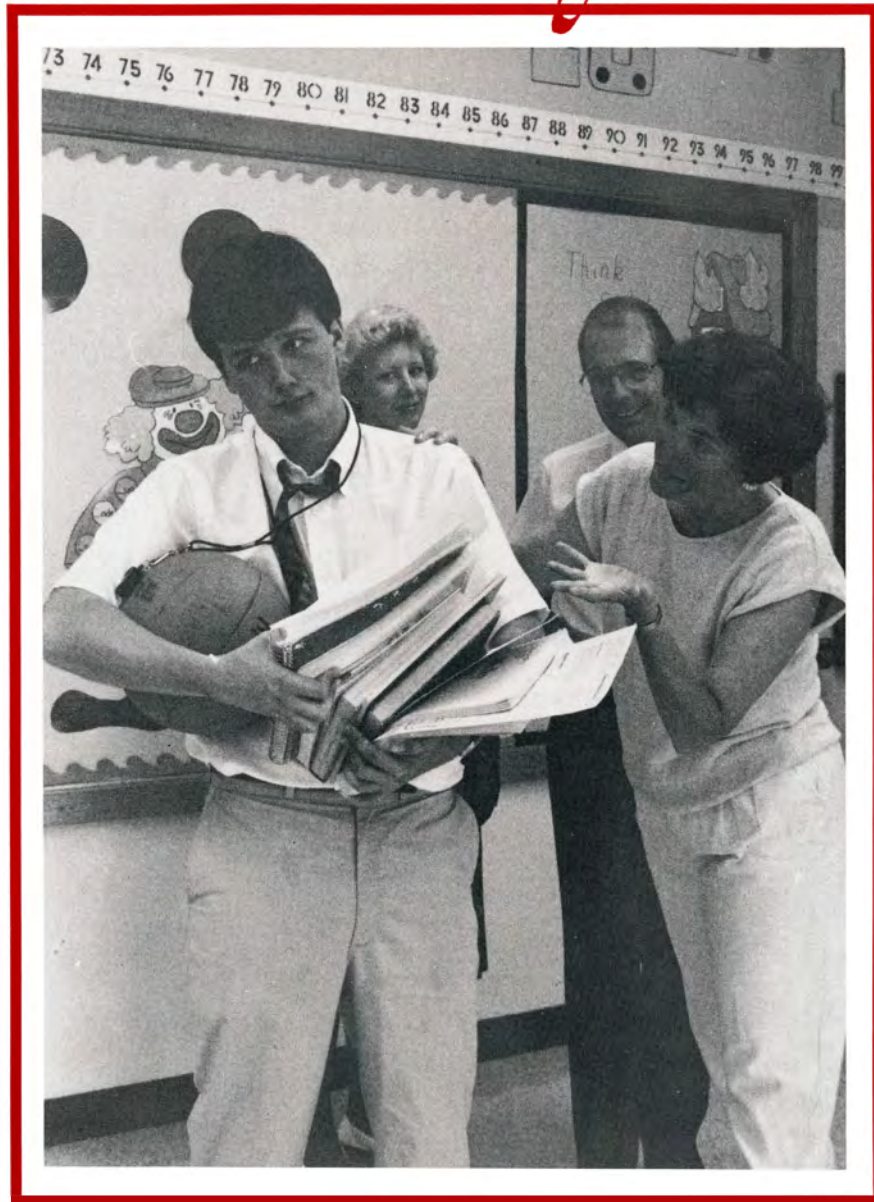


CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS *Journal*

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So You're New

Miss Leonard, Forgive Me



I have never met Miss Leonard, but for six months or so I could not stand her. Regardless of how I taught English to my first eighth graders, they always said, "Miss Leonard didn't do it that way."

Being new is difficult. People expect you to know things and do things their way. They make assumptions. I remember the new midwestern colleague in our California school who was asked to organize a student project: harvesting the nuts from the almond trees on the school property. He promptly arranged for a crew of students to stay after school. But nobody told him that he would need mallets and strong people to knock the nuts off the trees before they could be raked up and sold. Finally he threw up his hands in exasperation and asked, "Why did you ask me to do this anyway?!"

