior—and at its highest level relates that obligatory intuition to God himself. The lack of such reaches in the book diminishes the effectiveness of Goleman's achievement. One can be pleased that the book is as good as it is; one regrets that it is not better. ■

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