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*Working Through Differences*

**Christian  
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**CEJ**

# Show Them

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try too hard to solve  
their students' problems.**

**W**HEN MY SISTERS AND I reminisce about our early years together in the same household, we tend to laugh a good deal. We all know, of course, that eight sisters could not possibly have shared one bathroom mirror and sink without considerable conflict. But most of the time we tend to forget the spats that colored our early lives.

I notice that my students also dwell mainly on the pleasant memories of home, now that they are away from home. Appreciatively they remember the good times with their parents and siblings. The conflicts fade from their thoughts.

The response is considerably different, however, when we reminisce about school. Almost all of us recall with some embarrassment and pain certain school conflicts that continue to haunt us. I still shudder at the memory of angry teachers gone too long from the room to reasonably expect a silent classroom when they returned. I struggle yet to appreciate the teacher who publicly embarrassed me when broken glasses prevented me from reading wall charts during a test.

These are exceptions, you say—now it's time to put the past behind. Of course. But I could give a dozen more examples. So could you. So could our students. In fact, one recent day mine did so, and the results stunned me.

Each of the students, most of whom had attended a Christian school, wrote about a school conflict, how the situation was resolved, and how the student wished it had been resolved. Of the forty-two valid examples offered, thirty-three of the circumstances included teacher involvement in the resolution. The other nine conflicts, all pertaining to friendship, were resolved by the students themselves, some with the aid of time. Of the teacher-assisted resolutions, sixty-one percent of the incidents left the student at least somewhat embittered by the way the teacher handled the problem.

# the Father

Unsatisfactory resolutions included three incidents where the student felt a teacher got too involved in the students' conflicts, four examples of what students considered unfair coaching of athletics, and five incidents that resulted in definite bitterness about the manner in which the teacher handled the incident. Nine more incidents centered on punishments the students considered unwarranted because teachers misjudged what had really happened and punished without ever learning accurate facts. In thirteen cases the students commended teachers for wise, fair solutions to school conflicts. In several cases, the teacher prayed with the students as they worked through difficulties.

Even in the negative situations, most students admitted that teachers probably responded in ways they thought would best serve the students. However, my unscientific sampling points out several lessons for teachers.

First, students can be deeply scarred by school conflicts. This sad fact serves as the basis for Dr. Raymond Moore, author of *Home-grown Kids*, to advocate homeschooling. Dr. Moore believes that a child's positive self-image develops largely in the first eight to twelve years of life. Therefore, if most of the child's nurture during those years occurs at home, where family members offer acceptance in spite of everyday mistakes, by the time the child goes off to face his peers, the child is ready to cope with the normal put-downs and embarrassments that everyone encounters.

One might argue that the sooner a child faces the "real world," the earlier he or she will learn to cope. Many view homeschooling as a form of over-protection; we must concede, however, that sibling rivalry provides young children adequate opportunity to practice survival skills in the arena of self-protection.

A second impression I gathered from my students' papers is that teachers

sometimes try too hard to solve their students' problems. Students appreciate a teacher who is ready to hear them, but they tend to resent a teacher who interferes with their private conflicts or who "needs to be needed." Because some students long to be noticed and are not, teachers must be very sensitive to the body language of their students so they can detect which students are ready to be helped and which ones need space.

I recall a year when some eighth grade girls fought mercilessly, and their mothers constantly phoned one another and the faculty to try to resolve their daughters' friendship problems. Finally one girl stated, "I wish our moms would just stay out of it and let us figure things out ourselves."

I know a relatively young teacher who lets the students work out their own conflicts, but he provides them a room and a time limit. He tells them to talk while he steps out for fifteen minutes. Often the problem is solved when he returns. If it is not, he provides another fifteen minutes; if the problem persists, he then helps the students work through the conflict. Sometimes all they need is someone to provide "equal turf."

Perhaps the most disturbing revelation of my students' papers is that teachers judge too quickly. We who teach tend to like being in control, which partly explains why we become teachers. The disadvantage is that we sometimes make snap judgements that scar our students, and that becomes serious. Certainly God can turn even our errors to work for good in our students' lives, but we have the responsibility to judge wisely.

When I recall some of my own inaccurate judgements, I am reminded of Jesus' words to the Jews who challenged his healing on the Sabbath. He advised the Jews to "stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgement" (John 7:24 NIV). He himself demonstrated great care in his judgements, not hesitating to condemn

obvious opposition, but exercising great patience with the woman at the well and others who appeared to be involved in wrong practices. He kept open the channels that would enable him to show them the Father. To the Pharisees he said, "You judge by human standards; I pass judgement on no one. But if I do judge, my decisions are right because I am not alone. I stand with the Father who sent me" (John 8:15-16).

Therein lies the key to our conflict-solving. We really must stand first with the Father—so we can see correctly. *Before* we judge, we need a spiritual focus, and *when* we judge we need that same focus, so that *whom* we judge will be pointed to the Father, too.

A very wise teacher told me of a serious dilemma she and a student encountered when he failed to honor a clearly-defined major assignment required for graduation. The student's bad habit was so pronounced and the consequences so serious that the teacher took more than the usual care to study and pray about the situation. After several days the Lord provided her a way to maintain her standard and yet allow the student to learn from the natural consequences of his mistake. Meanwhile the teacher drew the support and respect of the student's parents and the principal because she took the time to seek wisdom and understanding before making a judgement.

Would that we teachers spend more time asking for wisdom, so that, especially in the difficulties of human conflicts, we would stand with our Father.

# When Misunderstandings Come

BEN BOXUM

## Preserving the dignity and confidentiality of those persons who are at odds with one another is very important.

**F**EW PROBLEMS DEVASTATE the life and morale of a Christian school more than do misunderstandings between school personnel. When fractured relationships occur, it takes wisdom to discern the problem and courage to resolve it and bring about healing. Most people look to the administrator to supply both the wisdom and the courage.

First, presume you are dealing with fellow members of the body of Christ. This is basic.

Second, remind all persons involved that you will work for righteousness rather than rights. The difference is significant. One who insists on his or her rights, first of all, is demonstrating self-centeredness. Philippians 2:3,4 speaks this principle clearly: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others."

Why do this? Because the following verses state that Jesus, who as God, did not hang on to that tremendously high position, but became man (you know,

"away in a manger no crib for a bed"). Christ's demonstration of selfless love makes very obvious and important the principle of seeking righteousness first, not rights.

Third, the mediator must listen. He or she must hear what is being said rather than what the person is saying. That may be the same thing—but it may not be. "We the people" are very good at covering up how we really feel about something. James 1:19 puts it succinctly: "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry."

Fourth, after talking to the disagreeing person(s) individually, decide if a mutual session is necessary. If so, establish a time and place that is not threatening to either party. If two teachers are involved, don't meet in one of their rooms. Choose instead, a place such as the principal's office with chairs set in a less formal way and the principal away from behind his desk, the counselor's room, or some other place where there will be no interruptions. Preserving the dignity and the confidentiality of those persons who

are at odds with one another is very important.

Fifth, begin with prayer. *Always* begin with prayer. No matter how uncomfortable you may be, begin with prayer! This is not a custom or tradition. This is wisdom-seeking. James 1:5 guarantees wisdom to those who ask believingly. James 3:13-18 was written certainly to include all those who mediate personal problems.

As an aside, I recommend that every administrator pray for wisdom at least once a day. God doesn't need that much reminding, I realize, but we do. By asking for wisdom from God often, we are reminded that we lack it in our own finite selves.

Sixth, make your goal one of healing. That's crucial. You see, in Galatians 5:13-15 Paul tells us that if we are in Christ, we are called to be free. Hence, we serve one another in love. Love your colleague, then, as yourself. You see, if we keep on biting and devouring each other, be aware that we will destroy one another.

These are six simple but significant Christian principles to which, in my opinion, each CEJ reader should subscribe.

Administrators, you must take the lead to see that they are practiced in the school in which the Lord calls you to serve. **CEJ**

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# "First AIDS"

H.K. ZOEKLICHT



**R**ICK COLE, OMNI CHRISTIAN High School's utility man who dabbled in the teaching of English, speech, and psychology, was grinning as he entered the faculty room at 10:30 on Thursday morning. He held in his hand a set of papers he had just collected from his tenth-grade composition class. "Listen to this one," he howled to the covey of coffee drinkers. "Listen to what Caitlin Arendhorst wrote at the end of the first paragraph of her essay." Rick paused for effect and read aloud: "However, this fact is not true." It didn't bring down the house, but there were a few chuckles.

"Well," came from the new history teacher, Ward Smart, "look at the one I got the other day," and he pulled from his clipboard a sheet, which he passed around for everyone to read. It said, "Pres. John F. Kenedy was a member of the National Riffle Asocation but he was assassinated by riffle shots in 1963." Cole, glancing at the student's name on the paper, said, "Oh, that's Merle Vogelzang's. He can't spell for beans."

Now business teacher Bill Silver protested, "Aw, come on," he said, "you guys are nit-pickers. No wonder kids hate writing classes. Besides, you shouldn't make fun of students that way." Then he added, "Or of the NRA."

Smart responded quickly, "You're absolutely right, Bill; we shouldn't do that. But before we quit, did I tell you the one Petie Potgeter handed in the other day? He wrote on his test 'The Spartan victory over the Athenians was only a phallic victory.' He must have meant 'pyrrhic victory', don't you think?"

But nobody caught on, so Ward drank his coffee uneasily and quietly. After about a minute, physical education teacher and coach Ren "Rabbit" Abbott spoke up. "How many of you guys are on Carpie's new Asset Utilization Committee?" he wondered.

"I don't know about that, Ren, but I do know that you had better not let her hear you call her 'Carpie'. She's made it clear that she wants to be addressed as 'Dr. Carpenter,'" said Steve VanderPrikkel. He stressed the *doctor*.

"Yeah, I know," came from the coach. "I think she's worse than old Peter Rip was." He smiled and added, "Remember when he first got his doctorate? He could hardly wait for the phone to ring so he could announce: 'Dr. Rip speaking'."

At that moment Matt DeWit, science teacher, joined the group, blowing on his wire-rimmed glasses and wiping them clean with his handkerchief. "Have you heard the latest?" he asked, shaking his head soberly.

"What's that?" came from John Vroom, who sensed either tragedy or scandal in DeWit's tones and had momentarily stopped chewing on his jelly doughnut.

"It's happened here. It's happened at Omni, as we all knew it would. I guess it was inevitable. It's happening everywhere," he said quietly. "We have

probably got our first case of AIDS, you know, right here at Omni." Pausing for an appropriate moment, glancing over the faces of eight stunned coffee-breakers, he then added, "Darrell Bronkhorst has it. At least they think he does. He found out last Friday already, but they've been kind of sitting on it." He tightened his lips and shook his head sadly.

"I wondered when it would hit here," put in Vander Prikkel slowly. "They do have a case over at Trinity, you know. They tried to keep a lid on it, but it leaked out. You can't keep a thing like that quiet for long."

De Wit spoke again. "You remember last year—when was it? in March?—when Darrell was in that collision over on Yonge and the highway? He got hit by a pickup, and they gave him lots of blood? They now think that maybe that's when he picked it up." He shook his head grimly. "Poor kid," he said. "He is really going to go through it, and there's going to be lots of talk."

"Like what?" came from Susan Katje, the alert librarian.

"Well, like, uh, some parents already think that Darrell should not come back to Omni. You know, they say that they feel sorry for Darrell and all, and for the whole Bronkhorst family too for that matter, but that the safety of the students ought to be the main consideration. As a matter of fact, Rev. Kink over at First Church thinks the same way," said the biology teacher.

"Oh, no," groaned Ginny Traansma, who had been in charge of the just-completed chapel service. "Nobody needs that. Not the Bronkhorsts, not Darrell, and not Omni."

Meanwhile, throughout this grim conversation, Bible teacher John Vroom had been listening, aghast, consuming an entire pastry without deriving his customary pleasure from the ritual. In a loud voice he said, "This is no time for sentiment. That AIDS stuff is dangerous, and there's no cure. Darrell has got to stay away from here. He can

stay at home. We'll hook him up to a telephone or television or something, but he can't be around here." Vroom's hand shook as he raised his coffee cup to his sticky lips.

