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The Small School-Plight or Preference

**Christian
Educators
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CEJ

Bring Back the

REMEMBER hearing about the "good old days" when our parents went to one-room country schools? Remember hearing how diligently they studied so they could pass the county exam at the end of eighth grade?

Not all was good about the old days. Kids played pranks then as well as now. My mother's journal reveals tales of boys hiding a classmate's pony, the girl's daily means of transportation. Then, as now, some of the teachers had difficulty maintaining control.

Recently I visited with a teacher who began her career sixty years ago as a nineteen-year-old in a one-room country school. The evening before our visit, nine of her ten pupils had returned with her to that small structure to honor her and to reminisce about their school days. She told me how, even after she taught in larger settings, she held special regard for that one-room school. "What is it," I asked her, "that you found so special about a place where you had to teach so many different ages at one time?"

"We were a unit," she replied.

"Everybody helped each other, not only with the schoolwork, but also with the housekeeping chores."

THOSE of us schooled after the consolidation movement of the fifties have difficulty understanding how teachers managed to provide adequate training in the eight-grade classroom. Twenty years ago when I was offered a multi-grade teaching assignment with small classes, I quickly turned it down for the larger school where I had thirty-two eighth graders

per section but only twenty preparations per week as opposed to forty-five. Considering the way I teach today, however, I might have given more thought to working in a smaller school.

A variety of reasons affect my thinking. First, I am influenced by several innovative administrators who operate small alternative Christian schools on the principle of integral education that exemplifies the lordship of Christ in the Christian community. One of these administrators is Elaine Brouwer, whose Seattle school is discussed in this issue. (See page 9, "What's Right with Small Christian Schools?") In future issues we plan to include the views of Larry Litman, headmaster of Mustard Seed School in Hoboken, New Jersey, and of Dr. Gregory Maffet of Grace Christian School in Ohio. These and others participated in last summer's second Chicago Conference, where conferees focused intensely on the vision of Christian education as we approach the twenty-first century.

My second reason comes from personal experience within groups, both large and small, and my observations of group interaction. Whenever groups of people become large, certain members of the group become less active participants. Sometimes shyness drives them to silence; sometimes they feel unneeded or threatened by the more confident members. Whatever their reasons, we have probably all noticed how each member takes on greater responsibility when a large group is split into smaller units.

The main reason I view the small school more positively now is that I

GOOD of the "Old Days"

have changed my teaching style as the result of reading and talking with Christian educators about enabling students for discipleship. As a novice, I thought my most important task was to get students to retain a commendable quantity of knowledge in a relatively pleasant environment. Test scores and parental satisfaction measured my success rate. Granted, I talked to my students about the Christian's cultural mandate to use language to the glory of God, but we probably spent more time glorifying human skills than practicing heavenly service.

IN recent years I have found that small group work gives students valuable opportunities to study and use language. Language becomes personally meaningful when the students are responsible for choosing and using it, especially when helping or teaching others. Within the smaller group, each person must give more of self and each must learn the needs of other members of the group. Members must work to accept the strengths and weaknesses of others in order to work as a unit. That's how the family and community work too—and the body of believers. Members participate in a variety of ways, not all doing identical tasks. Thus, when we pattern our schools after the family rather than the factory, we better enable students for discipleship in the Kingdom of God.

"But look," you say, "we already have a school of 600 students. We can't go back and be small." True, but you can find ways to model the small school unit. Perhaps your school already arranges for older students to

assist younger ones with class work. If not, try to work out an arrangement with other teachers for an upper level class to work with math or writing concepts, perhaps one on one, with students in lower grades. When students are asked to become responsible for someone else's learning, they take more seriously their need to prepare well. Have these paired teams read to each other, and watch the toughness of a "macho" type melt away into genuine concern for a younger member of the school "family." Try arranging an educational field trip where eighth or ninth graders accompany second graders to a commercial plant which the older students have previously scouted so they can be effective guides. Then have them assist their young companions with lunch and physical education activities. If such ideas are well-planned and wisely presented, students can build bonds that cut across the lines of age and ability.

Elementary schools tend to be more readily innovative than secondary schools in the formation of alternatives to traditional educational structures. Several articles within this issue allude to some of the concerns which tend to hold back secondary innovators. They have tremendous opportunities, however, to make an impact on the Christian community because of their students' greater maturity. Therefore, I challenge more secondary school educators to take the risks of innovation, to design upper level courses that build a sense of Christian community, and to let us know what they are doing to educate for Christian discipleship. ■ LVG

Meeting Needs At Different Levels

AS schools grow, they automatically begin labelling and streaming students according to perceived ability levels. Teachers in small schools which cannot afford to stream may feel penalized because they must try to be all things to all people. Students in small schools may also begrudge the presence of others who are markedly above or below their ability level. Bi-leveiling is one method which enables the teacher to maintain unity in the classroom and still address the needs of students at different levels.

Bi-leveiling need not be viewed negatively, as the last resort for small schools. Positively speaking, it is a way of avoiding labels and the stigma that they encourage, an opportunity to move students from level to level depending on the activity, and a way of teaching that one person's strength complements another's weakness. In other words, bi-leveiling encourages the child to acknowledge his or her God-given worth as an image-bearer of God.

A bi-levelled unit for a Grade 10 class might look like this:

Bi-levelled Unit Grade 10	
GENERAL	ADVANCED
<u>Aims</u> (may be the same)	
To investigate the influences of the United States in Canada.	
<u>Objectives</u> (may overlap but must differ)	
Identify and explain two current issues involving Canada and the U.S.	Identify and explain more than two current issues involving Canada and the U.S.
e.g. 1) Acid Rain 2) Cultural Influence	Choose from: 1) Acid Rain 2) Cultural Influence 3) Free Trade 4) Gas Exports 5) Water Export 6) Branch Plants
<u>Materials</u> (are separate but may overlap)	
Films, articles	
<u>Approaches</u> (are separate but may overlap if analysis is of different length or depth)	
Group-selected articles Discussion Group outline for individual essay Group presentation/summary Poster for debate Bulletin board display	Group- selected articles Discussion Individual outline and research essay Debate
<u>Evaluation</u>	
Different standards (even if same assignment)	

The levels can be mixed in a group effort if differing expectations are made clear and different responsibilities are assigned. For example, the advanced student may be responsible for bringing resource material for the group or for preparing the summary report.

Jigsaw groups involve grouping for expert research and then regrouping for sharing the research. The research group can be bi-levelled while the sharing group may be grouped by level.

The academic strengths of the advanced group can be passed on to the general level who may rise to the challenge, if the advanced group is sensitive to their needs. Another benefit can be that the advanced level group is forced to articulate and explain their knowledge in more detail for the general level than they typically would for the teacher, thus strengthening their own communication skills.

Tests and exams can also overlap. Both groups may start with an objective

section and then proceed to different types of sections, perhaps short answer questions for the general level and essay questions for the advanced level. The weighting of the two test sections

GENERAL		ADVANCED
Objective	50%	30%
Subjective	50%	70%

would also be different.

Through the setting of different assignments and expectations the various levels can be challenged appropriately without developing a sense of superiority or inferiority, but rather a sense of responsibility to develop and appreciate whatever gifts God has given each one. ■

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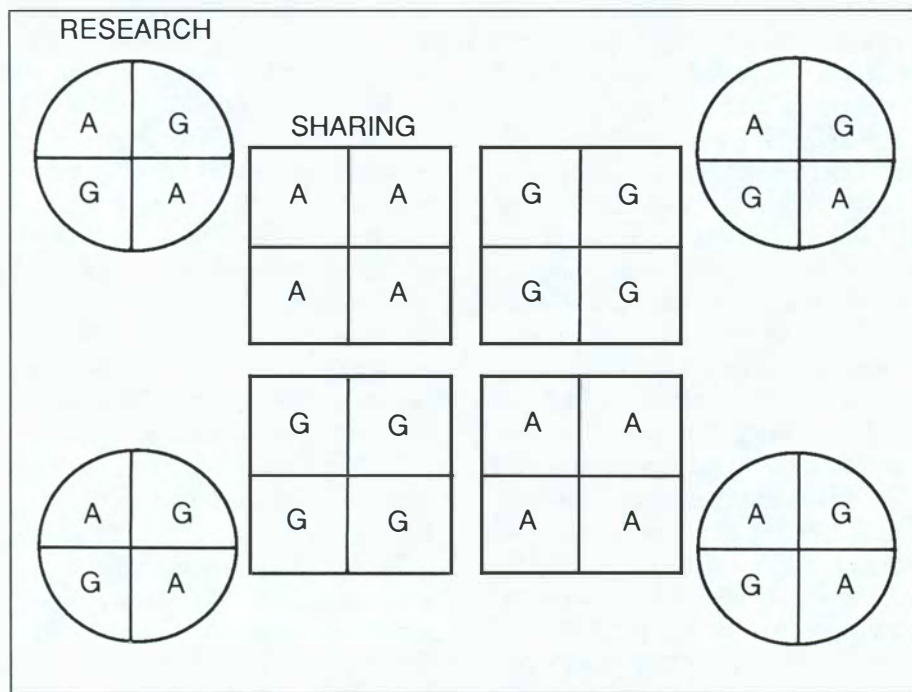


Diagram showing possible jigsaw grouping.

LINKING LARGE AND SMALL SCHOOLS

FRED M. RITSEMA

IMAGINE two schools, Elm Street Christian School and Main Street Christian School. Elm Street Christian School is a K-8 school with about 100 students and meets in the educational wing of a church. Main Street Christian School is a K-12 school with about 700 students which meets in its own modern facility. The principals of the small and large schools want to explore ways to cooperate with and help each other. There are areas in which the principal of the small school (Elm Street) and the principal of the large school (Main Street) can cooperate. The following eight ideas represent a sample of cooperation between schools of varying sizes.

First, large and small schools should provide summaries of textbook evaluations completed by their school faculty. The school curriculum guides can also be shared. These give the schools a starting point for evaluating a textbook series or for evaluating the need for curriculum change.

When a large school is sponsoring an inservice session, the teaching staff of a nearby small school should be invited. Inservice days are difficult to plan and expensive to present. This useful teaching tool is seldom affordable within a small school. A large school gets a wider variety of insights and per-

spectives by inviting the small school staff to the inservice.

A third area of cooperation might be making available copies of forms, procedures, and policies to each other. It is useful to have other forms and policies to evaluate when designing or revising forms. This procedure should be considered as a potential exchange of information which may have practical application in the other school.

A fourth possible area of cooperation between large and small schools is bulk ordering. Large schools should invite small schools to order books and materials with them. This requires a joint agreement as to the suppliers used and the variety of materials to be ordered. Bulk ordering often results in discount prices to the purchasers. That is a benefit to all schools involved. Joint contracts for the servicing of office machines or for bus maintenance could be practical and offer a better price for each school along with better service.