Everyone involved in a school has expectations—parents, students, school board members, other teachers, and certainly the new members of the faculty. When education students accept that first job, or when teachers change jobs, they anticipate students who love them, parents who support them, colleagues who include them, and principals who encourage them. Such idealism is probably healthy; one should start with a positive outlook.

All too soon, however, they must face the exhaustion of preparing new courses, the reality of

students who challenge their authority, the judgment of parents who believe their child's version of what goes on at school. New teachers and principals, whether experienced or not, are judged more stringently than their colleagues. If the predecessor was well loved, the new person will likely not measure up; if the predecessor was ineffective, the school community will expect drastic improvements.

The Christian school community has not been particularly gracious or professional in helping new teachers and principals adjust. One new teacher commented, "Here we came a thousand miles, all our earthly possessions stacked in a Ryder truck, and nobody from the school showed up to help us unload. Nobody even bothered to check when we would arrive." Starting a new job is stressful in itself, and health experts tell us that moving almost doubles that stress. Add to that the change in social activities, churches, and personal habits, and you again double the level of stress. If each new faculty member had at least one school board member and one warm-hearted teacher appointed to help the prospective teachers even before arrival, and certainly during the period of adjustment, the sense of Christian community could be greatly strengthened.

Principals and school boards should take the initiative to arrange that a suitable person provide dinner invitations, introductions, advice on shopping for local goods and services, and most of all, warm acceptance. More than that, staff members must take the time to ask a new colleague how they can serve

him or her at school and yet allow the new teacher the freedom to experiment, to do things in a different way than the last teacher. Colleagues should be available but not smothering.

You new teachers may be thinking by now, "But if others don't think about my needs, what can I do to get the help I need?" You can do several things.

If the predecessor was well loved, the new person will likely not measure up; if the predecessor was ineffective, the school community will expect drastic improvements.

First, select the veteran teacher who seems most able to help you. Then ask for help. Is your grading system a mess? Admit it to someone you can trust; that teacher will either consider it an honor to be asked or admit how difficult grading is for him or her, too. Either way, you'll know you don't have to struggle alone.

Avoid comparing the new school with the last place you worked, or at least avoid talking about it. I know how difficult this advice is to follow; I regret not always adhering to it. But no place can possibly be just like another. Decide to appreciate the differences, and if you think change is necessary, introduce new ways discreetly.



Communicate, especially with parents. If you have a contained classroom, send a weekly bulletin home to parents. Let them get to know you so they can also learn to trust you with their children. Don't make it merely a request list, although at times you may want to ask parents to work with you on a school project. But make it a way to let parents in on the positive ideas you and your students share at school.

Let the principal know you need her or him. I suspect administrators are some of the loneliest people in the Christian school system, perhaps because they draw away in order to appear fair to all staff members. Perhaps teachers avoid them, consciously or subconsciously, not knowing how to perceive of them as persons aside from the role of "boss." For a starting point, talk to your administrator about how this feeling inhibits you and ask how you can overcome it.

Allow yourself to fail, to forgive failure, and to learn from failures. You won't be right all of the time, you know, but God can use you, even in your weakness, to serve his purposes. Whether you are new this year or not, your starting point must be the realization that you are the instrument and God is the strength of your teaching. Ask him, therefore, to renew you daily—even hourly—that you may serve him well. Your commitment to be God's tool will change your focus from performance to praise. **LVG**

Like Karate Lessons

His name is Tommy. (Not really, but he is a real boy.)

He's my nephew. A sixth-grader.

Late last summer he moved, together with his family, to the city in which I live.

Of course he also had to change schools. Christian schools.

But that should be no problem.

His skin is the right color.

He goes to the right church.

His clothes carry the right labels.

He lives in the right neighborhood.

He's surely not "dumb." Or "ugly."

But it was a problem. Still is, in part.

He was shut out.

He was taunted. Repeatedly.