"John, John, John," came in progressively softer and more disapproving tones from Ginny. She shook her head in disbelief.

But John Vroom was adamant. "Listen," he said, waving a fat finger at Ginny. "You remember when Minnie had her hysterectomy at St. Luke's last year? Do you know there were AIDS patients there at the same time?" he demanded, emphasizing *same*. "And they didn't tell us?" Then the Bible teacher paused and added gratefully, "As luck would have it, providence was on our side and she didn't get it." He looked puzzled for a moment and added, "Can women get AIDS?"

Steve Vander Prikkel, who by virtue of his biology training spoke with some authority now, broke into the tense conversation. "Look," he said firmly, staring right at John Vroom, "nobody's in any danger of catching AIDS from Darrell. The disease isn't transmitted by drinking fountains and shaking hands and that stuff."

"All the same," retorted Vroom stoutly, "all you are saying is that there is no evidence that it has happened yet. But that doesn't mean it won't. Are you willing to risk the health and life of the whole school just because you don't have evidence? Not me."

Then a new thought popped into the Bible teacher's head. "How do you know he got it from a transfusion?" he asked.

There was then a long silence. Finally Steve said, "Well, as a matter of fact, we don't, but—well, we assume . . . how else? You don't think. . .?"

John Vroom put on his judicial face. "Nobody knows what to think. That's just the trouble," he said, waving his pudgy finger. "And we have to be realistic in a situation like this. That means that we have to admit the possibility, at

least, that there may be some kind of sexual involvement, don't you agree? I wasn't born yesterday. That's just being reasonable, candid, and fair to everybody, isn't it?" It was a rhetorical question.

"Well," offered Cole, "if you make that assumption, then maybe we've got to take some steps to deal with this thing. Maybe there are other kids involved. Sunday night I heard this Koops fellow, the Surgeon General, you know, say on *Sixty Minutes* that the only way to deal with AIDS is to have people use, uh, er, condoms." He looked nervously about him and then at the floor.

"That's what they're saying, all right," affirmed Ginny Traansma, "but. . . ."

Now John Vroom interrupted her forcefully. His mouth was still full of doughnut, but he could not wait. His face was red; his eyes bulged; his breathing was audible. He glared at Ginny. "The day Omni Christian High School recommends, sells, authorizes, or teaches the use of those things is the day John Vroom resigns!" he announced.

"Whoopee!" came in subdued tones from somewhere in the back of the room.

Vroom continued. "I mean it. This is no joke. We are not going to turn this Christian High School into a brothel, and, and, and. . . ."

The Bible teacher was blotched and breathless. He could not, for the moment, continue. He could not even eat.

"Now wait just a minute, John," said Matt De Wit. Nobody is suggesting anything like that. Simmer down. We're just exploring things here. And after all, aren't there some situations in life when you just have to choose the lesser of two evils?"

"Relativist!" shot back Vroom. "The Bible says, 'Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.' We don't do things the way the world does them. We don't

compromise with evil." With that the apoplectic Bible teacher rested his case.

"So you'd say nothing and do nothing and let the disease spread throughout the school and the neighborhood. Is that what you'd do, John?" asked De Wit.

John Vroom glared at him for a minute but said nothing.

"Maybe John's right," said Cole. "Maybe this is not a school problem. Maybe we should let the doctors and the family and the church handle it. Maybe we should just not get involved. If we do, it's going to be a mess. Wait and see."

"But we are involved," protested Matt. "Apparently one of our own students has AIDS, and we don't know how he got it. But we do know how some people get it. Shouldn't the school try to put some light on the problem. Isn't that what education does?"

"I guess it does," said Ward, "but this community won't tolerate it. We'd never get to first base trying to explain to our constituents that we even mention condoms around here, to say nothing of suggesting that they have something to contribute to solving this matter. All we can do is teach abstinence. That is what we are supposed to do anyway. I guess that's where I am on this business."

"I hear what you are saying, Ward," said Matt, but we all know that some of our students are, uh, sexually active, as they say. Shouldn't we accept that as truth and deal with it? And if we don't, aren't we responsible for the consequences of our inaction?" Then he added, shaking his head, "Crap! We are in a dilemma. No matter what we do, we are in trouble. There doesn't seem to be any way to do the right thing, the Christian thing."

No one had noticed the quiet arrival of Dr. Esther Carpenter, first-year principal of Omni, who had been listening to the conversation for several minutes. But now she stepped forward, gingerly

holding a cup of steaming herbal tea in her left hand.

"I think you're right, Matt," she said. "This is a most difficult situation. And tragic, too. But we'll be all right if we stay calm and pray for guidance. For the moment, though, there are a few things we know we have to do, right?" She sipped her tea daintily and continued. "First, we have to be supportive of Darrell and the Bronkhorst family. His prospects aren't great, but we need to enhance them as much as we can. Those people are in agony. We should pray for his healing. Second, we must make no assumptions about how Darrell became infected, and we surely have no business suspecting him of doing anything wrong. Third, this is a policy matter for the board, not the faculty. We should urge the board to get the best medical advice on which to base school policy in this matter."

Dr. Carpenter paused for a moment, looking over the cup's edge at her faculty as she sipped, and then added significantly, "At the moment, however, I can see no reason why Darrell cannot continue to attend our school, and until we have a good medical reason to the contrary, I will recommend to the board that Darrell attend as usual. If there is some risk in that, why, I guess we'll just have to take it. But we will proceed in the open. We will continue to stress the importance of dealing with facts, not rumors."

John Vroom glared. Matt De Wit nodded approval.

The principal added a final word. "Doesn't our statement of philosophy of Christian education say that one of our objectives is to equip our students to live the Christian life in the contemporary world? Well, this is the contemporary world. Let's show the kids how to live in it."

There was silence. Then Steve Vander Prikkel began to applaud. Others joined. All but one. John Vroom grimly chewed his doughnut. CEJ

# P A R E N T S

## Can Help

ANITA MIDDLETON

**A**LTHOUGH I WAS A TEACHER for three years myself, I have always been a bit intimidated by the thought of going to school and discussing a problem with one of my children's teachers. Even though I know that communication between parents and teachers is not only helpful but necessary, I am still reluctant to get involved. There are other parents like me, and there are probably teachers, too, who find it hard to make the effort to talk personally with parents. But it is something we all need to do.

Christian parents, and Christian teachers, have an advantage here. We can pray first asking God for wisdom both to give and to receive advice or correction and for the ability to understand the needs and desires of the child, the teacher, and the parent. Several of my Christian friends have told me how they have been involved in their children's classroom problems and how, with God's help, they have been able to improve the situation, resolve it, or, at least, get through it.

My friend Pat, who has seven children, has always made it her business to talk to her children's teachers and to let them know that she is concerned about the children and wants to support the teacher's efforts. She has even, on occasion, given some advice.

When Tony was little, he was quite rowdy, and one of his teachers would often make him sit out in the hall or the principal's office for an hour at a time. Pat didn't think the punishment was very helpful, but she recognized the need for it. She went to see the teacher.

"It's fine to send him out when he's disruptive," she said, "but don't let him waste his brain." Tony's penmanship was terrible, she pointed out. Why not have him practice writing while he was out of the room? Or maybe he could do some memorizing: the constitution, the ten commandments.

The teacher thought this a good idea and put it into practice. Here was a wise teacher, able to accept advice



from a parent. Little wonder that Tony's behavior improved, with his mother and his teacher putting their heads together to devise productive punishment for his infractions.

Pat feels that it is pride that sometimes gets in the way of helpful communication and problem-solving between parents and teachers. If the teacher is too proud to take advice from a non-professional (especially one with a rowdy son!), or if the parent is too proud to admit that a son or daughter is less than perfect, conflicts will be harder to manage.

Sometimes a teacher may need more than advice. Can a parent dare to offer correction? What happened to my friend Sheila's daughter would not have happened in a Christian school, but I hope that Christian teachers would be as open to correction as this teacher was.

Sam and Sheila moved last year and had to take their daughters out of a Christian school. The girls adjusted quite well to the public high school, but the ninth grader was upset because one of her teachers habitually used profanity in class. Sheila was horrified. Her first thought was to go to the principal and complain, but after she and Sam had prayed about it, asking God to give them wisdom to do what would be most helpful for all concerned, they decided to go together to see the teacher himself. They were careful not to go with a condemning attitude.

"I thought you would want to know," Sam said, "that one of your students is troubled by your use of profanity." He also let the teacher know that they had not told their daughter they were coming to speak to him about it, and would not tell her.

The teacher reacted very well. He said he realized that he had "slipped" in regard to his language and he thanked them for calling it to his attention.

This, too, was a wise teacher, able to accept reproof without becoming defensive, to recognize his own wrong,

and to admit it. It would have been harder for him, I'm sure, if Sam and Sheila hadn't been so tactful and considerate. They didn't tell him he was wrong to use such language. They left that up to him to determine. They simply told him what was undeniably true and what they, as parents, were possibly the only ones to know: that one student, their daughter, was troubled by it. By going to the teacher himself rather than the principal, and by not telling their daughter or anyone else at the school about the matter, they showed that their only concern was to take care of the problem at hand in as kind a manner as possible.

When parents and teachers are able to communicate with kindness about areas of conflict, problems are often easily resolved—often, but not always.

Eric and Rose had always prayed that their sons would get just the teachers that God wanted them to have in order to build character. They were very pleased with the boys' teachers until Charlie's third grade year. That year there was a conflict. Charlie was constantly being reprimanded; he thought his teacher picked on him. Rose went to see her.

Charlie was a very bright boy, the teacher said, but he was also very sociable and a bit of a tease. Although he was doing well with his lessons, she felt that his carefree attitude was hindering his academic progress. She told Rose she had determined not to let him get away with anything.

Rose and Eric disagreed with the teacher's evaluation of the situation, but they couldn't get her to change her mind. She continued to be very strict with Charlie, and he continued to hate it. It was a long and difficult year for him.

It was a hard year for Rose, too. She couldn't agree with what the teacher was doing but at the same time she felt that God had given Charlie this teacher, and he must have had a reason. She maintained close contact with the

teacher and also spent much time in prayer about the situation. She and Eric told Charlie he had to submit to the teacher's authority whether or not he thought she was right. "Your job is not to judge your teacher," they told him, "but to be a good student."

They were glad when the year was over. Even now, with Charlie in high school, they aren't sure just what was accomplished by that experience. They did learn that the teacher had been going through a difficult time personally that year; she wrote and told them about it later. Perhaps that caused her to be overly harsh with Charlie; on the other hand, perhaps he needed it. At any rate, Eric and Rose maintained peace where there was great potential for conflict. They did it by submitting to the teacher's authority and teaching their son to submit. And they did it through prayer.

Parents need to be involved. With the needs of the children uppermost, and with God-given wisdom to both give and accept constructive criticism, parents can often help teachers alleviate conflicts at school. Wise teachers will encourage them. CEJ

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# Adoption:

**Perhaps the greatest error teachers and others make is that they too quickly attribute a student's problems to his or her adoption.**

**T**HE IGNORANCE ABOUT adoption and adoptees is appalling. Children who are adopted often face some of the prejudices and problems minorities experience. Often myths and ignorance about adoption exist despite high levels of education and generally thoughtful attitudes on the part of teachers as well as society. One such misconception people have is the assumption that the birth father is usually unknown; others that he is alcoholic or a criminal. The truth is that adopted children come from the same statistical background as the general population—cutting across race, educational level, careers, religion, and personality as the rest of the children in the classroom.

Perhaps the greatest error teachers and others make is that they too quickly attribute a student's problems to his or her adoption. Whereas this can be a contributing factor in some disturbed children, especially if a child is in adolescence or has been in many

foster homes, it usually is either a very minor part of the situation or not related at all. For example, the fourteen-year-old boy whose temper has been flaring up lately could be having a personality development problem or could be in a home situation in which his younger brother, who is having a learning problem in school, is receiving all his parents' attention. Each case must be carefully evaluated before one jumps to the easy conclusion that a child's problems can automatically be traced to his adoption.