A cooperative effort may also include the formulating of a joint substitute teacher list. This presumes that the school boards have agreed to the same pay scale. This idea gives both schools a larger substitute list and greater flexibility to choose the correct substitute for a given classroom. Substitute teachers would state whether

they are willing to substitute in both or in just one of the schools.

Large schools generally have more audio-visual equipment, library books, and filmstrips than smaller schools. It would be to the benefit of a small school if it could borrow these items. Many possible areas of conflict must be resolved before this can happen. Transporting the items is one of these problems. Who will bring the equipment to the school and who will pick it up are among the questions to be answered. A check-out and check-in system for materials must be devised. Both staffs must do careful planning and scheduling of loan items for classroom use. The teaching staff of the larger school must be willing to give up a measure of their freedom to use the loan materials in their facility. An agreement must be made concerning repairs and replacement of loan items. The relationship of the large school and small school must consist of written policies coupled with trust and sensitivity for each other's needs.

Schools can offer to donate or reasonably sell items which are no longer of use in their school. Sometimes an individual teacher in a classroom has use for used textbooks, audio-visual equipment, filmstrips, library books, or desks. However, schools should avoid

What's Right with Small Christian Schools?

ELAINE BROUWER AND JOAN DUNGEY

offering items that are trash rather than materials considered obsolete for them.

A final area of cooperation directly involves the teaching staff. Agreements for teacher exchanges for a day, week, or a school year could be arranged. Teachers could consult each other. Faculty members from the two schools could share ideas, prayer concerns, problems, and solutions. They might also consider face to face forums with an agreed upon question for discussion or an open forum. Teachers have a wealth of ideas and knowledge which could and should be shared. Seldom are teachers given enough opportunities to use each other as resource persons.

Schools of varying sizes should explore many ways of cooperating and strengthening each other. To do this, there must be a desire to help each school as well as a willingness to share each other's strengths, weaknesses, expertise, and human and material resources. This understanding should lead to a prayerful, loving concern for each other's welfare. Large and small schools have so many potential areas within which to cooperate. When they operate completely isolated from each other, both lose so much. The fictional Elm Street and Main Street Christian Schools represent many schools which could have close relationships. ■

Fred M. Ritsema has experience teaching in small Christian schools housed in churches. He presently teaches at Northern Michigan Christian School in McBain, Michigan.

My first step into Covenant Christian School left me speechless: bright yellow furniture, all movable, learning centers, nooks and crannies for materials and kids, bulletin boards, desks for individual work stations or small groups. So pleasant, so warm, so inviting. My only thought, "a dream school." And animals! Little did I know then what a difference they would make in the total atmosphere of the school for my teenage sons. Why do only elementary classrooms have animals? J.D.

It was business as usual at Covenant that November day. A record snowfall had buried Seattle and every school, both public and private, was closed—except Covenant Christian School. Of course we had school! Most of our children and teachers could walk or take the bus—and they wanted to be there. They had projects to work on; and we had Thanksgiving activities planned. It was a very festive day.

Two girls were giggling in the school hallway. The girls, good friends sharing together, were ages seven and thirteen. One was of Korean ancestry, one of Filipino. This friendship vividly demonstrates a key ingredient at Covenant: cross-age involvement. The younger student grows from such sharing, and the older student feels important and develops responsibility.

COMPARED to large public and private school systems, at first glance, small Christian schools may seem unable to offer complete educational opportunities. Yet, small schools, run by master teachers and concerned with individuals may offer more to students than larger schools. How can this be?

In this article, we will examine the positives of small Christian schools with specific references to Covenant Christian School in Seattle, an alternative Christian school of thirty-eight pupils, grades kindergarten through

twelve.

Recognize Christ as Lord in all things. The opening statement of philosophy of Covenant Christian School reads:

Since our Lord Jesus Christ lays claim to the entire universe which includes the education of our children, we seek to obey his commands to instruct his children in the fear of his name and to educate them in a way which helps them recognize the authority of Christ in every area of life. To achieve this goal, we have established this alternative Christian school for the instruction of our children for the specific purposes of:

1. Approaching students, not primarily as rational, social psycho-physical, scientific, pragmatic, or autonomously creative beings, but as religious beings, created in God's image and capable of responding to him in the entirety of their lives.
2. Approaching the curriculum in such a way as to make it possible for students to see their unity and their diversity. . .

This statement includes nine goals of holistic Christian education (Brouwer and Greene). In order to incorporate integrated Christian education which weaves Christ's lordship into each subject, rethink your school's structure. A

new one may be needed.

Meet individual needs. This demands a thorough understanding of each child: his or her thinking style, learning style, gifts and talents, family background, and problems. A small school can have close personal contacts and focus on the building of relationships. Expert in educational pedagogy, a master teacher will properly select assignments that speak to each individual child. Christian caring envelopes the child with the security to take risks necessary for learning.

Be flexible. A small school is not constrained by rigid scheduling nor dependent upon certain texts. Required subject matter can be taught many ways, and hands-on active learning tasks, more easily done in a small environment, may well meet students' needs *better* than traditional textbook usage. (Research shows that 40 percent of students learn better by inductive activities—Keirsey and Bates.)

Field trips are activities which demand flexible scheduling. During marine biology at Covenant Christian, students went weekly to area beaches for comparison of changing conditions and times until they became comfortable with and knowledgeable about beach ecology. Museums, laboratories, parks, theaters, and factories are all available for curriculum fulfillment. However, community involvement goes beyond visiting and part-time employment, for students volunteer in Christian service. Our dream is to see covenant students involved in a variety of ministries with the needy in the city.

Flexible room arrangements allow for flexible groupings: individual study, large and small groups, and

whole class circles. Cooperative learning is the emphasis here, as students help each other, reducing competitive pressures. Daily, students set goals and schedules, taking charge of their learning and becoming responsible for themselves and others in peer and cross-age tutoring.

Involve parents. Parents are an integral part of Covenant Christian School. Not only can we not exist without their help, the presence of parents as learner-teachers welds the community together. Parents are role models of discipleship and the Christian life-style. Lines between school and home are comfortably blurred as learning carries over into family activities. As the National Commission on Excellence in Education Report says:

As surely as you are your children's most important teachers, your children's ideas about education and its significance begin with you . . . moreover, you bear a responsibility to participate actively in your children's education.

Teach true socialization skills.

Most people feel that small schools cannot offer students needed socialization skills. Yet, with parent and community volunteers, the small multi-aged school actually teaches life-long socialization that help students relate to people of *all* ages. Students need caring, Christian role models. When closer relationships between all ages develop, self-confidence learned in a loving, close-knit school community leaves the child free to be comfortable with all persons. Peer socialization will still occur at school, at church, and in neighborhoods.

Include high school students. We recommend that any small school seriously consider incorporating into its program a high school-aged student desirous and committed to attend. Examine your state's educational requirements for graduation. Realize that what is required in the usual high school class can be taught in a variety of ways. Become aware of home school high school curriculum available



(see below). Utilize community people to not only teach subject matter but to show direct job application. Visualize what a caring supportive environment will do for this teen, and recognize the educational value of cross-age and peer tutoring.

Covenant's high school students exhaust all information in classroom college reference texts before going to the university library for further research. They demonstrate well-developed independent research skills, a major goal of education.

Small Christian schools offer a unique nurturing environment wherein each individual in the school—students, teachers, parents, community helpers—become partners in the learning process. Small schools should not feel compelled to pattern themselves after the model offered by large schools. Research has shown that the quality of education depends upon the leadership of the principal and on class size. A small teacher-pupil ratio, committed parent volunteers, and attention to the matching of curriculum with stu-

dents' learning styles make small schools laboratories, preparing for the life-long business of learning. ■

Elaine Brouwer is teacher/administrator of Covenant Christian School, which she started several years ago in Seattle, Washington. Joan Dungey is a free-lance writer and educational consultant in Yellow Springs, Ohio. She was recently curriculum consultant for Covenant Christian School.



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Extracurricular Activities

EVERYONE who has been associated with a small school is familiar with a major stumbling block to an increased enrollment—the lack of a complete extracurricular program and the lack of a significant social life for the students. How can a football team be fielded when there are only seven junior high students, and five of these are girls? What kind of band music can be performed by only four students, especially when the orchestration consists of drums, tuba, oboe, and flute? What is an eighth grade girl supposed to do when the only boys around are a skinny sixth grader and a seventh grade computer "nerd"?

Generally, as the school moves into progressively higher grades, this problem becomes a vicious cycle. There are not enough students to support activities, so some leave and go elsewhere. Now there are even fewer students, so others leave. Soon, all that are left are the students who can't get into another school and those few (God bless them!) whose parents are totally committed to a thoroughly Reformed education.

Unfortunately, for financial reasons, this cycle often makes it difficult, if not impossible, for a Christian school constituency to start a high school. It is rare to find one teacher who can competently teach all subjects on a high school level. It is often necessary to hire several subject-area teachers; but the school requires a reasonable enrollment in order to afford their salaries. Up to a point, the costs are fixed. If there are only a few students, the school will suffer a significant financial drain and may need to drop high school altogether.

ONE good solution to this problem is to increase enrollment: the more students enrolled, the more social and extracurricular activities a school will be able to support. Of course, the school then no longer fits the category of a small school. What can be done for the school which remains small? I would like to suggest various ways for us to evaluate the situation. Rather than seeing the small size of the school as a liability, we must see it as an asset.

First, we may emphasize the specialized nature of the school. We might say to applicants: "We are not trying to meet the needs and desires of everybody. We have a limited market, and we want to meet those needs well." This policy need not be elitist in nature, but should merely be a recognition of the fact that different parents want different emphases and approaches in schools. One could tell inquirers, "If all you want is rigorous, academically-oriented education, we have that to offer. If you want a full complement of extracurricular activities, we do not offer that here. I can recommend ABC School down the street for that." A school need not be apologetic; any school is limited in what it can do. Every school needs to define its purpose and goals, but especially the small school. Questions should be asked: "What exactly are we doing here? Why should we continue, or should we fold up and go home? What do we offer that is distinctive from other schools?" Within the broad spectrum of education, the small school must narrowly and precisely define what its goals and emphases are.

Second, the small school must do

well what it claims to do. If it will emphasize a rigorous, academically-oriented program, it had better do that well. The results will show students scoring high marks on achievement tests and doing well in academic competition. A common mistake is for the small school to try to copy the larger school and thus spread itself too thin. With only a few faculty members, already stretched to their limits, it will be difficult to get adequate leadership for extracurricular activities. The temptation will be to try anyway, just so it can be said that the school has after-school activities for its students. No, if something is to be done, it should be done well, not half-heartedly. A small school which tries to do only a few things and does them excellently will be far superior to a small school which does a lot of things in a mediocre way.