His teachers liked him, but teachers usually do.

He got roughed up in the bus. Nastily. Repeatedly.

(Boys will be boys, you know.)

Of course he survived. They always do. In a way.

But it stung. Still stings.

Saturday night we had friends over.

Their son had had it a little tough, too. In the same school.

They had found a solution. Karate lessons.

(They really help your self-confidence. And who knows?)

They weren't joking.

We have two grandsons. Jon is already in pre-school.

(Where boys are not yet boys, you know.)

Their dad is a minister.

Ministers have to move on occasion.

Their kids, too.

We've thought a bit about helping with tuition.

(Young ministers with growing families can use help.)

But lately we've had second thoughts.

Maybe they'll need the money for other things.

Like karate lessons.

—by WALLACE BRATT

Schools and Colleges Can Help Rookies

—by ARDEN RUTH POST

Reality shock is a term frequently used in educational literature to describe the transition from student to first-year teacher (Marso and Pigge 1987). During this traumatic time the beginning teacher adjusts to the expectations of a school system, learns the intricacies of handling a classroom on one's own, becomes acquainted with subject matter and materials, and constantly tries to "beat the clock" while realizing that a twenty-four-hour day just does not provide enough time for the many duties and responsibilities. Christian teachers, in whom the Protestant work ethic is ingrained, may be especially vulnerable as they try to do the best possible job in the field to which they feel called. The following comments vividly illustrate reality shock, often explained as the difference between expectations about teaching and the reality that exists.

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCES

"The first year I taught was a nightmare. I didn't know whether I was coming or going," said Brian. "I think I should have paid the school a salary to have me there instead of having them pay me!"

"If I had had the opportunity to quit teaching after my first year, I would have," said Lisa. "However, my husband was in graduate school. I needed a job, and teaching was what I had trained for. So I stuck with it and now I'm glad I did. But it took two or three years before I really felt comfortable teaching."

"No one warned me that teaching would be this much work! I

never have time for anything but papers, tests, bulletin boards, and lessons. Guess where I am on Friday nights! No, not out having a good time. I'm home doing school work!" exclaimed Barb.

"Coaching was what I always wanted to do. In fact, that's probably why I went into teaching. But, wow! The amount of time it takes is unbelievable! It's as if coaching is a full time job by itself, and then I have all the teaching duties: lessons to plan, papers to grade, tests to construct. It never ends!" said Joe. "I think I chose the wrong career!"

Beginning teachers face some unique challenges compared with young people who are starting other careers. Their work continues far

the principal or a sympathetic colleague. Many beginning teachers soon learn to whom they can comfortably go for help. However, others are reluctant to ask for help, fearing that they will appear to be incompetent. They suffer in silence.

What are the types of problems and concerns that beginning teachers face? Veenman (1984) did a comprehensive review of studies of beginning teacher problems and found the following to be the most frequently reported:

- a. disciplining students
- b. motivating students
- c. dealing with individual differences
- d. assessing student work

"I stuck with it and now I'm glad I did. But it took two or three years before I really felt comfortable teaching."

beyond the normal day, and they are expected to accomplish many duties in addition to the actual teaching for which they were hired.

Expectations for community or church involvement may accompany teaching positions in many Christian schools. Furthermore, beginning teachers soon realize that no amount of teacher aiding, student teaching, or education courses could ever prepare them for the real thing: their own classroom and students.

Those of us in teacher education receive many frantic telephone calls from former students asking for help with a multitude of problems. Schools with beginning teachers on their staffs receive some of the same types of questions, often directed to

- e. relating to parents
- f. organizing class work
- g. obtaining sufficient materials and supplies
- h. dealing with problems of individual students

Interestingly, few differences were noted between elementary and secondary teachers, the decade in which the research was conducted, or even the country in which the teachers were teaching.