The Christian community has an especially interesting perspective on adoption. Christians are the adopted children of God, "predestined. . . in accordance with his pleasure and will" (Eph. 1:5). They have the inheritance rights and the love of God through Jesus Christ. This spiritual adoption, then, should give the Christian community a special sensitivity and joy when addressing the concept and reality of adoption on earth.

**Current Research** Research of the 5,000,000 adopted people in the United States has been developing in the last years. Some research shows that a slightly higher proportion of adopted adolescents seek psychological help, but as adults, the psychological gap closes and shows no differences between adopted and nonadopted people who seek help. Other researchers advance evidence "to show that adopted children are no more susceptible to problems than everyone else. . . children who do have problems because they're adopted usually come from families in which the subject of adoption is either taboo or surrounded by uneasy feelings" (DuPrau 79). It would also follow that uneasiness could result if teachers or the community make a child feel unusually singled out. An important new study by Leslie M. Stein and Janet L. Hoopes debunks many myths about adopted persons by proving that their identity formation is normal. Stein says that "because so much in popular writing and the professional literature seems to suggest that adoption is itself a major problem in identity formation, the topic has long been overdue for serious, objective study" (6). The researchers studied over-all identity, parental relationships, nonadopted siblings, and search behavior. The results showed "that many myths perpetrated by researchers who studied adopted persons who were part of a mental health practice are unfounded. Studying healthy adoptees and comparing them with other family members resulted in the kind of common-sense finding that adoptive families have long been familiar with" (8). Adoptees were shown to have normal identity formation, healthy relationships, and normal self-esteem.

The only clear evidence of problems indicates that adopted children seem to have more learning problems. One study found that "while adoptees are equal to the general population in terms of level of education they attained,

# Facts and Myths

JUDY OTTE

forty-seven percent seemed to be underachievers" (Plumez 146). A child with learning disabilities has an average or above average IQ but seems unable to learn or perform as well as he should because of subtle neurological problems or development lags. These problems are usually outgrown or compensated for by adulthood. A possible explanation is that learning disabilities are caused by a long or difficult birth, and since adoptees are often the first children of teenage birth-mothers, the births are more likely to be long and difficult. The point is that children should be tested for learning disabilities before they are considered to be underachievers or to have psychological blocks.

Often research on children who have been adopted is done on populations that have sought help from mental clinics and institutions, and therefore, statistics do not paint a true picture of the larger portion of successful adoptions and "well" families. In one study, psychologists at Drew University in New Jersey, found that adoptees were different from persons who were not adopted, but that the differences were all in the adoptees' favor. Dr. Richard Detweiler and Kathrun S. Marquis compared the perceptions that young people have about themselves—both those who have adopted parents and those with biological parents. The study "Does Adoptive Mean Different?" showed that adopted children have a more positive world view, see others in a positive way, and have a higher level of confidence than non-adopted children. They said their parents are more nurturing, comforting, and providing of help with problems. The researchers conclude that "adoptive persons feel more positive about themselves and about others and are more in control and confident than are the non-adopted persons in our sample" (Powledge 63).

Dr. Detweiler says:

The bottom line is the notion that

adoption is not abnormal, that adopted children are not predisposed to abnormality. Adoption is a fact. We should accept it. . .and we should have the same expectations toward adopted children as toward biological children ("Today's Adoptees").\*

## Emotional and Behavioral

**Characteristics** Children who are adopted can, like all children, have any problems seen in the classroom, from learning disabilities to behavior problems. As was stated earlier, the classroom teacher must carefully test and evaluate the student and consult the parents before jumping to conclusions about the cause of the problem.

However, in the adolescent years, students become absorbed with self-identity, and for the adopted child, this can be unsettling and sometimes lead to searches, rebellion, or restlessness. Such reactions can result in less interest in the classroom, poorer grades, and possible moody or rebellious behavior. If a child has learning disabilities, his awareness of his poor performance often causes emotional distress. The learning disabled child can become frustrated with school. Problems which are grounded in other causes need to be dealt with as for any child—with tutoring, counseling, correcting, and praying for guidance.

**Classroom teacher response** The classroom teacher, then, needs to be wise and sensitive to the adopted child. First of all, the teacher should not dismiss a problem or excuse it because the child is adopted. It is much better to seek the real cause of the problem and deal with it if possible. For those children who are struggling with adoption or identity, a teacher-counselor should be available. Perhaps a peer group of others who are adopted can provide a setting for some to discuss their feelings. This, however, should only be a parentally-approved option for those

\*A study done by Rita James Simon and Howard Altstein from 1972 to 1984 showed that black and other non-white children adopted by white families have high self-esteem, do well in school, and show no sign of major emotional damage. They are as healthy as other adolescents in middle class families.

who seek it or need it and not be used automatically for all adopted children.

The classroom teacher should be especially sensitive to language used and attitudes shown about adoption and the adopted child. While no special singling out should be done, the teacher must be aware that not all children come from an "average" background with two parents and biological children. Whether adoption affects the drawing of a family tree or places undue emphasis on heritage in other areas, the teacher needs to be aware of his or her language and any possible sources of ignorance on the part of the student, as, for example, whether there has been any heart disease in a child's family background. The teacher should let the child bring up adoption if he or she chooses but never should put the child on the spot with questions or references made to him or her. Adoption should not be over-emphasized but only brought up when it is appropriate.

If a child seems to be having some problems, a sensitive teacher with an open, unprejudiced mind and a loving heart could do much to make a child feel better by allowing a chance to talk while receiving affirming messages of worth and acceptance.

If a child has a learning disability, the school may need to change the learning process. The teacher can make a tremendous difference by adjusting course materials and presentation manner. Bethany Christian Services pamphlet "The Grafting" maintains that "short term therapy for the child and his family can help with the child's feelings of low self-esteem and depression, and give the parents support and new insights regarding more effective means of managing related behavior."

The classroom teacher needs to become informed about adoption. He or she needs to be open-minded about

the causes of a child's problems, going deeper than just the fact of adoption. The teacher must be sensitive in handling the child. Undue references to adoption on the part of an "enlightened" person can be as upsetting as denying that adoption exists. The goal, then, is to make all children feel accepted and worthy. The child who is adopted is just one of the class. Each child has a unique story with unique problems and triumphs, and each is a precious person to God. CEJ

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# A Teacher's Prayer

FANNIE L. HOUCK

These packaged surprises, these children of Yours,  
Lord, teach me to love them without keeping scores,  
To nurture and cherish the slow-learning one,  
Remembering they're children—Your daughter, Your son.

Creative and patient when problems arise,  
With things in perspective as seen through *their* eyes—  
Grant me good humor and from rancor keep free  
That each of my students may see You in me.

# How to Re-route a Failure

JOAN MARTIN

**"DON'T TRY COLLEGE.** You won't succeed." These words were said to my son when he graduated from high school. A well-meaning teacher wanted to avert him from possible failure.

The words did their damage. He attended college for only three months, even though we tried to encourage him to go on.

In contrast to this story is the experience of my second-grader, Craig. At the end of the school year, my husband and I were called to a conference at his school. Craig's teacher's face revealed the bad news. "Craig is a fliberty-gibbet," she said. "He needs to repeat second grade."

I felt myself bristling as I asked, "Can't you find anything good to say about him?"

"Not much," she replied.

That summer we moved to another city. We told the school principal about Craig. He evaluated the situation and then asked our son, "Craig, if I let you go on to third grade will you work very hard for me?"

"Yes, sir!" he replied, smiling.

After a few months we attended a conference with Craig's new teacher. Her report was this: "I just know this boy is going to make something of himself. He's just a late bloomer, like one of mine was." I hung onto every word she said and hurried home to tell our son.

Years of difficulty in school went by for Craig, but today he is an electrical engineer and doing well.

Although we see signs of failure in others, can we really predict the future? Who knows what might happen if we were to encourage and help that one we feel is destined for failure?

As teachers we have a unique choice to re-route a possible failure, but so often our first response is to say something negative instead of to offer a positive comment. Certainly there are times when we must be negative, but in most situations there is something good

## ...compliments must be genuine or they lose their effect.

that we can emphasize. How can we do this?

**Think before you speak.** Are your words the kind that build people up or tear them down? Remember, everyone is vulnerable to words. This includes little children as well as the elderly.

One day I met an acquaintance on the street. Her twin boys were with her. She introduced them and said, "Johnny is the slow one."

He responded, "Mommy, I am not."

I thought, "You will be if your mother goes on talking this way."

**Make a promise to say something encouraging and positive** to each one of your students and to others around you. You might comment on something small or insignificant, but remember the importance of your sincere interest.

**Ask those you live with whether you are a positive or a negative person.** Find out if you come across as a demanding complainer or as an encourager.

No one tells truth as do your spouse and children. One day my son laughingly said, "Mom, it's so funny. You can be punishing us and yelling at us, and when the phone rings you answer as if everything is beautiful." Kids have a way of seeing the real us.

**Work on lifting people up.** If a family member or a friend comes to you and is hurting or depressed, take time to listen to that person and think of positive ways to help.

**Think twice before relating something to your family or friends about another person.** What you say may have lasting results. If you put a person down, the tendency will be for those you tell to feel the same way. They may lose respect or the wish to help

someone because of your negative remarks.

**Look for people's special gifts.** After a luncheon, one woman said to another, "You have an excellent speaking voice." She hadn't realized her strength, and the comment helped her overcome her nervousness. Remember, however, compliments must be genuine or they lose their effect.

Hundreds of people step out to do a task and never hear "well done." Those same people may think, "I'll never try again." Our words will help them to do even better the next time.

**When someone appears to be failing, there is no need to add to their discomfort.** In his Sunday School class Bill had a chemically dependent youth. Jim attended class because his parents made him go, but he hated every moment and sat with his head down most of the time. Bill knew the problem but seemed to take pleasure in making Jim read and answer questions.

Some time later, we heard Jim had become a Christian. He had become a part of another church and when asked about his conversion he replied, "I couldn't get over the love the people showed even when I was a mess."

Mistakes and sin have consequences for us all. Yet, we must not pre-decide what the Lord will do in a life. After denying three times that he knew the Lord, Peter declared his love openly and became a mighty apostle for Jesus. If Christ can look past weakness and failure, and even use it, who are we to do differently with other people for whom Christ died? **CEJ**

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# The Stifling and Menacing

**Schools need radical pedagogy that empowers people to overthrow class-based dominance.**

**R**ECENTLY I RECEIVED three significant new books on Canadian education. The first described and severely criticized a Catholic school as an example of oppressive education. The next promoted "critical" (i.e., neo-Marxist) pedagogy. The last decried the debilitating capitalist exploitation of the schools, and the resulting passivity of students. These three books are just a current sample of a steady flow of "radical" education books, many used as textbooks and references of universities today.

**Schools Oppress and Exploit** What themes do these books emphasize? First, North American schools perpetuate inequality. Schools slot students into jobs and social status that roughly reproduce our current hierarchical labor force. They enable the dominant class, the "hegemony," to control economics, politics, the mass media, and education by establishing its view of the world and its values on the masses. In other words, they are instruments for cultural and economic control.

This control is not fully secure, however. Schools must educate pupils to be active agents against the prevailing ideology so that eventually the struc-

tures of domination inside and outside the school may be overcome. Schools need radical pedagogy that empowers people to overthrow class-based dominance. Then persons may truly act as subjects rather than as objects of economic and cultural and sexual exploitation, and will be able to reconstitute our social order.

Now, these authors have supporting evidence. They point to the small proportion of students from low socioeconomic background who enter college. They show how teachers in "blue collar" schools promote rote learning while those in "professional" communities emphasize critical thinking and problem-solving. They have numerous examples that it is not *what* you know but *who* you know that determines your advancement in society. They demonstrate that IQ and achievement tests reflect social and cultural background more than aptitude—and yet are used as filtering systems for educational advancement.