Third, the small school can concentrate on extracurricular activities which match its specific goals. The academically-oriented school could have a debate team, for example, or science, computer, math, or reading clubs. These activities do not require a lot of students, as would a band, for instance, and they reinforce the emphasis of the school on academic excellence. Again, such activity participants must strive for excellence; the debate team of the small school should make itself known for its superiority in meets.

What about leadership? We have already mentioned that the faculty in a small school will often have little time for other activities because of the multitude of lesson preparations required. However, it is possible to find parents with certain abilities in these areas who

and the Small School

RODNEY M. KIRBY

are willing to volunteer one afternoon a week to coach the debate team or to direct the computer club. Often, too, such volunteer work will give the students a fresh perspective on their learning. For example, science lessons in school can sometimes become rather abstract and unrelated to the real world. But if a parent who is a chemist for a local oil company can arrange to meet with the students once a week, the students can learn about chemistry from a man or woman who is working every day in that field and who knows what is important for the student to master. This implementation can also help the small Christian high school faculty. Courses can be scheduled to allow part-time teachers to come in once or twice a week to teach a course in the area of their calling.

Finally, we need to emphasize something that has been implicit in our discussion to this point. People often think that if a school does not have a well-rounded extracurricular program and an extensive social life available, the students will be deprived and will not be taught adequately. One might say, "The child's development involves much more than his intellectual training. If you limit your school to academic pursuits and leave out such things as art, music, and physical development, the students will not be well-rounded disciples of Christ. We must educate the whole child, not just her brain." I agree; there is more to the student than just her brain, and the whole child needs training in discipleship. But must the school provide all such training?

Consider the sentence, "The school

educates the whole child." There is a sense in which this is true. We must teach the student a biblical worldview, so that he or she is able to evaluate all of life from the Christian perspective. Thus, the school should teach a biblical view of physical development, art, and music, as well as of science, math, and grammar. However, saying the school should provide a viewpoint is different from saying the school must provide all these activities. Another example will hopefully make this distinction clear. The school may teach a biblical view of nutrition and health. The school need not, however, take on the responsibilities of providing the students with three square meals a day, of seeing that the students brush their teeth regularly, or of providing warm clothes in the winter. These are generally acknowledged to be parental responsibilities. It is up to the parents to see that their children are clothed, fed, and cared for. My contention is that education as a whole is a parental responsibility (Deuteronomy 6). It is not the job of the school, but of the parents, to train "the whole child." The parents contract with the school to assist them in part of this task, but the school does not thereby have complete responsibility for the child's development. The parents must decide, under God, what kinds of activities their children need.

When we view education in this light we see that the small school does not deprive children of any necessities. If the parents want their children to have music, they can sign up for private lessons. If they want their children in sports, there are organizations such as Little League or the YMCA. It is not

necessary that the school provide all these things. Modern thought seems to have (as R. J. Rushdoony* has termed it) a Messianic expectation of education—that if something is good for children, the schools must provide it. Thus we have hot lunch and breakfast programs, sex education, and now AIDS education in the public schools. No, we must say that if something is good for children, biblically speaking, the parents must see that their children are provided with it.

Don't misunderstand; I am not saying it is wrong for a Christian school to have athletics and music as extracurricular activities. I am saying that it is not necessary that a school have these things. It is great if a school can have a band and do a good job at it. But if a school is too small to have one, people should not think the students are somehow being deprived of a good, well-rounded education. If the children are deprived, it is the fault not of the school, but of the parents, who should see to it that their children receive all that is necessary for their development and well-being. This statement presupposes that the school does not assign so much homework that the students do not have time to do other things after school. I believe students should work hard during school hours and then be able to do other things after school, such as take music lessons, help parents around the house, or study in areas of special interest. We must not limit education to schooling; much that is of educational value for the child takes place outside of the school.

All of us involved in small schools need to be sure our outlook is correct.

*Rushdoony, R. J. *The Messianic Character of American Education*. Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1972. 5.

We must not look on the small school as a liability, or as a stage in the development toward a "real," or large, school. Rather, we must see that small schools have a legitimate place in God's Kingdom, and that God has given us a very specific task to accomplish. May we do so to his glory! ■

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Courtesy: INPUIS genesis, of Indiana University - Purdue University of Indianapolis, Fall, 1983

Accommodating Individual Differences in a Small School

ARDEN RUTH POST

ONE of the biggest challenges facing small Christian schools, or small school systems, is providing for students who stray too far from the average in terms of learning ability or learning style. Students who may be slow learners, mildly retarded, learning disabled, or even gifted are frequently not served well, possibly not served at all, in schools which can't afford consultants, resource teachers, or self-contained classrooms. Principals have had the unhappy task of informing parents that their children's needs cannot be met at their local Christian school. Sometimes entire families have left a school system, bitter because a school serving to educate covenant children seems able to reach only some of them. Granted their number may be small in comparison to a total school population, but children who deviate from the norm constitute a population which is increasingly calling for recognition.

While financial considerations appear to be a major roadblock in providing special services for such children, I wonder if more of them can be taught in the regular classroom than are presently being served. I am not referring to remediation or incorporation of special programs for which a specialist may be needed, but rather a chance to maintain, support, or enrich the child in the regular classroom. While there may always be children whom we cannot serve, whose differences are too great to be accommodated in the regular classroom, I suggest that there is a substantial number whom we can serve by providing teachers with approaches and strategies directed at individual differences.

Teachers have often felt the frustra-

tion of trying to teach a child for whom the school's curriculum is not appropriate. Often in order to learn, a child needs more instruction, more time, a varied teaching/learning style, different material, or modified requirements. The teacher realizes modifications are needed, but a totally individualized program seems impossible. Sometimes children zip through class work and the teacher wonders what to give them next. Frequently parents of children with exceptional ability demand some special programming or instructional challenges for their children.

I would like to introduce a strategy which the regular teacher can employ in the classroom and yet meet the individual needs of the learners just described. Interestingly, I heard this approach, called the unit approach, recommended in two very different strands of college courses: one for the mildly handicapped, including the slow learner, the mildly retarded, and the learning disabled; the other for the gifted—and I have found it to be successful with several of the above mentioned children.

The unit approach begins with a topic that the teacher chooses. Once the topic is chosen, a five-step approach can be followed. The teacher should do the following:

1. *Decide major concepts that should be taught.* This step has the advantage of setting clear goals for teaching and can free teachers from the textbook by focusing on important and appropriate concepts.
2. *Identify the process goals* the students should work on as they study the concepts in the unit. Process goals may include classifying, comparing, chart-

ing, solving problems, finding references, conducting interviews, making observations, keeping notebooks, building models, conducting surveys, doing experiments, and reporting information (Gillet and Temple 239-240).

3. *Consider sources of information and means of learning* that may contribute to the conceptual goals or the process goals. Teachers should think in terms of categories of learning experiences such as the following:

Activity

- Field trips
- Experiments
- Investigations
- Demonstrations
- Role playing or simulation
- Building models
- Making dioramas
- Constructing artifacts

Reading

- Textbooks
- Encyclopedias
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Almanacs
- Information books

Listening and Viewing

- Films or filmstrips
- Slides
- Audio or video recordings
- Guest speakers
- Pictures or photos

Speaking

- Discussion
- Debates
- Interviews
- Reports

- Conversation
- Brainstorming

Writing

- Reports or research papers
- Study guides to fill in

- Outlines or organized notes
- Diagrams
- Annotated bibliographies
- Vocabulary exercises or word games
- Illustrated time lines

4. *Choose and match the concepts, process goals, and means of accomplishing them.* Depending on the grade of the students, this step may involve class discussion and decision-making. It is in this step that the opportunity exists to modify or expand the major concepts, the process goals, and the means for serving individual needs. While an individual contract with each student may not be feasible, it is preferable for the students described previously. *In fact, it is this step which allows the classroom teacher to provide for the slow learner, the learning disabled, the mildly retarded, and the gifted.* (see Student Unit Contract)

5. *Plan the daily schedule for the unit in terms of the activities, reading, listening and viewing, speaking, and writing* —who, what, when, where, and how they will occur. Consider the fol-

lowing example from a fifth grade class. The unit, *Classifying Living Things*, was first diagrammed or mapped by the teacher in a top-down, hierarchical listing of topics. Concepts for the unit are listed on the left, and processes to be used and developed are listed below. (See Unit Map)

This unit map enabled the teacher to choose the first three concept groupings (C1, C2, C3) for the whole class. Joe, a slow learner who read with difficulty, completed work slowly, and learned best when he was given small amounts of information, was assigned the first two concepts, C1 and C2. Two gifted students, Joan and Wes who exhibited an advanced reading ability, high motivation to learn, and exceptional achievement in both the language arts and science, were assigned all four concepts. They were to do C4, Scientific Naming, as an independent investigation.

Process goals were linked to the concepts. The whole class was involved in observing, classifying, comparing/contrasting, charting, predicting, and prov-

ing. Joe was not required to make as fine a discrimination in likenesses and differences as was required by C3. Joan and Wes had an additional process goal, analyzing, which fit in with their study of scientific naming.

The following sources of information and means of learning were used. Most of them were appropriate for the whole class. Note the individual modifications as indicated by the asterisks.