Marso and Pigge (1987) studied twenty-four working conditions that influenced the amount of reality shock experienced by beginning teachers. They investigated the aspects of teaching that had the greatest discrepancy between

beginning teachers' prior expectations and the reality they encountered. The top ranked items were the following:

- a. work load
- b. equipment for teaching (materials and resources)
- c. inservice (amount and kind of help given)
- d. facilities
- e. opportunity for growth
- f. value of college classes in preparing them for teaching

One has only to speak to a beginning teacher to verify many of the areas mentioned above. All of us who are presently teaching can remember our own first years to know that some problems remain ageless, occurring over the decades.

HELP IS ON THE WAY

It would be easy to end here with the statement, "Oh, well, that's the way it is. It's always rough to get started, but we all have to go through it. Cheer up! It will get better."

Such an answer refuses to acknowledge the body of literature that is becoming available to tell us how to help beginning teachers. Such an answer also refuses to acknowledge the cries for help that we hear from beginning teachers. Let's consider some positive measures of assistance.

Seven general areas of support are suggested by Odel (1986) as primary areas in which beginning teachers need help:

1. *System information*—giving information related to procedures or expectations of the school
2. *Resources/materials*—locating and arranging for materials and resources the new teacher will need
3. *Instructional*—providing information about teaching strategies or any ideas to help classroom instruction
4. *Emotional*—empathetic listening and sharing of experiences
5. *Classroom management*—giving guidance for scheduling, planning, organizing of instructional

FREQUENT FRUSTRATIONS

Kurtz (1983) has identified problem areas expressed by beginning teachers that led them to leave the teaching field. The feelings of isolation and frustration they expressed were attributed to several specific causes:

- a. Subject assignment—Returning teachers get the "good" courses and/or the "good" students.
- b. Physical facilities—The choice of rooms and equipment usually favors the returning teacher, whereas the beginning teacher gets what's left.
- c. Location of the classroom—Beginning teachers were found to be farther away from the central office, farther from the mainstream of the school building, and thus more isolated.
- d. Extra class assignments—Extra class duties were a prime source of ill feelings.
- e. Lack of understanding of district expectations—Although new teacher orientation programs were regularly carried out, new teachers felt that this process ended abruptly once school began. To address continual questions that arise, periodic orientation meetings are needed through the first year.
- f. Inadequate supervision—It was felt that most problems could be alleviated if the principal, department supervisor, or a master teacher remained in close contact with the new teacher, observing, advising, and empathizing. Kurtz found supervision to consist of one to three formal visits, a few incidental contacts, and a number of group contacts. This amount of interaction was inadequate, according to the beginning teachers.

time as well as guidance for the management of student behavior

6. *Environment*—helping new teachers set up the classroom

7. *Demonstration teaching*—a master teacher or supervisor teaches while the new teacher observes. (A pre-observation conference should be held to establish the focus of the observation and a follow-up conference to analyze what occurred.)

The beginning teaching experience can be made more productive and less frustrating for all involved. While procedures will need to be tailored to fit a specific school, some common practices have been found to be beneficial (see Kurtz 1983):

1. Schedule a separate orientation for beginning teachers while still including them in the regular fall orientation meetings for all teachers. Continue to hold periodic meetings with beginning teachers during the school year, perhaps more frequently at first and gradually increasing the time between them as the teachers adjust.

2. Plan special inservices for beginning teachers during the year, perhaps in conjunction with other schools or districts. Session topics should address the unique needs of beginning teachers, such as those mentioned at the beginning of this article, but can also address beginning teacher needs as expressed through the use of a questionnaire.

3. Set up a mentor system in which an effective, experienced teacher serves as an empathetic adviser to beginning teachers. Some guidelines will be needed as to what is expected of the mentor. Mentors should be in contact with the administration about beginning teacher needs that the administration should address.

4. Identify the areas in a specific school setting in which a beginning teacher will need help: physical set up of classroom, orientation to community, scheduling the school day; ask the mentor or a "welcome committee" to assist in these areas.

5. Give careful consideration to the students, courses, and extra

assignments given to beginning teachers. While seniority rightly carries some advantages, it is unfair to load the new teacher with a host of problems and extra challenges during "start up" time. "The proper mix of courses and students is critical to the success or failure of many beginning teachers" (45).