The basic difficulty however with many neo-Marxist studies is that the selective data presents far from the whole truth. The starting point of neo-Marxists is that schools exploit and oppress students. This faith assumption

# "Eye of God"

HARRO VAN BRUMMELEN

then is "proven" by choosing appropriate data and interpreting it to fit the assumed framework. Neo-Marxists do not point, for instance, to the surprising amount of social mobility in North America, at least in part due to educational opportunity. They conveniently ignore the liberating effects of schooling and literacy. A unified and powerful and dominant elite intent on exploitation would never have allowed education in its present form. Further, their creed forces neo-Marxists to reject that some people can be relatively content with their present lot in life. If you do not want to "overthrow the oppressors," they say, then the oppressors' blanket of fog has blinded you.

**McLaren: the rituals that enslave** A good example of neo-Marxist educational thinking is Peter McLaren's 1986 book, *Schooling as a Ritual Performance*. Like Freire, McLaren holds that the teacher "must not merely present knowledge to students; he must transform the consciousness of students," and help them "crack the prevailing cultural crust" (114). McLaren's study focuses on a Roman Catholic school in a Portuguese-Canadian district in Toronto. The school, McLaren believes, has two main purposes: to produce compliant workers and to make faithful Catholics. School rituals such as religious observances, teacher body language, and lesson structure contribute to these aims and almost irresistibly impose dominant values.

What evidence does McLaren give? He emphasizes that teachers use their power to dominate students, with the latter being "forced to sit still for hours, made to listen to boring lessons, and assigned tasks which many of them consider irrelevant" (88). Further, to emphasize their authority role, the teachers' menacing eyes, "like the Eye of God," indicate readiness to repel any attempted subversion (103). The instruction rituals reward sitting still

and copying work mindlessly, thus inculcating the belief that the main reward in life is found in being a patient and hard worker. Most graduates, McLaren charges, "uncritically embrace the ideology of domination (and exploitation) with the heartfelt approval of the Church" (213). The key words in describing today's education, according to McLaren, are control, manipulation, neglect, domination, and oppression. At best, teachers are "unwitting accomplices" (224).

Instead, McLaren says, radical pedagogy must prevail, with teachers fighting for equality and liberation. But what that means he does not make clear. He honestly admits that he could not avoid using similar rituals and procedures during a substitution experience. He vaguely suggests that spontaneous drama and art might form the nub of multidisciplinary curriculum and that classes should plan "pilgrimages" (237). He urges teachers to become "co-celebrants" of human freedom rather than "security guards" (233). How is this to be done? He gives no specifics, for "to offer step-by-step solutions would be to extend the technocratic mind set that this book has devoted itself to criticizing" (229).

McLaren, of course, does not describe just a Catholic school in Toronto. He is talking about the schools in which you and I teach. His insight into the pervasiveness and importance of rituals in schools, also Christian ones, encourages us to do some critical self-analysis. But McLaren believes that humans, when given "total" freedom, will develop alternate, positive, "celebrative" rituals and thus redeem themselves. Both Scripture and experience tell us otherwise. Indeed, no human institution can function without imposed rituals. True freedom to learn can only be found within a framework of loving authority and respect, a framework that demands regular order that is based on and contributes to ritual. McLaren's Toronto

school apparently did not have such a positive framework. But many schools, both Christian and public, use ritual to engender love and respect as well as excitement about learning.

**Kindergarten as a straitjacket** Other neo-Marxist studies of schools are similarly flawed. Michael Apple and Nancy King, for instance, in *The Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education* (1983) describe a rigid American kindergarten in which Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy are held up by the teacher as good helpers since "they haven't said a thing all morning" (91). The study demonstrates clearly how kindergartens can stifle creative and enjoyable learning. The analysis is incisive and points out pitfalls to avoid. But the kindergarten described is not, in my experience, a typical one, despite Apple and King's claim that it is well-respected. They are quick to find fault, but, as for McLaren, their "radical pedagogy" remains undefined except for the suggestion that children must be given freedom. They do not recognize it is precisely a lack of structure and goals that eventually leads to oppression. Children feel secure and function best within a stable though flexible format under loving but firm teacher leadership.

Neo-Marxist studies such as these influence the views on schooling of many prospective teachers. In a concluding article I will discuss the strengths and dangers of neo-Marxist views on moral education. CEJ

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# The Librarian

**REMEMBER THE OLD** country school with its one shelf of books. I usually finished reading them by the end of October. Happily, many Christian schools have improved their book selection and the quality of their reading material since that time.

Today in elementary schools, the importance of books and libraries is often recognized because the language arts program is the basis of curriculum. At the junior high school, however, the emphasis on using libraries and library programming dwindles. The library becomes a study hall, a place to get out of class. At best, it is a place where one can do minimal research in order to complete a project.

Junior high students are in a transitional period of life. They are growing and changing physically and emotionally. They are excited and scared, dependent and independent, lovable and frustrating, and in a state of ambivalence and flux. Their social life and inter-relationships pre-empt most of the activities in their lives. They are seeking and searching for their own answers to life's problems.

Into this limbo we thrust more fragmentation, by giving the students a school structure based on departmentalization or the rotary system. This further frustrates students, often resulting in a lack of security and inhibiting the development of a good sense of self. In the elementary grades, students have one teacher on whom they can rely: to understand them as persons, to accommodate their workload, and to teach them all the bits and pieces that made their education a unified experience. Homework, requiring time management, is not a factor in sixth grade, but suddenly is expected in grade seven. Study skills, organizational skills, prioritizing of subject material, and research skills are all expected at

the junior high level, although no one specifically teaches them. Junior high students are expected to process and apply information in a number of different situations.

Too many junior high students have expressed the feeling that they are not important, because teachers are more concerned about teaching "stuff" than students. We have young people who are seeking unity and coherence in their lives in an ambience that tends toward fragmentation and disunity. What can we, as a school community, do to address this problem? Although I would like to have self-contained classrooms where students experience their education holistically, I am very aware that most junior high schools are departmentalized or on a rotary system. What can we do to bring unity and coherence in this situation?

The logical step involves integration and cooperation. Oh no, not again! The teachers I work with also have this reaction. It's too much work! That's where the school librarian comes in. You don't have to do all that work. Much of it comes within the realm of teaching library skills. Often, science and social studies teachers expect their students to outline, research, and write essays when the students have never had practice with those skills in science or social studies. That's not my area, some teachers say. That's language arts. Yet science and social studies teachers often dock marks for lack of clarity, conciseness, and poor sentence structure. The students often do not see the relationship between skills learned in language arts and their science assignment, because both subjects are taught in abstraction.

I want to pose an alternative for the frustrating situation in which junior high students and teachers alike find themselves.

A grade seven teacher is required to teach a social studies unit on the aboriginal peoples of Australia. The teacher can collect all the material him or herself, or partner up with the librarian, who can find all the resources available in the school library and whatever will be needed to supplement the local resources. The two can call a meeting of the teachers involved in science, biblical studies, art, math, language arts, and music.

After the social studies teacher explains the basic theme of the unit, the teacher can share with his or her colleagues specifics regarding how they can be involved: The students will be learning about the geography, climate, and history of the country. Atlases, geographical and physical maps, specialized maps, and graphs for geography and climate will be needed. Comparison of world events, time lines, and books about the history of Australia are necessary. A desert ecology study in science would require resources concerning land masses, vegetation, animals, and climate. Aboriginal religion, sacred areas, similarities and differences of religious beliefs, justice, equality, and the treatment of aboriginal people can be covered in biblical studies. Books on aboriginal myths and belief systems and recent newspaper articles of the aboriginal fight for land must be collected. Parallel situations in Canada and the U.S. will require research into newspapers, magazines, and books. The art teacher should become familiar with the symbolic meaning and background of aboriginal art. The math teacher can be involved in graphing of elevation, distances, precipitation, and temperature records. The music teacher can introduce the class to aboriginal music and dance, its meaning and its relationship to the native religion and culture.



# as Integrator

MARG HOOGLAND

The language arts teacher can use a book about Australia, such as *Walkabout* or *Killing Me Softly*, as a literature study. Relationships need to be made to the culture in which the students are living.

The person who is best able to supply the information needed to make a unit work is the librarian, who has access to both print and non-print resources. Through networking systems and library loans, materials can be brought into the school through the library. Often the classroom teacher is too busy teaching to spend time researching. It is the librarians job to research and to find material. That does not mean that the classroom teacher can simply ask the librarian to do all the work and magically produce the material. No one can collect the materials unless the goals and objectives are clearly stated and there is an understanding of what is needed. Asking another library for "stuff on Australia" is much different from asking if there is anything available on the rock formations of Australia or the development of the opal industry. The information received is only as correct as the questions asked.

Time should be given to the librarian to secure the information desired. If on-file information is checked out and not in the library at the moment, it can take two weeks before it is returned. Time is also needed to obtain information from other libraries.

It is important that the classroom teacher maintains open communication with the librarian. Asking students to prepare a two-page report on a certain type of equipment used to mine opals when only two paragraphs are available is a recipe for disaster. The student will either hand in two paragraphs on the topic or will use a vivid imagination to fill in the remaining details. In addition,

the assignment develops defeatism and apathy in students.

The teachers need to keep the librarian informed of the goals and objectives of their lessons so the librarian can help the students properly research their topics, thereby enhancing what is taught by the classroom teacher.

The format for reporting, outlining, and researching should be decided on a school basis, and the librarian can be involved in teaching these skills using the content of the unit under study. If the same format is taught from the early grades through high school, there is less confusion for the student. There is no "best" way to set up report formats, but it should be consistent. Outlining, reporting, editing, and evaluating criteria should be set. Cooperation on a school-wide level is essential. Even though the assignment is not a language arts assignment, it should follow a specified format so that the students know what is expected of them.

This does not mean that students cannot express their individuality and uniqueness by personalizing their style. These should be encouraged, but in fairness to the students, the core requirements should be consistent throughout the subjects.

Cooperatively planning a unit can be a learning experience for the teacher as well. Often we don't appreciate the positive attributes of our colleagues. One person may not be vocal in a group and yet be able to write succinct objectives. Another can be full of ideas but have great difficulty putting them into acceptable form or even implementing these ideas. Some people are leaders, others are followers. By working together as a community, we can share the load and accent the positive in each person. In evaluation, one teacher can be excellent at grammar, another capable of evaluating group dynamics. This

can make the evaluation easier and more objective. The students will also realize that the staff is working together and that there is communication about what they are teaching.

In many schools, especially small ones, librarianship is in its infancy. Although a school may have a library and a librarian, they have not always been a central part of the school. It is interesting that in some places in Britain, the school is designed around the library; the library is the core of education. Alberta Education is aiming toward qualified personnel in every school with the library playing an integral part in the planning and implementing of curriculum.

As Christian schools, we can be leaders in this movement. Philosophically, we believe that the child is created by God, functioning in his world. We accept each child, and endeavor to enrich the student's life in every way possible. What better way to provide this type of education than through a cooperative learning situation?

Let's make the junior high school experience one that the students will remember, one that they may enjoy even more because they can work together, not only with their classmates, but with teachers, too. We expect students in our classes to be able to work together on projects, to work through their difficulties in group dynamics, and to respect each other's weaknesses and strengths. We can show our students through our example what a community of believers working together can do. CEJ

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# Myths

**T**EACHING IS THE OLDEST form of transferring knowledge and disseminating information. Adam and Eve were teachers. They, themselves, were taught by God as he spoke with them and commanded them in the Garden of Eden. There has never been a point in human history when teaching was not a vital part of living, and as long as there is existence, teaching will persist.

Of what does teaching consist? Do we picture in our minds an individual behind a desk at the front of the room facing a number of individuals—each behind a little desk—lecturing, having students read aloud, assigning homework, writing on the chalkboard, and giving exams? And is that where our teaching image ends?

Teaching has the broadest of implications. It can be sharing or showing. It can be instruction. It may cause the learner to know and understand a subject (math, art, science, religion, etc.). It can answer the question *how* or *why*. It can prepare learners to become accustomed to some action or attitude so that they, in turn, can face life less stressfully. It involves the guiding of studies. It explains all that happens. It imparts necessary knowledge. It is the means of instructing by precept, example, and/or experience. It includes education, training, schooling, and disciplining.