Activity

Field trips (visiting zoo)
Experiment (raising plants)

Listening and viewing

Film (living things)
Guest speaker with slides

Writing

Report 1 page*
Report 2-3 pages
Research paper**
Organized notes—complete
Organized notes—half page*
Study guides
Modified study guide*

Reading

Textbook (marked sections only)*
Textbook (entire unit, omit C4)
Textbook (entire unit)**
Encyclopedias
Information books
Science encyclopedias**
Advanced textbooks**
Speaking
Conducting interview**
Questioning interviewee
Discussing in class
Oral Reporting

*Joe

****Joan and Wes**

Student Unit Contract

Unit _____ Subject _____

Name _____ Date _____

Grade _____ Teacher _____

Concepts to learn: _____ Processes to be used: _____

<u>Materials</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
		<u>To do</u> <u>To Complete</u>	

Unit Map

CONCEPTS

C₁ Likenesses/differences

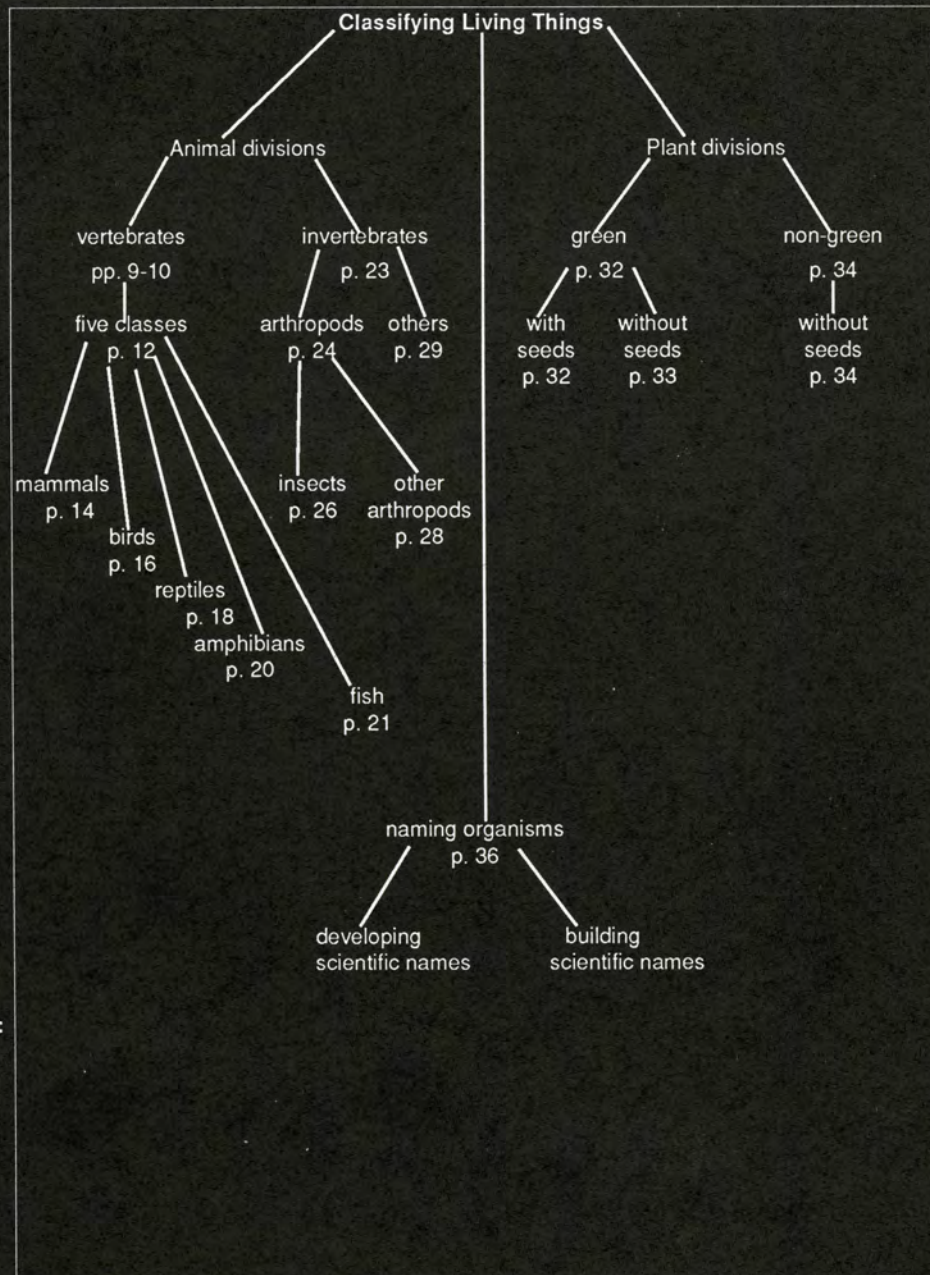
C₂ Major characteristics and examples

C₃ Characteristics and examples
of classes
and groups within classes

C₄ Scientific naming

PROCESSES TO BE USED/DEVELOPED:

Classifying Proving
Comparing Analyzing
Contrasting
Observing
Charting
Predicting



Science. Unit I "Classifying Living Things." (Grade 5 of series) Menlo Park, CA and Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1980: 4-41

Joan and Wes completed an independent research paper. They studied the text, found advanced reference material on scientific naming, and brought in a scientist to interview for the class. The class was asked to take notes on the scientist's remarks, to organize them, and to hand them in. Joe also took notes, but it was determined that he achieve a half-page of organized notes. The class was asked to write a two to three-page report, using encyclopedias and trade books on a class or group of living things. Joe was directed to an encyclopedia and a trade book within his reading level. It was determined that he achieve a one-page report on any animal or plant of his choice. Joe's teacher also used the buddy system to pair him with an advanced student for some tasks. This student guided Joe in finding material and organizing his report.

The individual accommodations for these three students occurred largely in the areas of reading and writing. In speaking, each student gave a three-minute talk on the animal class or group which had been the subject of his written report. Students were not to read their reports, but speak about them, using notecards and/or visuals. Joan and Wes chose a section of their longer research projects on which to give their three-minute talks. Joe used a visual with enough labels and phrases on it to aide him in remembering the gist of his talk.

The teacher met with Joe, Joan, and

Wes to set up individual contracts. She chose not to set up contracts for each class member although this, too, could be done to allow for individual student choices, interests, and abilities. Finally, the teacher made a daily schedule of events.

An important issue for consideration when individualization of class work occurs is the evaluation and grading of students. I have found it valuable to give a grade based on the quality of the work the student was required to do, and then to add a note on the report card, such as the following: Joe's grade was based on a modified curriculum which is explained in his school records. Another option is to place an asterisk next to the grade and simply call attention to school records. The point is that there is a way to deal with the grading issue as long as principal, teacher(s), and parents agree on the method to be employed. Honesty and sensitivity can and should go together in the grading issue.

Estes and Vaughn describe the unit approach as follows:

The unit is . . . the ultimate organizational consideration in diagnostic instruction. The teacher is coordinating time, space, and activities around key concepts and understandings that the students are to acquire. It provides an atmosphere for varying abilities and needs of all students and seeks to create the best possible opportunity for learning for each student (229-230).

While teachers may shy away from the suggestion of diagnostic instruction, it is really a natural component of teaching. It requires a mind set which is alert to student strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, and it incorporates that knowledge into instructional planning that is practically achieved in strategies such as unit planning. It need not mean twenty-five individual plans. However, the unit approach does allow the teacher flexibility in planning for those students who may not otherwise be served in the regular classroom.

The results often include more positive feelings on the part of the individuals for whom modifications are made, deeper understanding of and respect for individual differences among class members, and a more stimulating, diversified classroom environment for everyone. Perhaps most important for Christian school systems is the underlying message that accompanies such an approach: we respect, recognize, and accommodate individual differences in the children whom God and parents have entrusted to us. ■

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- Estes, T. H. and J. L. Vaughan, Jr. *Reading and Learning in the Content Classroom*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1985.
Gillet, J.W. and C. Temple. *Understanding Reading Problems*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1982.

PARENTING SCHOOLS

As an educational consultant, I work alongside teachers in their classrooms to help them implement new programs, modify old ones, and deal with a host of educational concerns ranging from classroom management to writing and implementing integrated units. In this capacity I am often requested to help small new schools. Board members want to set goals and objectives for the total school enterprise and for the curriculum. Teachers request assistance in dealing with multiple grades and lack of space and facilities.

My consulting in schools across the United States and Canada as well as my personal experience as a teacher and principal in small schools suggests to me that the plight of the small school has been overlooked far too long. The experience of the beginning school is not unlike the first year teacher who is thrown into a situation with little experience or preparation and very little guidance and support. Many small schools find themselves in the same predicament. Personnel from larger schools are too busy running their own establishment to have the time to "walk with" those struggling in the small school. It can be a frustrating and lonely experience. Only a sense of vision, dedication, and the grace of God allow as many small schools to survive as do.

A possible way of dealing with this problem came while I was consulting in the Christian schools in Australia. There I discovered a small new Christian school on the campus of the large well-established Mount Evelyn Christian School. The two staff members talked with appreciation

about the benefits and support they received by being located on Mt. Evelyn's campus. Upon further questioning I found that this was not the first school to have its beginnings on Mt. Evelyn's campus.

Though neither Mt. Evelyn Christian School (MECS) or Mountain District Christian School (MODS) considered themselves parent or parented, their experience will shed light on the concept of parent schools.

Students from the Mountain District had to be bussed a considerable distance to Mt. Evelyn Christian in order to obtain Christian education. In 1978 the MODS Board was formed with the intention of starting classes in their own facilities in 1979. After MODS' fruitless search for buildings MECS offered MODS facilities on their campus until MODS was able to purchase land and erect their own buildings. Students from the Mountain District were still bussed into MECS, but the school had its own board, education committee, and student body. In the interim MODS had access to MECS' classrooms, playground, gymnasium, science labs, library, and general campus area. The MODS student body interacted freely with the MECS students. The MODS teachers participated in teacher activities and workshops at MECS. A board liaison from MECS kept an eye out for the growing and developing MODS.

While MODS was operating on MECS campus, the MODS board searched for land and eventually built their own building. After eighteen months at MECS campus, MODS moved to its own location. During this time MECS basically stood by and

watched as MODS took its first independent steps. These times still were difficult. The MECS board liaison eventually became a MODS board member. Today MODS is an independent, thriving school and, other than being a feeder school to MECHS, is completely on its own.

In this relationship I see the potential for much more support and guidance for small schools than presently exists. I Corinthians 12 speaks of the body of believers as a community where all parts of the body bring together the varied gifts and talents in order to experience the beauty and fulfillment of the whole. This passage also speaks of the community being as strong as its weakest member; when one member hurts, all hurt and when one member is honored, all are honored.

Small beginning schools are in a weak and vulnerable position. They do not have the benefit of past experience. They are usually small in numbers and ill equipped with facilities and materials to implement a good program. Staff members often feel insecure, isolated, and overworked; students feel unable to participate in many of the inter-school sports events; and parents feel burdened with the responsibilities of a beginning school.

A parent or sponsor school could do much to ease the burden experienced by the smaller schools by nurturing and guiding the new school as it explores and determines and assesses the needs of its new community. It could also provide temporary facilities.

If empty classrooms are available, the new school could be housed in the parent school as was done in the case of

AGNES STRUIK

MODS and MECS. If classrooms are not available, portables located on the grounds of the parent school would provide classroom space while still having access to the gym, science labs, and other facilities. Many small schools forego gym equipment, art supplies, and music programs. A parent school often has the facilities for art and music rooms as well as gymnasiums, which could be made available with a minimum of problems.

Use of expensive equipment such as laminating, audio-visual, and photocopying machines could be rented from the parent school until the new school gradually purchases its own equipment.

Small schools often incur extra cost when ordering school supplies because the small quantity of materials ordered are an inconvenience to the suppliers. Consequently, service is often very poor. Ordering school supplies with the parent school would eliminate this problem.

Support of a fellow principal to share problems and joys of administering a new school would alleviate some of the overwhelming sense of responsibility faced by principals in new schools.