6. Supervision of new teachers by the mentor and/or principal should occur frequently and begin early during the first year of teaching. The observations can be carried out in such a way as to be non-threatening and helpful, particularly if a pre- and post-observation conference is held. Most beginning teachers will welcome suggestions and eagerly look forward to help.

7. Survey beginning teachers at the end of their first year for aspects of the orientation program that helped them and areas that need improvement. Remember—beginning teacher orientation should be a year-long process, and evaluation can best be made right after this time.

8. Consider hiring a consultant, perhaps a recently retired teacher who has been very effective in the classroom, to be a support person to beginning teachers. This person can meet formally and informally with the beginning teacher as well as be available for calls.

9. Plan for social events and get-acquainted activities that help beginning teachers feel at home in a community and school. Perhaps several school families are willing to be on a committee that arranges invitations for beginning teachers

with school families. The administration and teachers, also, should include new teachers in their plans so that they feel welcome and not like "outsiders" to the in-group.

10. Arrange for regular opportunities for first-year teachers to speak with each other and with experienced colleagues in a planned, yet informal, setting where they will be free to share concerns and ideas. Often, beginning teachers most appreciate this type of opportunity.

THE ROLE OF THE COLLEGE

All too often colleges and universities have considered their roles to be finished once students have completed their teacher education programs. Other than meeting former students at teacher conventions and receiving some S.O.S. calls during the first year, most college and university personnel have little contact with their former students once they become teachers.

This situation is changing. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) is recommending that teacher education institutions continue contact with graduates of their teacher education programs. In addition to asking graduates to evaluate their undergraduate preparation for teaching and make suggestions for improvement, colleges are being asked to provide follow-up assistance to ". . . develop arrangements with school districts in the area to provide assistance to its graduates who are first year teachers . . ."

(NCATE Standards 1987). Some of the larger universities have developed programs of active involvement between the university and first-year teachers (see Burke and Schmidt 1984). While many teacher education institutions recognize the need to maintain contact with their graduates to aid in a smooth transition into the profession of teaching, the question of how to go about it can become the stumbling block that prevents action. Burke and Schmidt (1984) give several recommendations that should be encouraging to teacher education institutions because many of these recommendations are already in operation:

■ Encourage students to build resource files and gather resource materials for classroom use. I suggest to my students in the Introduction to the Teaching of Reading course that they obtain a bookcase and begin collecting children's books so they have some materials with which to supply their classrooms. I also suggest that they obtain some boxes and begin to file items in manila folders under appropriate headings for future use: holiday activities, math puzzles, nature pictures, news items, problem-solving challenges, word games. Anything that may help the first-year teacher—materials, ideas, or words of wisdom from the professor's own first years—can be shared.

■ Conduct senior year seminars that address problems common to first-year teachers. The weekly seminar that accompanies student teaching may address some problems, but this session is often needed to address the day-to-day concerns of student teaching. A week of seminars at the conclusion of student teaching was recently instituted at Calvin College and was found to be an effective time to address problems and concerns common to beginning teachers at a time when students are about to take their first teaching positions.

■ Hold workshop sessions at the college that give beginning

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teachers an opportunity to dialogue with each other about common problems and concerns. Colleges may hesitate to try this idea because of the number of graduates who leave the area, thus becoming unavailable for dialogue with colleagues and faculty at the college. However, for colleges that have a significant number of students who become beginning teachers in fairly close proximity to the college, informal meetings generally receive enthusiastic support from those available to attend.

■ Hold inservice sessions that address topics identified as major concerns of beginning teachers. This suggestion could take the form of college faculty becoming available to go to schools to conduct sessions, the cost of which might be split by the college and the school. Several schools or districts could band together to sponsor beginning teacher inservices.

■ Provide inservice sessions for principals and administrators to help them improve their awareness of the needs of first-year teachers. Some colleges are offering summer workshops such as the Teacher Induction Workshop held for two days at Calvin College by Philip Lucasse for Christian Schools International District II administrators and supervisors in June.