Because it is such an ancient, yet modern phenomenon, teaching has produced all learning in the world today. And when anything becomes or maintains its stance as a worldwide fact, there are bound to be myths which surround it.

What, then, are some of the myths about teaching which are prevalent in our society?

**Teaching is not doing.** It was George Bernard Shaw who stated, "He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches!" But the best teacher is not the one who approaches life from the theoretical, but he or she who has a practical, clini-

cal knowledge of that which is being taught. We can't come back from a place to which we have not gone! Teaching is a performing art. It is also a practical application.

Unfortunately, there is a widespread lack of morality today. Standards have been lowered and the gap has widened between teaching and doing. Ethical considerations are lacking in today's classroom situation. Facts can be taught by teachers with the highest intelligence; yet, if the lifestyle of the teacher does not and cannot be equated with knowledge and discipline, the effect of the teaching will be greatly diminished. Doing *has* to be an integral part of teaching if teaching is to be profitable. "Do as I say, not as I do" ought not to become our national byword.

**Teaching should exclude the teacher's personality.** On the contrary, learning can come from books without the need for a personal instructor. Computer training and education has done just that. But the product produced is little more than robotic. It is the personality of each teacher which provides the impetus and healthy variations for learning. When we think back over the years of education, what first comes to mind? Is it the "*un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq*" we memorized—or is it the long-nosed, thin-lipped, well-travelled teaching mademoiselle whose voice rose in a crescendo each time we were wrong and lowered in a distinct pleasure when we were right? Do we remember what we learned in every philosophy class—or do we remember the self-assured, knowledgeable professor who walked into class each day behind a stack of books which he placed on the podium and referred to by title and page number, but never once opened? Do we remember studying Chaucer and Shakespeare—or just Mrs. Cartwright, who gave us humorous examples from her own life which brought out the meaning of what seemed an otherwise tedious and bor-

ing study of the classics? Surely a large part of the teaching-learning process depends on the personality of the teacher.

**Students' "worst" teachers will later be remembered as their "best" teachers.**

This myth seems to spur many teachers to provide misinformation, give extremely difficult exams, grade without objectivity, and insult student input *ad nauseum*. Instructing without concern for learners will never result in good teaching. If a teacher does not know the material he or she is supposed to teach, "bad" teaching will result. If one teaches "above the head" of the students, that teacher cannot be effective. If the teacher does not capture the imagination of the class, he or she will never be remembered for being a "good" teacher. It might also be noted that popular teachers are all too often considered "bad" teachers. There is no substantial truth in this and it is often based on envy and jealousy among the teaching staff. Other teachers are considered "bad" because they pile on homework, require extra projects to be completed, and demand far too much from their students. These will almost always be thought of as among a pupil's "worst" teachers.

**Teachers are born and not made.** It would be well to consider that no matter what profession or work situation an individual enters, he or she is not born into it. India, for centuries, relied upon a caste system (and quite unofficially continues to do so). Only in such a devastating order would one, by custom and practice, be born to do a particular thing. But this certainly does not mean that those in the teaching caste have been born with the qualifications required of teachers. In our democratic way of life, we can choose what we want to be. And teaching is a popular profession of choice. Some may, of course, have natural abilities which allow them to influence other lives in a positive fashion. But if we are to teach others, it follows that we must learn

# about Teaching

MARJORIE A. COLLINS

**. . .no matter what profession or work situation an individual enters, he or she is not born into it.**

ourselves. Teaching must be filled with ideas, not merely stuffed with data and statistics. Innate abilities, talents, and gifts may provide a good basis for one to go into teaching, but teaching, as all other professions, requires adequate training and devoted attachment to the principles of teacher involvement. The best teachers I've ever had are those who had a loving concern for people, studied hard to acquire more knowledge and improve their skills, and continued to learn throughout their life-times. Personality, background, education, and experience affect an individual's ability to provide teaching. But teachers are not born—in the normal understanding of this myth—any more than sanitary engineers, construction workers, physicists, or missionaries are born.

**Teaching a subject requires only that one know it.** My mother tongue is English. I speak it, read it, write it. I've had a knowledge of this language since birth. But in no way am I qualified to be a teacher of English. I cook three meals a day. I know what basic food groups are needed for good nutrition. I enjoy cooking, and those who eat the food I prepare are quick to compliment me. Does it then follow that I should be teaching domestic science—or, at least, cooking classes? I don't believe so.

Perhaps my brother stated it best when, as a young man, he attended

radio school. When I asked him how it was going he replied, "I've learned a great deal. I only wish I understood a tenth of what I know!"

Teaching must involve understanding. It must also allow for the capability to transfer that understanding to others—not simply by telling them, but by allowing them to discover for themselves the answers to

life's questions. Simply telling others what one knows or has experienced results more in an exchange of ignorances than in teaching. Knowing and teaching cannot be equated. Sharing knowledge may be instructive—but teaching provides education. Almost anyone can transfer information from the printed page to prospective learners. But if there is not impact on the mind and character of the pupils, the teaching is in vain. The purpose of education ought to be the stimulation and guidance of the learner's self-development. A student can be trained and yet not be educated. Severely handicapped persons can learn to do things. But they are incapable of learning why they do them or how they might improve their productiveness.

**Teaching ought to produce uniformity of thought and action.** In other words, what is taught should be learned and practiced. Some areas of learning must be taught by rote. You cannot indoctrinate a person in the multiplication tables or the chemical components of water. Pure formal and factual material must be taught by rote because it is based on interrelated systems of *knowledge*. But Marxism, Christianity, or Socialism can be taught by indoctrination because these involve interrelated systems of *belief*.

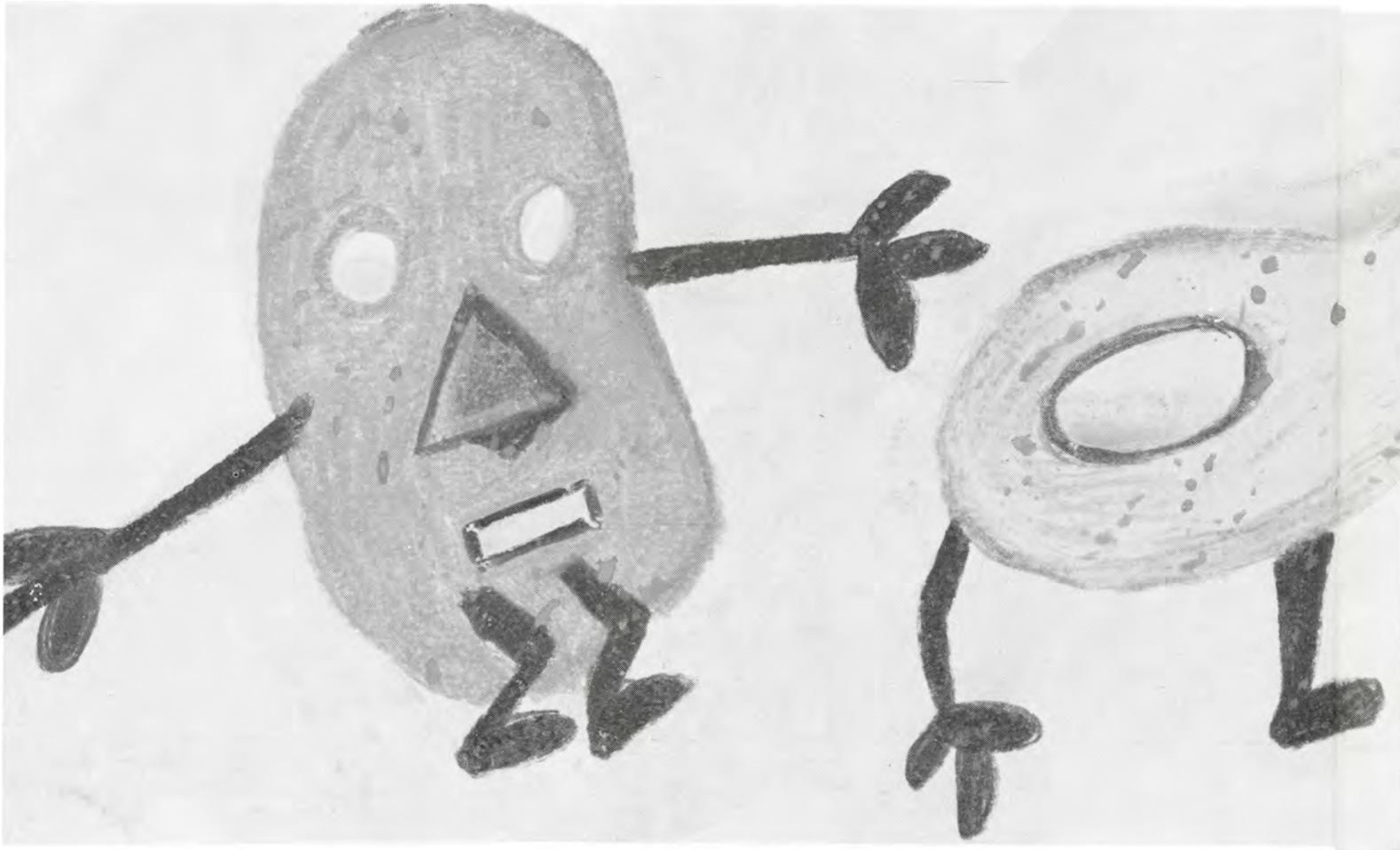
There can be no variance in that which comes from rote learning. Perhaps we have done the greatest dis-

service to young people when we have carefully monitored what they ought to know at a certain stage of life and frustrated them by leaving them with unanswered questions. Tests have been geared toward uniform answers (with little emphasis placed on essay exams, which are a far better tool for evaluating learning which is taking place). Teachers give the same information to each member of the class and, perhaps, unconsciously expect each learner to assimilate and use the learning in a predetermined manner. Teachers seek to indoctrinate in areas which cannot be learned by rote. This forces a partisan or sectarian opinion or point of view. Thus we have students who seem to be persuaded concerning specific matters, but they cannot rationally validate their beliefs.

It is time for us to dispel these myths about teaching or to reconsider how and what we are teaching if they are true in our experience. Education must broaden a person's outlook on life and make him or her more rational in decisions, speech, and actions. It must result in a change in mental state or overt physical behavior which is not the natural result of maturation or of artificial influences (i.e., drugs, alcohol) but is gained through both introspection and thoughtful study of resource materials to form an integrated and rational knowledge base.

If we can get beyond these teaching myths, we will be able to help humankind to *understand* what is being learned so it can be applied in new and constantly changing situations. Only then will teaching have accomplished its primary purpose—lifelong learning. CEJ

*Marjorie A. Collins, formerly a missionary in Pakistan and director of Christian education, is currently assistant to the president and instructor of missions at Trinity College in Dunedin, Florida.*



## Math, Mobiles, Masks,

### FORGET THE FLASHCARDS!

Practice makes perfect! However, practicing the basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts in the same way becomes a boring routine for students. Break the monotony by using old, discarded slides instead of flashcards. Gather rejected slides from friends, relatives, parents, and your own collection. Make them transparent by placing them in a bleaching agent, rinsing and wiping clean. Use a permanent marker to write one math fact per slide; then make an answer slide to follow each fact that includes both the fact and the answer.

Use the projector to show these slides to the class. Have the students write down an answer to the first slide,

then check their computation against the answer slide. These slides can be used in large-group, small-group, or individual work. Allow students who have a projector at home to check out the slides overnight.

Slides can also be used for practice in other areas such as sight vocabulary, states and capitals, symbols, and chemical elements.

### SHAPE MOBILES

Stop! Don't throw out all of those Christmas, birthday, and anniversary cards you received this year! Save them and any other greeting cards you may have for math class.