Individual and communal board members would allow the small school nurturing and guidance while moving toward independence. Board members could be eased into the responsibilities of financial planning, long term strategizing, promoting public relations, and studying curriculum concerns as if in an apprenticeship.

Because both the parent and the small school share similar curriculum concerns, regular joint education committee meetings would initiate the small school into the educational issues

required to oversee a school over the course of a year.

Students of the new school could participate with the students of the parent school in social activities and field trips.

Teachers of both schools could participate in joint workshops, professional development days, staff meetings, and curriculum meetings.

Though preferable, physical proximity is not necessary. Use of facilities and staff interaction would be limited, but a parent school could still guide in board and committee responsibilities, budgeting, ordering supplies, and holding administrative meetings. An example of this kind of relationship exists between the Lethbridge School Society and the newer Taber Christian School in Southern Alberta.

These are only small ways in which a parent school could foster and nurture new schools. I realize that there are some disadvantages to being a parent school. The parent school would have to make a commitment to provide nurturing not unlike the one parents make to their children. The small school would need to be nurtured, encouraged, and allowed to participate in the life of the parent school until it had the confidence and resources to take up a life of its own. The parent school would need to share its wisdom, insight, and experience while at the same time allowing the small school to develop and grow in a way that is compatible with the vision of Christian education held by that school's community. This would take a commitment of time, energy, and money. It would mean "walking alongside," becoming a spiritual mentor to the small school.

We need not let the competitive individualistic spirit so prevalent in our society dominate our actions as school communities. Instead let us join hands with other schools, recognizing and allowing for differences while at the same time moving toward a common goal.

Today MODS is a well-established Christian school that is reaching out to other small schools. They have developed a manual for small schools based on their experiences. The principal and staff encourage other beginning schools to visit them and learn from their experience. Whether we are talking about people or schools, if proper nurturing takes place during the beginning years, one will be more able to reach out and help others later on.

Then others watching our actions will be able to say, "Behold, how they love one another," and they will know that we are Christians by our love. ■

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Basals, Basals Everywhere and All Their Minds Did Shrink*

ROBERT W. BRUINSMA

AS I recently sorted through my morning mail I came upon Christian Schools International's May 1987 edition of *Intercom* which provided a summary of the results of CSI's recent survey of textbook needs in Christian schools. As part of the survey, I recalled having been asked by CSI to share some of my ideas about an ideal K-8 language arts program and specifically whether CSI should embark on the production of a "high quality Christian reading series." I was curious to discover how CSI teachers "out in the field" felt about this issue and was initially heartened to read that "the majority of language arts teachers do not believe there is an overwhelming need for CSI to produce a complete reading or literature series."

"Great," I thought. "At least my view that the reliance by teachers on basal reading series is a great impediment to holistic language arts instruction seems to be shared by a significant number of Christian teachers." However, the very next sentence of the survey report set me back on my heels: "Almost all CSI schools use a basal reading series for grades K-6, and the reading materials of several secular publishers receive widespread support." Clearly the message is that CSI need not bother itself with the production of a basal reading series because teachers are happy with the basals provided by secular publishing houses and (perhaps) because CSI probably can't afford to produce a competitive series anyway. I completely agree with this latter assumption since it costs secular publishers about \$15,000,000 to produce and market a new basal reading

series. But even if CSI had all the money in the world I would still be strongly opposed to using it to produce a basal series, and I am saddened to learn that basals are the primary instructional resource for the teaching of reading in Christian schools. In that regard Christian schools are unfortunately no different than their secular counterparts.¹

Why do I feel so negative about the use of basals to teach reading in Christian schools? My unhappiness about this state of affairs can be summarized under three main headings: 1) Basals generally demean language and literature (especially at the primary levels); 2) Basals demean the role of the teacher and the child in the teaching/learning process; and 3) The cost of basals steals money away from more worthwhile curriculum expenditures.

Basals demean language and literature. The last fifteen years of research in oral language acquisition has conclusively demonstrated that children learn to speak because they are able to extract meaning from the "noise" of human language around them and that they do so primarily because adult caregivers interact with infants using language that is whole, functional, and meaningful. No one teaches children to talk by presenting them with carefully sequenced bits and pieces of English phonology and syntax. It is becoming increasingly clear that learning to read and write is also most easily accomplished when the learning environment presents language in whole, functional, and meaningful contexts. That means that even the ear-

... in a forty-minute reading lesson the average child spends less than five minutes in actual reading.

*With apologies to Samuel Taylor Coleridge

liest selections children are asked to read should be real language that is comprehensible and important to learners. What, however, do basals do? Let me summarize some comments made by the American psycholinguist Kenneth Goodman from a recent article in *Language Arts*.²

— Basals put undue emphasis on isolated aspects of language: letters, letter-sound relationships, words, sentence fragments, or sentences. Often, particularly in workbooks, there is no cohesive meaningful text and no situational context. That leads learners to put inverted value on the bits and pieces of language, on isolated words and skills, and not enough on making sense of real, comprehensible stories and expository passages (361).

— Basals often create artificial language passages or text fragments by controlling vocabulary, building around specific phonic relationships or word-attack skills, and often create artificial texts by applying readability formulas to real texts. Even the use of real children's literature is marred by gearing it to skill development, rewriting it, or using excerpts instead of whole books (362).

In my view, the primary purpose of learning to read is to be able to appreciate literature—not in the future but immediately.³ Thus a reading/language arts program ought to be based on real literature at all levels rather than on the specially manufactured, often artificial fare of basals. Basals, especially at the primary grade levels, tend to be almost exclusively concerned with the *how* of teaching to read

and very little with the *what*; yet I contend that especially Christian teachers should be as much concerned with the *what* of children's reading as with the *how* of this learning.⁴ Much of what basals present to children is not worth learning to read. Besides the artificiality of the language, the subject matter is often insipid and trivial, which is a shame given the recent explosion of worthwhile *literature* being written for young children. Space considerations do not permit me to provide examples of the thin literary offerings of basals, but those readers familiar with a specific basal series ought to ask themselves this question: "How many selections in the K-3 readers can I recall as having moved me to either genuine laughter or tears?"

Related to my criticism that most basal selections, especially at the primary levels, are not literature is the fact that what content there may be in the selections has to be inoffensive to everyone. As such, the stories can often deal with only the most basic of shared American/Canadian values. For example, because of current societal uncertainty over what constitutes a family, many publishers of basals shy away from including any selections that deal with family settings. Similarly, one would not know from examining the basals from any major American publisher that religion plays any role in the lives of North Americans—religion is just too hot to handle. Paul Vitz goes so far as to claim (with considerable documentation) that there is a systematic explicit and implicit bias against religion, family values, and certain political and economic positions in American school textbooks and espe-

cially in basal readers.⁵ If the above linguistic and literary criticisms have any merit, they, in themselves, ought to make Christian teachers far less comfortable with using basal readers as a major curricular tool.

Basals demean the role of the teacher and the child in the teaching/learning process. Schools and teachers must either abandon basals or at least put them in the position of curricular servant rather than dictator. Many manuals prescribe detailed scripts for teacher-pupil interaction in the mistaken belief, I suppose, that teachers are imbeciles who need to be protected from their own ignorance of how best to teach kids. This quest for teacher-proof materials and the scripted teachers' manuals designed to narrowly control teachers and students' responses must be abandoned if teachers want to be thought of as educated professionals rather than semi-skilled technicians.

Accompanying most basal readers is a plethora of workbooks, skill sheets, ditto masters, mastery tests, and management systems. The sad fact is that most reading lessons involve far more underlining, filling in the blanks, circling of answers, and other non-reading related busywork than reading. Estimates from a number of widely respected studies indicate that in a forty-minute reading lesson the average individual child spends less than five minutes in actual reading. This statistic is even more frightening when one discovers that the majority of children in elementary school spend only five to seven minutes per day in other reading related activities and only about one percent of their free time reading books.⁶ Thus a heavy reliance on

basals tends to reduce teachers to technicians and students to rote responders. Such concepts of teaching and learning strike me as being rather far removed from the guiding, unfolding and enabling functions of Christian teaching that John Van Dyk has been calling for in the last few issues of this journal.

The cost of basals steals money away from more worthwhile curriculum expenditures. A quick phone call to the principal of the Christian school which my children attend provided me with the following statistics. It costs roughly \$1200.00 per class to buy the initial basal readers and support materials and an average of from \$300.00-\$500.00 per class per year to maintain and purchase non-reusable components of the series. For what it costs to outfit a K-6 school with a basal series (7 x \$1200.00=\$8400.00) one could purchase about 560 books for the school or classroom library (at an average of \$15.00 per book) and one could build these libraries at the rate of about 140-230 books per year using the same figures for calculating the maintenance costs of a basal series. Even if these

figures are off by a substantial factor, any way one looks at it, basals are an expensive proposition. When one further considers the woeful condition of many of our schools' libraries and learning resources, one wonders if there is not a better way of exercising curricular stewardship in our schools.

What is the alternative to the use of basal readers? Given that most CSI schools surveyed report the use of a basal reading series and given the rather negative critique of that fact delivered here, what is the alternative? The fact is that children do not need a basal series in order to learn to read; only (some) teachers seem to need one in order to "teach" reading. In the next issue of this journal I will present some principled and workable alternatives to the teaching of reading using a basal series. ■

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NOTES

1. See pp. 35-36 of *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*, National Institute of Education, 1984, for a summary of how "basal programs 'drive' reading instruction" in the U.S.A.
2. Goodman, Kenneth S. Basal Readers: A Call for Action. *Language Arts*, 63-4, (April), 1986. 358-363.
3. Appreciating literature is not, of course, the *only* purpose of learning to read. Reading should not be isolated from the other language arts of listening, speaking, writing, and viewing. This point implies that a reading/language arts program must also provide children with skills and practice in reading critically in the content area as well as in the area of literature conceived of as a fine art.
4. This point was graphically illustrated for me when I attended a slide show about literacy work in Sierra Leone. The Christian literacy worker explained that in addition to devising an alphabet for the native language, work was also proceeding to teach the reading of English but there was a real dearth of reading materials for the people. Prominent in one slide was a large billboard at the entrance to a village which enticed in bold letters accompanied by a macho image of a western cowboy: SMOKE LUCKY STRIKE CIGARETTES. How important is it to learn to read if such print may well be the only available fare?
5. Vitz, Paul. *Censorship: Evidence of Bias in Our Children's Textbooks*. Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1986.
6. See *Becoming a Nation of Readers* pp. 74-79 and Goodlad, John I. *A Place Called School*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984. 107.

The New Principal

NO one was sure just how it happened. Steve Vander Prikkel had heard that some school board members didn't support retiring banker Louis Lulbaas for principal because they had once been turned down for a loan, while others didn't want Peter Rip back because he "projected the wrong image." Matt DeWit had heard that the board president was a long-time friend of the Timmermann family.