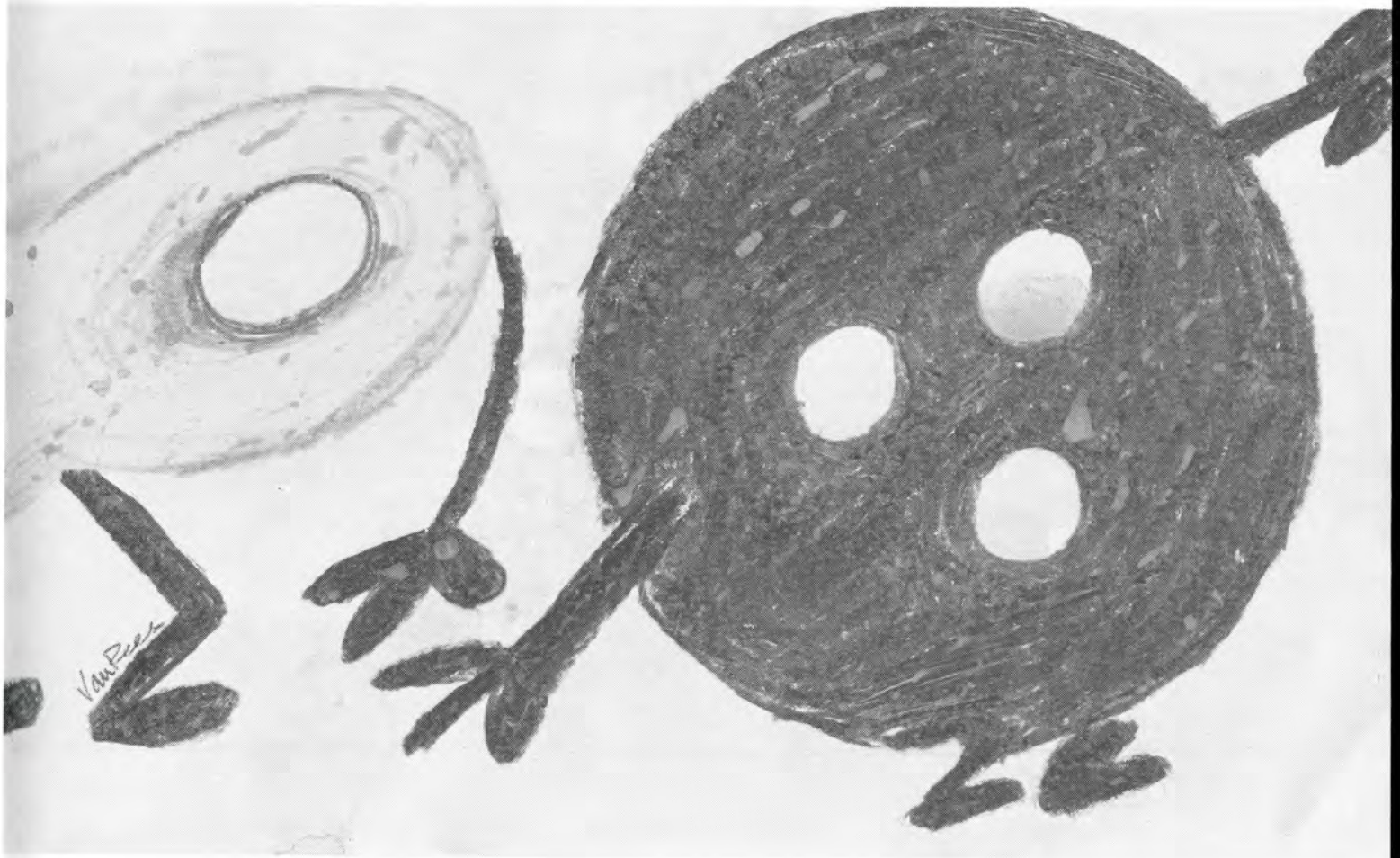
When your class is studying shapes, have each student review the various shapes by cutting the picture part of

these cards into circles, squares, pentagons, hexagons, and so on. The student then writes the name of the shape on the back of the card and creates a mobile by attaching each card to a hanger or dowel with a colorful length of yarn.

You could also use this idea as an evaluative part of the unit to determine which shapes the student is familiar with and which need further study.

### MATHEMATICAL MASKS

Another idea to use in conjunction with the study of shapes is to allow each student to create a facemask using at least four different shapes. Have students make a mask out of thin cardboard using scissors, paints, markers, and cut-out pieces of construction



## and Measures

LAURA NIEBOER

paper for facial features. Instead of requiring the use of a certain number of shapes, students could also be challenged to create a facemask using only one shape over and over again.

When the projects are completed, each student should model his mask for the other members of the class who in turn must determine which shapes have been used to create that particular mask. If there is more than one section of your grade level in the school, lead your class on a "Mathematical Mask Parade" and visit the other class. These students can test their knowledge of shapes by naming the shapes they see as the parade goes by.

Later, these masks can be used in the language arts class where students can

write a story about their mask character, use the masks in creative drama, or work together with several other students to write and perform a play involving their mask characters.

### TREASURE MEASURE

Practice both measuring and mapping skills by conducting a class treasure hunt. How do students attain the tantalizing treasure?—by using their rulers and yardsticks!

First decide on a treasure (ex., extended recess pass, skip-an-assignment coupon, ice cream certificates) and hide it somewhere in the school. Then prepare several sets of straightforward directions beginning from several starting points. For example:

1. Go west eight feet

2. Go north twenty-one feet
3. Turn west nine inches

You should plan a different starting point and route for each group of students, making certain that each route is of equal distance and leads to the same place. To give students a chance to work with both short and long distances, start the treasure hunt outside on the playground and gradually move it inside.

Equip each group of students with rulers, yardsticks, and directions. The first group to measure their way to the treasure is the winner. **CEJ**

# An Experimental Approach

**A**FTER TEACHING MIDDLE elementary grades for at least six years, I was confronted with a class of recalcitrant sixth graders who defied any guidance, instruction, "unfolding" or "enabling" (as John Van Dyk advocates in previous articles). I was teaching in the International School of Amsterdam; the class leaders were very bright and articulate young men who pronounced that most dreaded adjective "boring" before I had a chance to initiate any activity. I lay awake many nights wondering how to stimulate and encourage this class. The magic formula appeared just before we were to begin one of my favorite ancient history units: Ancient Greece.

When I walked into the class the next morning and announced that we were going to study Ancient Greece by becoming as much as possible "like the Greeks of old," my comments were initially treated with some skepticism. But as I proceeded to deviate from the prescribed curriculum in ignoring scheduled reading, spelling, language arts, math, science, and social studies periods, their interest and curiosity mounted.

For the next five weeks we talked, read, wrote Greece. Sections from the basal readers were taken out of sequence and read to and with class members. Myths became popular read-to-us activities. I rewrote plays from Sophocles and Euripides to be understandable and palatable for sixth graders. Spelling words were taken directly from these reading activities. Every student had his or her own book on Greece which contained essays, plays, poems, and myths.

In math we studied geometry and architecture. Science classes were devoted to Archimedes and some

of his untried experiments. The geography, specific historical events, lifestyles, and educational and class divisions, were the focus of social studies activities. The physical education teacher taught them early Olympic skills. In art class we made and decorated vases and/or assorted bowls with clay.

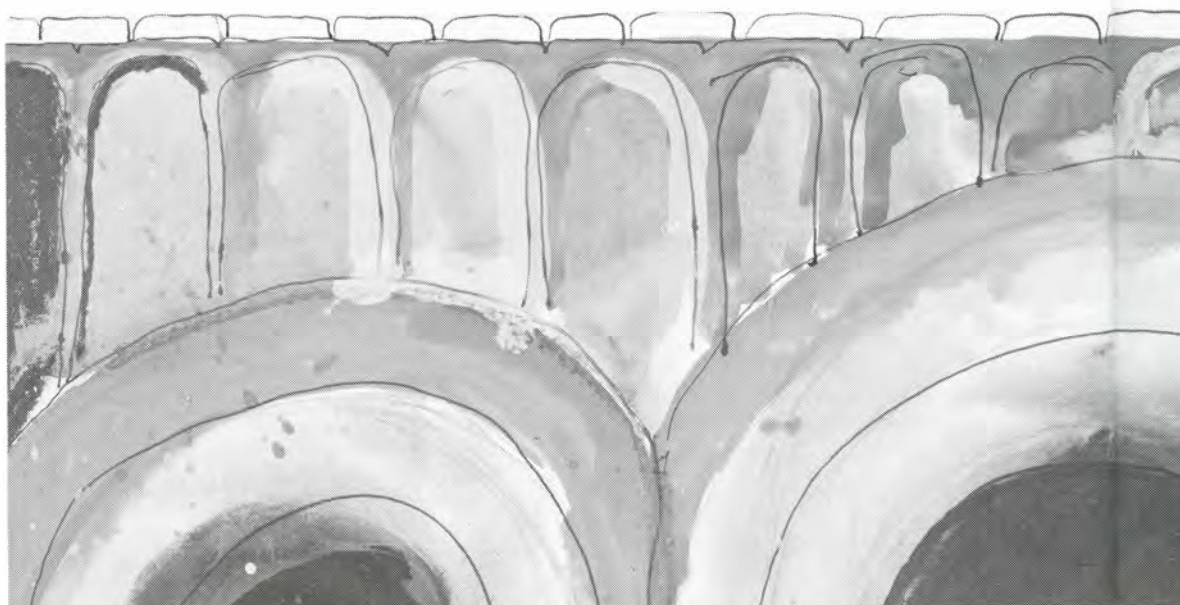
Student involvement increased during the course of the weeks as they prepared speeches, debated ancient issues (and some contemporary ones), decorated the classroom with copies of Greek alphabet letters, identified a particular hero or god/goddess as a favorite character, selected a play to perform for others, and typed their entries in their Greek books to maximize neatness and legibility.

The highlight for all of us was the last day of the unit. We had rearranged the classroom furniture the day before to create a more Grecian climate. Desks were either removed or placed against walls; Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian pillars (made from many pieces of stiff white paper) graced the various corners, entrance, and speaker's platform at the front of the room. Recipes for Greek foods had been sent out to parents with requests for their participation.

Those previously critical and uncooperative students came to school on their Greek Day, resplendent in costumes depicting their favorite characters. Hercules had spent hours at home decorating a shield with string and spray-painting it in gold. Aphrodite was swathed in layers of white and pink organza. Our Yugoslavian Athena looked fearsome with her crown and armor. Zeus may have been portrayed differently in Greek literature, but our Hiroshi conveyed the character well. Amidst delightful squeals of laughter the day began.

And what a day it was! We performed our plays for the school and conducted classroom Olympics with arm wrestling and other contained activities. We heard fiery speeches from the forum and debated the pros and cons of the teaching/learning activities as they had been experienced. The food was tremendous and the quantities were such that other classes could also benefit. Greek music dominated in the afternoon as we all practiced various Greek dances. When the closing school bell rang at 3:30 no one was eager to board the buses for home.

Although more traditional subject structuring occurred in the subsequent weeks, the teaching/learning activities



# to Cross-Cultural Education

ALYCE OOSTERHUIS

retained some of the "flavor" of Greek day. Involving students, varying activities, learning by doing, and experiencing by identifying became the norms for classroom interactions, processes, and productions. For the last six months of the school year this sixth grade class sustained its enthusiasm and motivation.

Why did it work? What I intuited in my late-night frustrated musings prior to Greek day worked for the following reasons:

First, there were activities and lessons which allowed all of the students to excel at some point. The concrete activists could wrestle, "throw" pots, dance, build pillars. The abstract activists could debate, speechify, and discuss plays and myths. The reflective, abstract workers could write, suggest, and plan the day's events. The concrete, reflective students could research, create projects, and practice geometry. The research conducted today by the proponents of left brain/right brain learning styles confirms the individual differences among students as well as the need to structure classroom activities to accommodate the varieties of styles.

Second, education became a matter of total immersion. In their identifica-

tions, dress-up, mock Olympics, play dramatics, and food tastings, these students learned to experience Greek life in its most positive and productive moments. In their various debates they learned to take the positions of the "other"—an experience in which they developed an empathic understanding for losers and/or winners. They also learned to praise and support their fellow classmates when their turns came for speeches and play productions.