Regardless, Esther Carpenter, who had her Timmermann name Anglicized when she started college, succeeded Bob DenDenker as the first female principal of the forty-year-old Omni Christian High School. There had been a lot of talk among Omni's constituency, ranging from theologizing about "women in authority" to psychologizing about "women under pressure." Some heads shook, some eyes rolled, some smiles of satisfaction flitted across faces, but for the most part parents, students, and faculty were content to watch the curtain roll up on Omni's new chapter in history.

Now it was noon hour, and John Vroom grumbled while puttering around by the faculty room sink. Under the new reign of Principal Carpenter, Jenny Snip would no longer be responsible for such non-secretarial jobs as making coffee, buying donuts, and cleaning up. Today it was Vroom's turn for KP duty. His neck muscles bulged under the unaccustomed strain of refilling the hot water pot. Some water splattered on his light-gray 100 percent polyester Penney's slacks, and he wondered with irritation whether the spots would dry before he faced his 1 o'clock class in Church Doctrine. Next time he'd wear one of Minnie's aprons,

he thought, then wryly muttered to an amused Asylum crowd about the evils of women as pants-wearers while men slaved over women's work.

But the attention was suddenly diverted from the indignant John Vroom as loud, angry voices exploded in the hallway just outside the door. There was a dull thud of a fist making contact, and then the scream of a girl. Quickly the faculty room emptied, and Omni teachers witnessed the new year's first love triangle conflict. Apparently Richy Primus and Wally Last had been fighting over Toots Middler for sole possession. Richy and Wally stood facing each other now like two psyched-up prize fighters, while their prize wept big tears on the sympathetic shoulders of several girlfriends.

Dr. Esther Carpenter, smartly dressed in an off-white pantsuit, was already on

the scene. She took each combatant by an arm and ordered both to her office. Her voice was firm but not unfriendly. And because assistant principal Bill Silver was absent with the flu, she asked Matt DeWit to accompany the small group.

Students slowly began to scatter while the faculty returned to their asylum. All were full of curiosity about how the new principal was going to handle this one. "If I were the principal, I'd kick the rummies out," intoned John Vroom.

"Yeah, as your good book says," quipped Rick Cole, "vengeance is mine."

Vroom checked down the front of his slacks for the incriminating wet spots and chose to ignore Rick's dig. Ginny Traansma jested: "Just what I've always dreamed of—two handsome brutes





fighting over me." Then she added wistfully, "I would've even settled for one."

When Matt reentered a few minutes later, all eyes turned toward him. "Well, are they kicked out?" asked John Vroom.

Matt smiled at John. "No, they're back in the hall now; in fact, they'll be back in your class in just a few minutes, John.

John groaned; others asked what had happened. Matt eagerly obliged them with a first-witness account.

"Well, we all sat by the round table in Esther's office. I guess I was there as a witness, which is one of the new policies now. Esther just asked them if they knew there's to be no fighting around here. They didn't say anything at first—didn't even want to look at her. But Jenny Snip must've given her

the names, because Esther then called each boy by name and repeated the question. I tell ya, she's cool, man, just as calm and in control as you please."

"So what did they say, then?" asked Vander Prikkel.

"They nodded. And then she said: 'Do you agree with the rule?' After a little while, they both said 'yes.' And then she told them that she's glad to hear that, because if they didn't, it would be very hard for them to keep the rule, in which case Omni might not be the right place for them."

"I like that," smiled Ginny approvingly.

"But what punishment did they get?" John pushed impatiently. "Or did she just practice this positive psychology bull on them and let them go?"

"Patience, my good man, I'm coming to it. She told them that since they had

violated a school rule, they would have to be punished. So she said that she wanted three hours of their time, one hour after school for the next three days, to help her plan and set up a peer tutoring system at Omni."

"Whaaat?" gasped Ginny, but with pleasure in her voice.

"You've gotta be kiddin'," croaked John, the red color of incredulity and chagrin slowly creeping over his face.

"But then she gave them a little speech before she let them go. She said there was another rule this school tries to honor, namely the second great commandment of loving your neighbor as yourself. Then she asked each one if he agreed with that rule too. By this time she had them looking at her and they both said, without much hesitation, they did. Then she said, 'I trust, then, that at the right moment you'll say you're sorry to each other and to God. You are free to go now.'"

It was quiet for a moment in the faculty room before Ginny Traansma said softly: "I think Bob would've liked that approach. I just hope the students aren't going to misunderstand it."

"Don't worry," responded DeWit, "there's steel in that lady too. She'll put up with no nonsense, not from the kids and not from any of us." Then he added, a note of foreboding in his voice now: "We'll find out, maybe sooner than we think."

At that John Vroom grabbed for his briefcase, hoisted his hefty self out of the easy chair, and stomped to the door even before the bell signaled noon hour's end. ■

Today's Television Woman

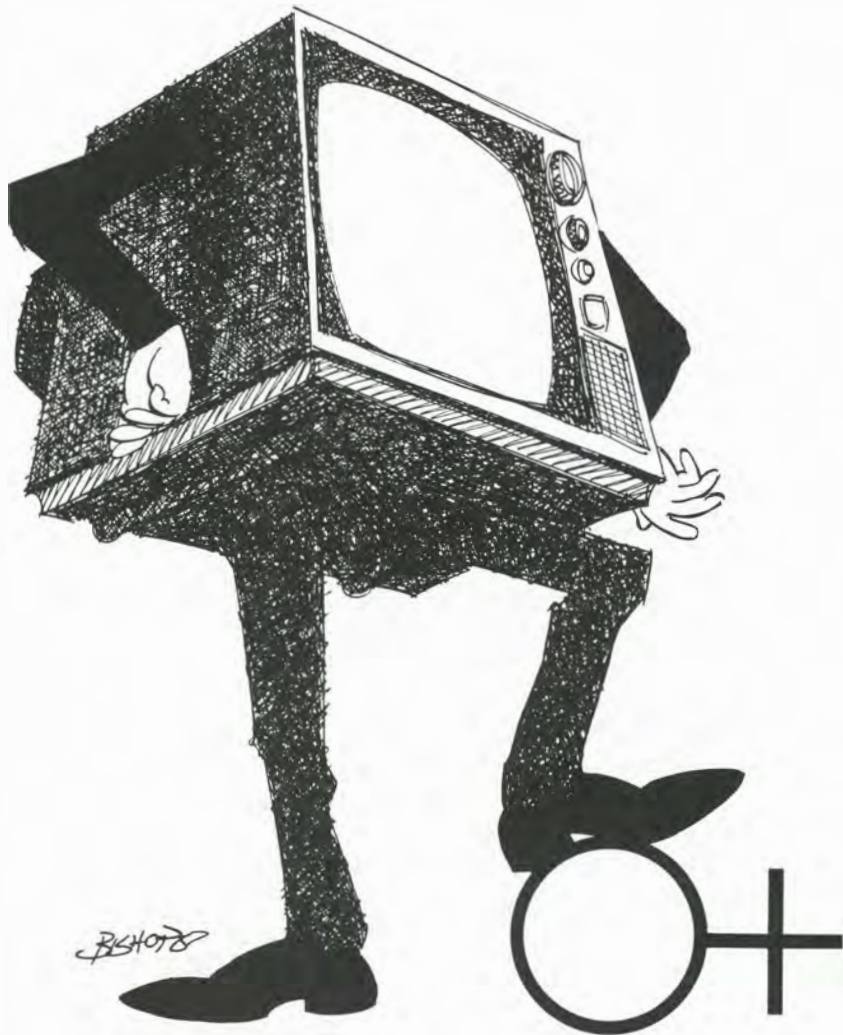
"D ESPITE my thirty years of research into the feminine soul," wrote Freud, "I have not been able to answer . . . the great question that has never been answered: What does a woman want?" If he were alive today he might answer it this way: A woman wants a television set and a quiver full of programs.

Women love television. If you don't believe me, just look at the ratings. Except for news broadcasts, sports shows, and scattered public affairs programming, there are always more women than men viewing television.

Apparently the "liberation" of American women has had little effect on their television viewing. Between 1960 and 1980, for example, the percentage of the nation's women who sat in front of the tube has remained relatively constant. Only during prime time did the number of women viewers change significantly, *increasing* about twenty-two percent over the past two decades. Today more women work outside the home, but they certainly have not sacrificed the tube in order to do so.

All of this would not surprise me except for the fact that American commercial television is so blatantly disrespectful of women. Women are stereotypically portrayed as little more than objects for entertaining people, especially men.

The latest example of this is Vanna White, co-star of the highly successful game show "Wheel of Fortune." She was selected for the program because, according to producer Merv Griffin, "She has a wonderful vulnerability and helplessness." Helplessness? Vulnerability? Since when are these



the characteristics for selecting television talent? In a talk show interview Vanna responded that the most terrible thing to happen to her on "Wheel" was that she broke a fingernail turning the letter M. Her fame has now landed her on the cover of *Newsweek*, which displayed Vanna's "vulnerability" in a revealing blue-sequin gown.

But Vanna's case is surely one of the mildest, for the tube is loaded with

women whose vulnerability is really a visual siren for voyeurs everywhere. A decade ago "Charlie's Angels" launched a new genre of prime time programming which relieved women of various undergarments and focused the camera on their anatomy. Some of the principal stars were also professional models; indeed, it was difficult to figure out where acting left off and modeling began.

In "Moonlighting," one of the major shows to attract the "liberated" yuppie audience, Cybill Shepherd's legs are a recurring visual transition from one scene to another. Admittedly there is not a lot of steamy sex on the series. But the woman is still the object of the hunt. And why Maddie puts up with David's repeated sexual innuendos is food for thought. Surely she must really like his loose tongue.

Nowhere in a popular medium have I seen greater lack of respect for women than on American television. Certainly there are exceptions: one need only watch the top-rated *Cosby Show*. But the big picture is depressing. Whether one examines commercials, talk shows, or drama, the overwhelming suggestion is that women were created for the male veneration of their bodies.

Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed. Since then all of mankind has clothed itself one way or another to maintain social decency. It does not take a lot of spiritual discernment to see that the lack of respect afforded women on television is one sinful version of the Fall's impact on mankind's view of its own sexuality. Like the waving curtain of an open bedroom window on a warm summer night, the images on the tube beckon the voyeur.

One wonders what would happen to the television ratings if programs had to be viewed in public, like a movie theater, rather than in the privacy of the home. Would women watch less television? Would women be portrayed differently? Would the medium's images of male and female change significantly? Perhaps we would clothe the voyeur in all of us—hide it from

our friends and neighbors—by viewing more discriminatingly. On the other hand, the depiction of women in films is probably no better than on the television set.