Third, classroom activities, lessons, and events were integrated around one theme and thus each segment was relevant in its relationship to the whole. Students no longer asked, "Why do we have to do this?" but strove to excel in their chosen activity by typing, rehearsing, redoing, and perfecting.

Finally, student involvement was at a premium as the students made choices pertaining to characters, sports, day's events, reading activities, personalized spelling, and language arts. In the course of those weeks a number of activities occurred simultaneously. After all, we were limited in our type-writer supplies, pottery wheel and kiln potentials, play characters, and research books—a limitation which compelled students to share, take turns, accept responsibility for time-on-task, cooper-

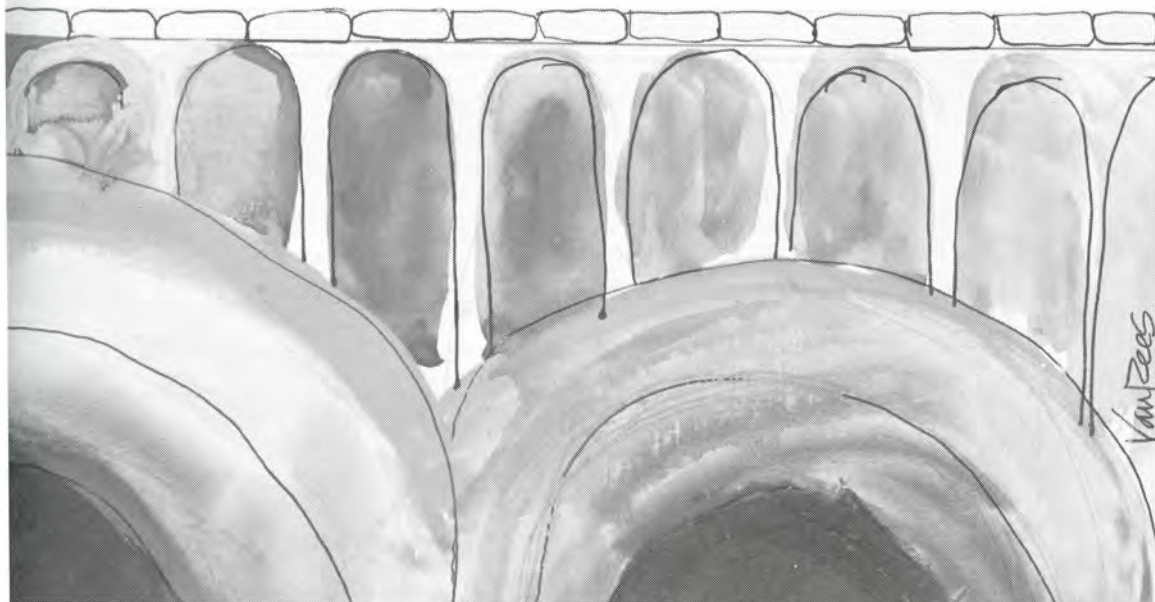
ate, or find alternatives. The level of student involvement transformed our classroom into a joyous busy laboratory where teacher and students could work together at various levels of learning and doing.

More than ten years have passed since I taught that sixth grade, but the impact of the experience remains. Several years later when I visited Greece with a group of sixth graders who had also experienced the Greek unit, I was struck with the appreciation, knowledge, and insights these students held for contemporary Greeks. It was almost as if, having been "like the ancient Greeks," they now shared a common heritage with the people who walked the streets of Athens, Corinth, and Delphi. They were seeing "their" heroes cast in stone at various porticos. They were tasting "their" favorite foods as they sampled souvlaki and mousaka.

The experience also opened my eyes to the too frequently shunted potential of students to understand, to empathize, to be responsible, to take charge. It is doubtful that I will ever return to a sixth grade environment to teach another Greek unit or one like it. Yet it would be challenging to attempt it in a Christian school setting where students can be encouraged to go

beyond the cultural setting and historical facts and reflect on the limitations of the gods and heroes. On the culminating Greek day we could have the apostle Paul preaching to the pagan Greeks at the altar to the unknown god. Just think what an impact that could make! CEJ

*Dr. Alyce Oosterhuis teaches educational psychology at The King's College in Edmonton, Alberta.*



# Which Hat Are You Wearing Today,

## "Only the very wise should teach the very young."

**J**ANA BRASSER TAKES THIS old proverb very seriously. She steps with caution into the world of children and then immerses herself with the awe and fascination that only children can register upon discovering the wonders of learning—a kindergartner's discovery that the number on the calendar coincides with the time-line snaking its way around the room, a third grader's engineering feat of devising a new pulley system for simple machines, another kindergartner's yelp of glee at finding she can make a whole new color by dabbing blue and orange together; these elicit the "Aha" experience, as Jana calls it. It is self-discovery and Jana seems to relish these moments of learning as much as the children do. It is one of the supreme joys of being a teacher.



Miss Jana, as she is affectionately called by her students, wears many hats at The Potter's House Christian School. She is the morning kindergarten teacher, the school's science teacher on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, and a third/fourth grade teacher in Nellene Duimstra's room on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons.

Her kindergarten room abounds with things that beg to be touched: two mourning doves, a guinea pig, and a frisky rabbit named Bussy; math tubs that contain a panoply of manipulatives; a painting area complete with easels and color-mixing table, a kitchen replete with child-tested high-tech appliances; a worship center filled with

Bible symbols and figurines, and a reading loft spilling over with books. Her room is a place to explore, to classify, to estimate, to see how the world works. It is not a place to be passive. Jana believes that if children can be actively involved in learning, they will learn more, succeed more, and develop more self-esteem. She believes that children should be directly involved in their learning, that they must have hands-on experiences. Children are not adults; they need to be provided with steps leading up to the abstract—"foundations for understanding," as Jana would call them. "We're missing the experiences from the era when children used to work with their parents: building homes, feeding the animals, learning domestic skills." Her kindergarten is a microcosm of a world where children have these opportunities.

The science room is actually a laboratory that boasts of sinks with slate tops, gas jets, and bunsen burners. These furnishings were rescued from a suburban high school which was about to be demolished a few summers ago. The room is stacked with beakers, clamps, and assorted chemistry accessories. The children work at learning stations where they analyze skeletal structures of birds and small mammals, make predictions as to the force and energy of a simple machine, classify tree leaves and needles, and examine pond life under a microscope. Jana holds the philosophy that if the environment is properly set and ground rules are established, learning will happen. And it does, for the young predominately inner-city children at The Potter's House are fast becoming science buffs. Theirs is a love that has been carefully nurtured.

Jana's love of plants and animals and her respect for nature go back to her days of growing up on an Iowa farm. If she wasn't helping with chores or driving the tractor through the cornfields, Jana was roaming the hilly lands surrounding the farm, exploring the ponds, discovering wildlife, or just sitting on a stool in the barn observing the animals, much like Fern and her animal friends in *Charlotte's Web*. Jana fondly recalls caring for the baby calves, piglets, and barn kittens or nursing a wild baby rabbit who had been left homeless when her father's plow had uprooted its burrow. Her appreciation for plants came from working the soil, weeding the soybean patch, harvesting hay, and helping her father load the wagon at the





# Teacher?

MARK VAN ZANTEN

end of corn rows. Even though she didn't know food chains, she lived a food chain as she observed God's principles of nature close up.

Before ever entering the doors of a one-room schoolhouse near Rock Rapids, Iowa, Jana knew that she would be a teacher. That certainly never left her. Moving to Michigan at the age of twelve, Jana credits her teachers at Jenison Christian and Hudsonville Unity for nurturing her love of learning as well as encouraging her and giving her respect. In addition, her parents encouraged her to participate in extra-curricular activities and in summer programs such as debate workshops, two-week Girls State at the capitol in Lansing, and a Grand Valley State College enrichment program for the fine arts. But it has been her faith in God and the strength she draws from



him that have given her a steely determination coupled with an unflappable, humor-loving personality.

Jana's interest in spiritual things has led her to be a Children's Worship Center instructor at her church, Christ Church—PCA, and a trainer of future instructors. Her style of teaching Bible stories leads the children to their own personal application of spiritual truths. An aura of reverence and awe exists as the storyteller masterfully weaves a story much like Jesus' parables. The hushed children sit spellbound in a circle as the biblical stories of long ago are focused through wood carved figurines, illustrating the themes of God's protection and love for his people and his worthiness of praise. Jana states that "the lessons do not stuff information into the children's heads, but rather lead children through a guided meditation. This comes from a philosophy that children can encounter God." They are able to worship God in their own way at their own level, so they creatively respond to the important parts of the story through various art media. Jana comments that her storytelling has enhanced her own worship of God, since children's worship knows no age bounds.

Jana's other passion in life is her eight-year-old son Michael. Jana, Michael, and their new Labrador puppy, Mudpie, are inseparable. Jana has used Michael's interests as a way of

developing a plan for home schooling. First they visited zoos and Sea World to appease Michael's love for animals. Now they investigate more historical sites: The Smithsonian, the colonial village of Williamsburg, and Fort Michilimackinac on Mackinac Island. She carefully chooses activities to enrich her son's life. They both benefit from their close relationship and common interests.

Jana's love for teaching never seems to diminish; instead it seems to expand into a contagion that affects her students as well as her fellow staff members. She describes the classroom as an exciting, but also a scary place to be. "God has given us an awesome responsibility. Children don't take what we say lightly; their lives can be enhanced or hampered by what we say or do."

At The Potter's House, the very young can learn much from this very wise teacher. CEJ

*Mark Van Zanten teaches a first-second grade class at The Potter's House in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and is currently completing his master's program in the teaching of reading at Calvin College.*



# Ten Tips for Christian Educators

FANNIE L. HOUCK

1. Love all your students and your work above all other labors, for without this love the school day drags and dismissal time tarries.
2. Pray often for and with your students, ever pointing them to Christ and modeling reverence, obedience, and respect for Him.
3. Encourage without condemning; nurture without nagging; love without tongue lashing. Then will students return your love and desire to please you in everything, bringing joy to your ways and days.
4. Remember the immaturity of your students. Don't weary them with learning and lectures when their muscles twitch and yearn to rest or stretch.
5. Honor the earnest labor of your students' parents and uphold them. Like you, they are doubtless doing their best.
6. Do not kill the desire to learn righteousness; instead, encourage learning in an atmosphere free from harsh words and deeds.
7. Speak with great care, for you will surely and regularly be quoted and misquoted at the dinner table. Indeed, the young ones exclaim, "Teacher said . . ."
8. Accept with grains of salt the stories students bring from home, for creativity and children daily walk together.
9. Take care to be a worthy and righteous role model in dress, in deed, and in word, refusing to teach immodesty, careless habits, or gossip mongering along with reading and writing.
10. Don't covet the supplies or personality of another teacher, but strive always to serve the Master Teacher and prepare your students for entrance into His higher school.

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# Next Time

ELVA McALLASTER

When she strikes me  
with her fisted ego  
or the stinging fingers  
of her wit  
again,  
Lord Christ,  
please help me to remember  
that You were flailed  
with whips  
and cudgels.

When she stabs me  
with her dislike  
and bruises me  
with her indifference,  
remind me of Your nail wounds  
and Your thorns.

I abhor me  
when I wince so quickly  
and bleed so profusely.

Is there an ear somewhere  
among her entourage  
which I might reach  
to heal  
next time?

# In the Beginning Was

**The administrator is the principal key to harmony within the school setting.**

**W**HY SHOULD AN administrator be concerned with having a biblical view of language? Shouldn't he be concentrating on the "real" roles and responsibilities of an administrator—interpersonal skills, fiscal and building management, the instructional program, people (board, staff, students), organization and management, professional growth and development, curriculum? If you stop and think about it, you will realize that the use of the language plays a significant part in each of these areas. Nine times out of ten an administrator's problem in any given area of responsibility stems from poor communication. So, you say, let's give him a course in speech. Fine. He will get the skills to be able to manipulate the language. But do we want a Christian administrator who is skillful with language but who does not operate out of a Christian philosophy of language? I think not.