Until recently I thought that television's images of women were a result of the fact that so few women held significant positions in broadcast management. The television industry was dominated by men, I reasoned, and thus the sinful tendencies of male voyeurs would be projected in the programming. Actually, about ninety percent of all television stations have one or more female owners, and about thirty-five percent of the labor force in American broadcasting is female. While it is true that few women have made it to the highest levels of network management and program production, there certainly is a significant number of female voices in the industry.

In a fascinating collection of interviews with television producers, *The Producer's Medium* (Oxford University Press, 1983), editors Horace Newcomb and Robert Alley suggest that women have always been portrayed on television through male eyes. "Hence, men are careful, women picky; men are firm, women stubborn; men exercise authority, women are tyrannical; men are stern taskmasters, women are difficult to work with" (XVI). Such characterizations of the television woman are probably accurate, but why, then, do women watch so much television?

I am led to the conclusion that the portrayal of the television woman is more a matter of the Fall than merely a product of a male-dominated industry. I would like to see more women producers and directors. But I have no

faith that staffing changes would change fundamentally the nature of the programming. The respect for women will not spring mechanically from the television industry. It will only come naturally from the hearts of people (male and female) who see in women the image of God, and therefore commit themselves to serving all of mankind with tenderness and respect.

Should not Christian schools help combat secular gender roles and provide biblical alternatives? Or are such matters to be left exclusively to the family and church?

The fact is that schools are part of the problem (or solution) whether or not they like it. Most children spend more time with female teachers than they do with any others except for the generic television woman. While educators define their vocation as "teacher," they are probably just as influential as role models—even gender models.

In *How to Raise Your Children for Christ* (Minneapolis, MN, Bethany Fellowship Inc., 1975) Andrew Murray suggests that "example is better than precept." Might not this be a principle for schools as well? "Not in what we say and teach," warns Murray, "but in what we *are* and *do*, lies the power of training" (12).

The television woman is a sad spectacle of our sinfulness. So is the indiscriminating viewer, male or female. I am not comforted by Martin Luther's belief that "women should remain at home, sit still, keep house, and bear and bring up children." But if today's television woman is the only alternative, we are all in big trouble. ■

As the Year Begins

Spy Painting

by NICKI KLEIN PARSONS

As a beginning get-back-into-the-swing activity, or on hot end-of-school days, try sidewalk painting with water. As the student "spies" paint their soon-to-disappear secret messages, they can practice such skills as number or alphabet writing. For math practice try dividing the sidewalk into teams and let them do their own figuring with water painted problems. (Make sure each sidewalk painter has enough room to do several problems while the first problems or work dry up and disappear.)

Number Line Hop

Another outdoor activity which takes advantage of the beautiful autumn days while simultaneously developing math skills is a "number line hop." This exercise is designed for very young children experiencing difficulty with number order, addition, or subtraction.

Construct one or several number lines on which students can actually move by placing a piece of masking tape on the cement and taping large numbers along it. Then use directed activities such as "If you take two jumps forward, you will be at . . ." or "Nine minus four equals . . ." Let the students do the actual hopping.

Later in the year, this activity can be brought indoors and used at a learning center where individuals or small groups of students practice math skills via the number line. Make sure to have plenty of self-checking activity cards at the center, organized according to level of difficulty. Also create some challenge cards for students who are ready to determine the answer without the aid of the number line. (If you wish to eliminate the classroom noise involved with hopping, have the students guide stuffed animals along the number line instead.)

Responding through Photography

It seems as if many Bible curricula begin the year by looking at the Creation story in Genesis.

One dimension of any Bible lesson, whether it be the Creation story, the Tower of Babel, or the Calling of the Disciples, is the student's creative response to God after understanding the facts of the story and accepting these truths.

Some responses are inward, silent moments of thanksgiving while outward expressions of faith may take the form of a song, dance, or creative drama.

Teachers recognize each learner's uniqueness and often allow students in a classroom to choose varying creative projects according to individual talent and interest.

The story of Creation inevitably brings a student to a renewed awareness of the power and majesty of God in designing such a beautiful earth. Allow interested students to respond to this beauty through photography.

Instruct students to create a photo display around a theme such as, "When I think of Creation I see . . ." or "Creation tells of God's power, glory, and majesty" or perhaps around an appropriate verse from the Bible such as "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1). Students may also wish to center their display around one particular day of Creation.

Allow the students ample time for photographing and developing the film. Students could also include appropriate pictures taken previously at family outings or vacations. Then have students mount their pictures on a large posterboard with the theme printed across the top. Students may wish to combine their pictures with magazine pictures and artwork.

Photography can be used effectively in other curricular areas as well. For example, it could be used in a response to the study of the seasons in elementary science, or in learning about birds in biology, or perhaps in conjunction with the study of the family in social studies.

Celebrate Reformation Day!

While goblins, spooks, and treats abound on October 31st, Reformed Christians traditionally celebrate a holiday of greater historical significance and meaning. Reformation Day essentially changed the course of history as well as the course of the church.

Martin Luther is usually the man that is thought of first when one mentions the Reformation, and Luther is typically mentioned in devotions or school chapels. Go beyond the one-day focus on Luther and develop a unit which will make your students aware of this great Reformation leader as well as the impact the Reformation had on Christendom. Celebrate this event with thanksgiving!

These are some suggestions for student involvement which could be incorporated into a unit you've designed:

- Introduce the unit by having someone come to your classroom dressed as Martin Luther. Have that character enact the nailing of the 95 theses and tell a brief history of Luther's life up to that point.
- Find a list of the 95 theses and discuss what some of these ideas mean.
- Luther discovered that "the righteous live by faith." Discuss what it means to live by faith. How did Luther demonstrate his faith? How do we?
- Use a concordance to find other verses about faith. Construct a mobile of them, or incorporate them into a choral reading.
- Find examples in the Bible of men and women who demonstrated their faith. Prepare and tell the story to a few other students.
- Pretend that you are Martin Luther. Write a let-

ter to a friend explaining what you have discovered in Romans 1:17. Discuss what this means to you.

- Write an essay which analyzes the differences between the church of Luther's day and the church you belong to.

- Compare the Germany of Luther's day to the Germany of today, using maps.

- Write a play about the life of Martin Luther to be performed at a special chapel.

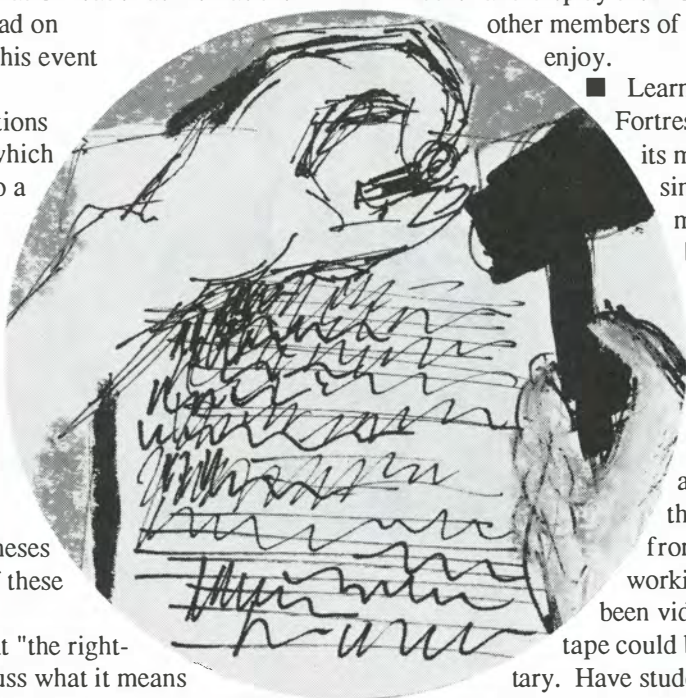
- Make large dioramas of the life of Martin Luther and display them on tables in the hallway for other members of the school to study and enjoy.

- Learn the hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" and discuss its meaning. Accompany the singing with rhythm instruments.

- Make a documentary of the life of Luther. Use films, slides (either slides taken from a commercially prepared presentation or slides made from students' artwork), and black and white photos taken of the costumed characters from the play students are working on. If the play has been videotaped, portions of the tape could be used in the documentary.

Have students write an accompanying script in journalistic style and present the documentary to other classrooms. They, in turn, could write editorials on their interpretation of this event.

- Invite children to a party which focuses on Martin Luther. Students could dress like Luther and a prize could be given for the most authentic costume. Serve refreshments and show a film on Luther, perform the play, and present other projects which the students have been working on.



*Pantomime*LISTENING TO
UNSPOKEN LANGUAGE

A drunk staggering down the street spots a wine bottle and empties it with comic delight. He then sees another, bigger bottle and consumes that—only to stumble upon an even larger bottle. This happens again and again until he encounters a bottle that is so huge that, while drinking from it, he falls in. His comic antics suddenly become tragic as he vainly struggles to get out.

The scene above was a part of Clyde Kipnis' pantomime show, "You Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet." The bottles were imaginary and no words were spoken, yet the pantomimist conveyed a powerful message.

An old adage states that "actions speak louder than words." Indeed, the way we act—our body language—often says as much as our words, or more. If a pupil averts his gaze and shifts in his seat when we ask for a vol-

unteer to report on last night's homework we have clues that he probably chose watching TV over doing his assignment. Students must learn how strongly unspoken language communicates.

One type of unspoken language is called pantomime: the art of telling a story through bodily movement. It is an ancient performance form. Pantomime was a major part of primitive rituals, and in the glory days of Greece and Rome one or more pantomimists would often act out a myth

or historical tale while a chorus would sing the story in the background.

THE ancient pantomime has contemporary value, for it can help students become aware of the power of body language. Use of pantomime also does the following:

- builds students' confidence
- helps to relax the physical stiffness that commonly accompanies performing or public speaking
- serves as an effective icebreaker
- encourages students to be aware
- interjects fun into learning situations
- stimulates students' imaginations

Most importantly, pantomime can teach a vital lesson about faith. As with the Christian life, one of the most common problems in acting is a lack of faith. The actor must believe in the character, the situation, and the sur-

roundings. The most common mistake made in pantomime is to forget an object being used. For instance, a student may pretend to be holding a heavy bowling ball when he notices that his shoe lace is untied. Instead of putting the ball down, he forgets that it exists and bends to tie his shoe. This action destroys the pantomime. In the same way, lack of faith in God's unseen plan for our lives sometimes causes us to "drop the ball" in our Christian walk as we focus on some immediate concern.