What, then, is a Christian philosophy of language? A Christian philosophy

of language transcends culture because it looks beyond man to the originator of language—God himself. In order to understand something of the nature of language, we must understand something of the nature of the Creator.

"In the beginning was the Word." God can talk! He can talk and we are created in his image. As image-bearers of God, we are called to be agents of God's Word in this world. As Christian administrators our number one priority should be to be agents of God's Word to our board, staff, students, and others with whom we come in contact. To do so effectively, we must be able to communicate with clarity and force the creative-redemptive nature of God.

Although our God is diverse in his nature, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, there is a unity within the Trinity. If we adopt a Christian philosophy of language—which transcends culture—then our language should reflect the unity, diversity, and power

of the Creator rather than the disintegration and powerlessness of the world around us. In the Christian school setting the administrator is the key to creating an atmosphere reflective of the unity, diversity, and power of the Creator. The administrator is the principal key to harmony within the school setting. It is he who most often must arbitrate disputes. He would do well to heed the advice of Proverbs 16:21: "The wise in heart will be called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness." Likewise, the administrator is the key to encouraging the diversity found within the student body and among staff members. Finally, the administrator is in a position of power and influence. He is the primary spokesman for the school. The image he projects portrays the school as either an ally or foe of the cause of Christ.

God is a creative Being. Likewise, language can be a creative art which reflects a person's personality and com-

# the Word

KEITHA PHARES

He continues, "Is it not symptomatic of this waning of personal and religious consciousness that almost every man can name the parts of an automobile engine clearly and definitely; but when it comes to meaningful interpersonal relations, our language is lost: we stumble and are practically isolated as deaf and dumb people who can only communicate in sign language?" (Edward Cell, *Language, Existence and God*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1971, 21)

This view of our language seems to indicate a sterile, cold, mechanistic environment. Often man has been reduced to a mechanistic being who had been programmed to function in a specific way. But this should not be the philosophy of the Christian—particularly the Christian administrator. Students and teachers are more than robots programmed to perform according to the will of the administrator. They are living human beings made in the image of God. Language should not become inflated rhetoric, nor should it ever take the place of a warm, deeply personal language.

It has been pointed out that man in his fallen state often misuses language so that it is cold and impersonal. Language can also be twisted in order to deceive others, to promote our own self-interest, to cause another person to stumble, and to excuse our own responsibility for wrongdoing.

In Genesis 3:1-5 the serpent—with the gift of language—misconstrues God's command to Adam and Eve, forbidding them to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. With his subtle implications, the serpent leads Eve to believe that God is withholding something good from Adam and her. Thus the serpent lays a snare for Adam and Eve, who trusted their own limited vision.

Language is used to make excuses for our wrongdoing. In Genesis 3:10-12 the Lord God asked Adam directly, "Have you eaten from the tree of which

I commanded you not to eat?" And instead of answering God's direct question with a direct answer, Adam prefaces his answer with an excuse, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." It is interesting to note that Adam not only tries to duck his own complicity in the sin by blaming Eve, but he also tries to shift the responsibility to the Lord God himself—"The woman Thou gavest to be with me . . ." The implications for Christian administrators are clear. We must use open, honest and precise language when dealing with the board, staff, and students, making no excuses for our own sins or the sins of others.

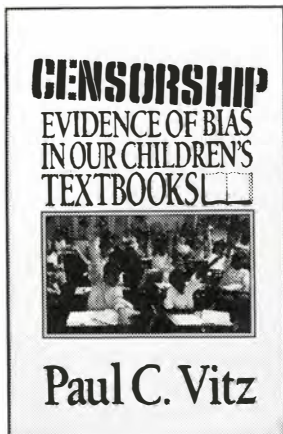
As God is a purposeful Being, so our language must also be purposeful. As God is truth, so must our language portray truth. If properly used, language enlightens the minds of men. It brings men out of darkness into light just as God brought light into the world when "the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep" (Genesis 1:2). A Christian philosophy of language recognizes that language is a gift of God, given so that men may know him better and thereby serve and glorify him. CEJ

*Keitha Phares wrote this article while studying at the Graduate School of Education at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. She teaches English and French at Northlake Christian School in Covington, Louisiana.*

mitment. As created in the image of God, we should learn to express our thoughts and ideas effectively and creatively. The language that we use should reflect our redeemed personality and our commitment to the truth as it has been revealed in nature (general revelation) and in Scripture (special revelation). This has great implications for Christian administrators who must communicate with others every day. Picture the Christian administrator creatively and effectively presenting an idea to his board. How many times has an idea, which is based upon sound biblical and educational principles, died a quiet death simply because of the way it was presented?

God is personally interested in man's welfare. Unfortunately, man has not always reflected this personal concern in his own dealings with other men. In this age of science and technology, "our response to the world is largely a response to a world of things rather than to a world of persons."

STEVE J. VANDERWEELE



**CENSORSHIP; EVIDENCE OF BIAS IN OUR CHILDREN'S TEXTBOOKS** by Paul C. Vitz, with Appendixes by Donald Oppewal and Bryce Christensen  
 Servant Books, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1986, 142 pp., pb. \$6.95

Reviewed by Steve J. VanDerWeele, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506 English Department (Emeritus)

A colleague informed me recently that the new generation of college history texts is based on the acknowledgment of the centrality of religion in the development of nations. They explain in a way not done before that the various institutions and cultural expressions of civilization constitute responses to the religious dynamic of a people. Belatedly, it seems, historians have come to accept this inescapable reality.

But Johnnie will have to wait until he enrolls in college to discover this new recognition of the importance of religion in human society. As long as he is a student in a public elementary or high school, he will, in the name of the constitution, be carefully shielded, in his textbooks, from learning about the religious underpinnings, the religious impetus and dynamic of the origins of America and its continuing importance to this very day.

This state of affairs is carefully set forth in Vitz's study, *Censorship*, "the only systematic study," according to the author, "of religion and traditional values in a representative sample of the country's public school textbooks." The study was funded by the National

Institute of Education, and the research was monitored by an independent research corporation, Educational Products Information Exchange.

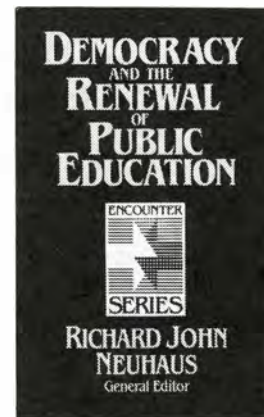
What did the researchers find? The results are truly startling. In sixty widely used elementary social study textbooks, one finds hardly a word or reference to any religious activity in contemporary American life. In 15,000 pages, not one picture provides any hint about contemporary Protestantism. An analysis of 670 articles and stories from grades three and six reveals not one reference to Protestant or religious life. A study of eight representative high school history texts reveals painful lacunae in the treatment of religious events and movements. Systematically ignored—with minor exceptions—are the First Great Awakening, the several dramatic urban revivals, the founding of Catholic schools and the role of Catholicism in integrating thousands of American immigrants into American life, the founding of Bible colleges, the central role of the church in Black American life, the significance of fundamentalist Protestantism, and the religious motivation of Martin Luther King. In the list of 300 events included in an Appendix, only three are religious events. Sports and the youth culture are given more prominence than religion.

The "anti-religious prejudice" goes hand in hand with an implicit political agenda. Minorities, feminism, and environmental issues are given undue emphasis—so the author complains. Moreover, the texts disclose an anti-business bias, a definition of the family apart from marriage and commitment, and, in the study of the 670 stories, frequent role reversals, with hardly a story acknowledging the traditional role of women as homemakers. Nor are any of the higher values recommended. Man is reduced to a consumer working for status, personal enjoyment, and material gratification. An example of a family budget in a social studies text

includes no item for charity.

What is to be done? Exerting pressure on publishers, citizens' lobbies, even lawsuits against the "Great American Textbook Machine" are possibilities. But these would be mere tokenism. What this crop of textbooks reveals is nothing less than the cultural crisis of America, the multiple levels of commitment, the stresses and strains of pluralistic society without a center of coherence.

I have one reservation about Vitz's book. He too facilely identifies, in my opinion, sympathy toward so-called liberal causes with secularism, and traditional causes with conservative forms of religion. As a Reformed Christian I seek an approach that transcends the polarities Vitz presents and gives one liberty to examine each cause or value on its own terms. Aside from that, the author serves his readers well by documenting so carefully the undeniable anti-religious bias of our children's texts. It is no wonder, as he notes in his preface, that the educational establishment strongly opposed the research project and the publication of its results. CEJ



**DEMOCRACY AND THE RENEWAL OF PUBLIC EDUCATION**

By Richard John Neuhaus, Editor  
 Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids 1987, pb \$9.95

Reviewed by Donald Oppewal, Professor of Education, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

If names like McCarthy, Skillen,

Glenn, or Vitz have come to your attention as Christian scholars speaking to significant educational issues, consider yourself tuned in. If you have meant to read their books, but haven't, consider yourself fortunate that this inexpensive and more readable paperback is available.

Here you have in one volume the gist of what these men have written in multiple places and, sometimes, in full books. They are all scholars who have, in other settings, dealt with intricate historical, constitutional, and political questions, sometimes in tedious detail.

Before giving brief glimpses of what each has contributed, I should note that the word "democracy" in the title is not a signal indicating content. The contributions do not herald changes on their conception of democracy as a socio-political theory. The only connection with the term and the book is that the authors focus on "choice" as having a central role in democracy. For the rest they concern themselves with various critiques of public education, and propose more or less radical changes in the governance, funding, and even curriculum of such schools.

The editor calls their proposals "visionary but not utopian." You will have to read the book for yourself to figure out the difference and see if you agree. It may reveal that one man's dream is, to another man, too revolutionary to be seriously pursued.

Each chapter, except the last, is a paper delivered at a conference sponsored by the Center on Religion and Society, of which Editor Neuhaus is the Director. The last chapter reveals the running debate and reaction to the papers by various other participants. All by itself this last chapter will give great insight into both what joins and divides even Christian scholars and political activists when facing questions of public policy.

If you are curious about the claims of value neutrality and how the government-monopoly public school system

militates against those claims, read the Richard Baer chapter. While a bit rambling and discursive, it touches all the bases in its attack on the "myth of value neutrality."

If you are interested in a heavily historical treatment of how the search for a common school (one for all youth) resulted in a state school at the hands of Horace Mann and others, read the chapter by Charles Glenn on "Molding Citizens." You will learn from it not only that history has a life of its own, but that powerful spokesmen help make pivotal decisions that are hard to undo later. Fortunately Glenn does not engage in villain hunting as much as in showing that ideological bias was operating with a vengeance.

Rockne McCarthy's unique contribution as intellectual historian is to give a digest of a thesis developed in at least two other books of his: that Jefferson was the ideological parent of the view that all traditional religion was sectarian, but that Jefferson's was not. McCarthy convincingly shows that the sacred-secular dichotomy will not hold up under close scrutiny. His five "steps" of change toward increased public justice show his political activist agenda.

James Skillen, of the Association for Public Justice, repeats themes of the previous chapters. In addition he assesses the way the courts have built a series of precedent-setting cases on those views. All have had a damaging effect on pluralism and choice in American schooling. While he hopes for change, he establishes no political agenda or legislation that would alter the Supreme Court's bias. This reviewer sees little hope for change in the courts, due to the power of precedent in the legal mentality. It will take ingenious legal maneuvering to so formulate the issue that the Court cannot evade a new look at old case law.

The chapter by Paul Vitz condenses his National Institute of Education study of textbooks. His and other data

have shown to the satisfaction of almost all scholars, that religion does not get a fair shake in school texts. Judges of two lower court cases being appealed have used this data to rule that biased texts cannot be required reading, and that secular humanism lurks in the background as the affirmative bias of those texts.

This reviewer recommends this book as the best short course for those who not only want to know how we got to the dismaying present, but also what hope there is that the past does not necessarily rule the future, even if it does explain the present. CEJ