To successfully incorporate pantomime into the classroom it is best to keep class size small in order to maintain adequate control. If your class is larger than fifteen, or if you have an especially energetic group, you can divide the class into subgroups of seven or eight for individual pantomimes. Since this is silent drama, several students can perform for their subgroups simultaneously in different corners of the room. The small subgroup set-up allows all students to perform several times in a period and the student audience to make more elaborate comments. The teacher should circulate, applying appropriate criticism. Each subgroup may elect a favorite pantomimist to perform in front of the whole class at the period's end.

To further maintain control, when assigning group pantomimes (where students pantomime a skit together) limit groups to no more than four or five. This will also prevent the pantomime from losing focus and becoming a three-ring circus. Better control can also be achieved if you set up the classroom in a large semi-circle.

AS you teach pantomime begin by having students individually perform a simple, everyday task.

Some ideas include dividing egg yolks and whites, cleaning windows, putting in contact lens, and lacing up an ice skate. Have the students practice the routine several times, and remind them to be aware of the intricacies of performing the task. For example, if a student decides to brush his teeth, what way does the toothpaste tube unscrew? Does he squeeze from the middle or roll up from the bottom—or does he use one of the newer stand-up dispensers? How does he hold the toothbrush? Does he make faces in the mirror before or after he brushes? The performer's goal is to make such precise movements that everyone watching the scene can guess the activity.

The student audience's goal is to critique movements. The audience members should encourage movements that make the invisible become visible for them. They should be on the alert for vague or sloppy movements.

Your next step is to expand the situation by calling out specific motives, reasons for performing the task. If the student is brushing his teeth, you may tell him that he is late for school, which prompts him to brush hurriedly. Then you may tell him that he is going to the dentist, which causes him to brush meticulously. This sidecoaching challenges students to learn flexibility.

Step three is to have students join in each other's activities. One student goes on stage and mimes a simple activity, such as setting a Christmas tree into its stand. As students in the audience become certain of the activity, they should, one by one, join the originator and cooperate in completing the activity. This cooperative act gives students practice in impromptu creation, which will later aid them in public

speaking.

NOW that they have practiced making up their own stories, have each group pantomime a biblical story or principle. One student we know did a hilarious illustration of removing a speck from a fellow group member's eye while trying to see past a log in her own eye.

More capable students can come up with their own ideas, or they may relate some specific task, such as a demonstration of chemistry lab safety, or of Columbus preparing to embark on his famous voyage. You may even encourage precision by having students write out the tasks step by step. Younger students need a little more assistance, so you may want to give them tasks or have them draw assignments from a hat. Include tasks such as caring for a younger sibling or training a pet.

As you start the students out with simple, individual pantomimes and progress toward more complex group pantomimes, you will find their confidence, creativity, and awareness growing. Motivate them with a performance goal. Have the class display their best pantomimes in a chapel, an assembly, or another class so that others too can "hear" about body language and learn the power of its message. ■

Linda Milbourne draws on her experience as a middle school drama and English teacher, most recently at Delaware County Christian School in Pennsylvania. Gina Schlesinger holds degrees in drama, which she taught at the middle school and high school levels at Delaware County Christian School.

REFLECTIONS

NORMA BOEHM

1. I shall try to find something in each student to admire and shall lovingly communicate it to the student and to his or her parents.
2. I shall see the student as a child of God, loaned to his or her parents for a time, and keep in mind the covenantal promise made at baptism to do my best to instruct this child in the doctrines of the faith.
3. I shall see myself as an instrument of God, a spiritual role model used by God as he brings to pass his plans for each young life entrusted to my teaching.
4. I shall make every effort to be known as a coach rather than a scorekeeper, trying to be approachable, confidential, and honest, and patiently teaching the strategies of the "game."
5. I shall be willing to admit my mistakes and to eagerly learn from others.
6. I shall try to be very clear in my expectations, both academic and behavioral, so that each student knows what must be done.
7. I shall be willing to make adjustments in my lesson plans and assignments to challenge those who are more able and to program success for those who are less able.
8. I shall strive to be more interested in process than product, cultivating a hunger for knowledge by learning along with my students and showing them where to find answers for their many questions so that the doorway to lifetime learning is opened wide for each one.
9. I shall prepare prayerfully and diligently with a conscious effort toward including variety in my presentations and with an awareness of what the researchers tell me about the effective classroom.
10. I shall always try to show respect for students, parents, other teachers, and administrators, even if their understandings are different from my own, and I will try to work for their success with even more eagerness than I work for my own.

Norma Boehm composed these reflections as a fourth/fifth grade teacher at Creston-Mayfield Christian School in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

STEVE J. VAN DER WEELE

CONFLICTING CHRISTIAN CONCEPTIONS OF TRUTH

by Tony Vanden Ende

Calvin College Monograph Series

Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI

1986, 42 pp., \$2.00

Reviewed by Harro Van Brummelen, Trinity Western University, Langley, British Columbia.

The publication in 1974 of Elliott Eisner and Elizabeth Valance's *Conflicting Conceptions of Curriculum* set off a spate of much-needed analyses of North American curriculum approaches. Whether or not Eisner and Valance's classification of curriculum orientations was the best one possible, they did for curriculum theory what Thomas Kuhn did for views of knowledge with his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*; Eisner and Valance, that is, showed in convincing fashion what truly Christian educators have been saying all along—that the theory and development of curricula are never neutral but are, rather, based on one's philosophical presuppositions. Ultimately, a curriculum orientation that is used consistently will shape the classroom and the children in it in a very marked way.

In a recent addition to Calvin College's monograph series, Tony Vanden Ende considers not only the curriculum orientation of a number of Christian educators, but relates their curriculum views to their underlying conceptions of truth. The Reformed tradition, Vanden Ende claims, has seen two approaches to the question "What is Truth?" Reformed scholastic theology has held a correspondence theory of truth, an approach in which faith becomes primarily an intellectual endeavor. Reformed covenantal theology, on the other hand, contends that

biblical truth is primarily a matter of how one lives, and that, therefore, faith is a matter of the heart.

Vanden Ende describes next several approaches towards Christian education in our own educational community. Henry Zylstra held to scholastic views; his curriculum orientation, not surprisingly, turns out as a form of academic rationalism. Geraldine Steensma's and my own [HVB] covenantal stance led to an orientation known as *social relevance*. The Calvin College Report of 1970, *Christian Liberal Arts Education*, harbors an "epistemological inconsistency." That statement regards faith and life as inseparable but nevertheless concentrated on intellectual, rational knowledge in its curriculum proposals. And N. H. Beversluis's approach, "a Reformed covenantal model of theology," though more complex, suffers from an inconsistency similar to that of the Calvin report.

Vanden Ende demonstrates next how especially Zylstra and Steensma/Van Brummelen have related their respective conceptions of truth and knowledge to specific curriculum orientations. He terms the latter a Social-Reconstruction Relevance orientation to curriculum, as one which forms "a solid framework in which Christian curriculum may be set." (Note: The reviewer, in his modesty, did not put matters that way; for the sake of accuracy, I took editorial liberties here to report Vanden Ende's endorsement of the Steensma/Van Brummelen approach. SVDW)

The brevity of the work—it has only twenty-seven pages of text—leads now and then to inevitable over-simplification and incompleteness. Thomas

Kuhn's book, for example, already alluded to, needs to be consulted in any analysis of views of knowledge. And in the 1970s Henry Triezenberg, CSI, developed a curriculum orientation towards cognitive process independent of the views of truth which Vanden Ende considers.

The monograph remains, nevertheless, a useful work for the professional development of faculty and the Christian community. Particularly when read with two other monographs in the Calvin College Monograph Series, Peter DeBoer's *Shifts in Curricular Theory for Christian Education* and Donald Oppewal's *Biblical Knowing and Teaching*, Vanden Ende's essay can enhance our consciousness of the theoretical base of our Christian school curricula. He contributes effectively to that continuing discussion without which we risk compromising the unique biblical perspective we value so highly. ■

TRAILING CLOUDS OF GLORY: SPIRITUAL VALUES IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

by Madeleine L'Engle

Anthologist: Avery Brooke

The Westminster Press, Philadelphia

1985, 143 pp., \$12.95, cloth.

Reviewed by Gary D. Schmidt, Assistant Professor of English, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

It is hard not to wish that this book were something other than what it is. Madeleine L'Engle has written with grace, eloquence, and perspicacity in a number of genres, including theology, children's literature, adult fiction, literary criticism, and what might be generally classified as the meditative essay, and always she is remarkable for her clarity of thought and purpose. A number of her own children's books have received the highest awards in chil-

dren's literature. *A Wrinkle in Time* received the Newbery Award in 1963; *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* won the American Book Award in 1980; and *A Ring of Endless Light* was a Newbery Honor book in 1981.

Trailing Clouds of Glory is quite a different project, however, for it is primarily an anthology. Those looking for an organized discussion of spiritual values in children's books must look elsewhere. Those looking for a theoretical examination of morality and literature might better turn to L'Engle's *Walking on Water*. But those looking for something close to a commonplace book which makes no pretensions to being a high-powered scholarly work might profitably stop here for a time.

L'Engle, working with Avery Brooke, has crafted what is essentially a collection of portions of well-known children's books. The authors represented are some of the most familiar in the field: Ray Bradbury, Louise Fitzhugh, Jean Craighead, Virginia Hamilton, M.E. Kerr, C.S. Lewis, A.A. Milne, Katherine Paterson, E.B. White, and L'Engle herself, among many others. These selections are grouped somewhat loosely in thematic chapters and tied together by L'Engle's commentary.

And it is here that one begins to wish that the book were something different. The snippets from novels are intriguing, and they do precisely what L'Engle and Avery wish them to do: drive the reader back to the original works. But the commentaries are so short, so abrupt, so curtailed as to seem almost extraneous. Perhaps this comes out of L'Engle's attempt to let the pieces speak for themselves, but the

reader misses L'Engle's own sparkling insights into the kinds of concerns that these pieces are working out.

The two large questions she addresses—not systematically, but by implication—are ones she has looked at elsewhere, particularly in *Walking on Water*. These concern the nature of story itself, and the defining of the relationship between literature and Christianity. For the first, she suggests that story is a way of expressing truth through fiction, where fiction is not something which brings the reader further away from reality, but closer into it. This attitude has implications for her second question, since a number of the authors collected here would not have called themselves Christians. Yet

these, too, arrive at moral truths which any Christian would affirm.

And with this comes the greatest contribution of this slim volume. Not only has L'Engle suggested that great children's authors have concerned themselves with matters as weighty as the significance of the individual, the hidden grace and courtesy in the seemingly mundane world around us, the wisdom of simplicity, and creation's witnessing to the divine, but she argues that children's literature is precisely that: literature. This collection brings together works which are ordered and crafted to explore the human condition, to delight the imagination, and to make us more aware of the glory that lies about us, not only in our infancy. ■

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