■ Provide beginning teachers with access to curriculum materials and other educational resources housed on college campuses. Beginning teachers frequently continue to use the curriculum centers at their colleges if their first teaching positions are in the area. However, beginning teachers who are new to an area are often unfamiliar with local college resources and might benefit from a colleague taking the time to familiarize them with local resources.

■ Provide access to university personnel through telephone communications. The idea of establishing a college hotline that is in operation during certain hours of the day or evening where students may call toll free is gaining

A TEACHER SUPPORT NETWORK

Raiser (1987) describes an exciting program of support for beginning teachers that begins in their junior year when they are preservice teachers at the universities starting their professional education courses. These preservice teachers attend a monthly support group that includes university personnel, first-year teachers, and veteran teachers. A classroom teacher and a university instructor moderate monthly meetings of the support group called "First Monday." Raiser makes the following point: "The key to successful moderation of a support group seems to be for the leaders to take the role of peers in the problem-solving process" (49). In other words, the university instructor and the classroom teacher act as facilitators and encourage others to take active roles. The preservice teachers learn firsthand about the challenges of a beginning teacher, and many who remain in the area belong to the group when they become beginning teachers.

The purpose of First Monday meetings is to facilitate mutual problem solving among the participants. The ground rules stress that the meetings are to offer support and encouragement to each other in solving problems in the classrooms, not to complain about particular administrators or school systems. In between First Monday meetings, the university facilitator is available for telephone consultation on Monday and Tuesday nights. First-year teachers who have been involved in the group return to campus to share "How to Survive Your First Year of Teaching" with senior education students.

popularity. Other colleges encourage graduates to leave a message for either a specific professor or for a specific information request, and the college later returns the call.

■ Make college faculty available to serve on support groups for beginning teachers as requested by school districts. Current or retired college faculty who have supervised student teachers could be available on a consultant basis to schools for work with beginning teachers. College personnel could team up with school personnel to form team support systems.

Hitz and Roper (1986) summarized several research studies as well as the comments provided by graduates of Oregon schools and colleges of education. They found four general categories of information that beginning teachers need and suggest that teacher training programs review how they are meeting these needs:

1. Learning how to work with other adults, parents, administrators, and aides

2. Learning how to work with colleagues
3. Presenting a more realistic view of the teaching profession
4. Giving students a more complete theoretical framework.

TEAMWORK NEEDED

It should be clear that beginning teachers need help, more help than either our schools where they are employed or our colleges from which they graduate are presently providing for them. This article offers a variety of suggestions, some of which can be easily implemented and others of which will take some discussion and planning.

We owe it to our beginning teachers to make their first years productive, exciting, and encouraging. I'm willing to do my share. Are you? Let's get together and see what we can do. **CEJ**

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The Takeover

Making the Classroom Yours

—by JOAN M. DUNGEY

When the student missed the question, the teacher said, "All right, class!" He took a stance, stretched out his right hand, crooked the first two fingers at the boy, and said, "Zzzzzzz!" All the class followed his example. The student writhed to the floor under his desk. Everyone laughed.

Observing this, the class I was to take over the next day, I stared in horror. The teacher, hired as a coach, was not certified in science, and the state auditors were requiring him to return to college for a session. I was the long term substitute. What was I going to do?

The first graders were standing in straight rows beside their desks, chanting the phonics rules together. When a boy mispronounced a word, the teacher put her face close to his and said, "Repeat after me." She said each separate sound of the word three times. In some cases she actually spit into his face. She turned to me. "He has a severe speech impediment. He'll never speak correctly." They went back to chanting the rules.

I looked at these first graders, already labeled "remedial readers," and wondered about Monday when I was to take over the class. The principal wanted the same program continued. What was I going to do?

Since we have moved extensively, I have had opportunity both to serve as a long-term substitute and to take over a class mid-year. Some of the teachers I have replaced were wonderful. The teacher I am replacing now was also a professional model. Others, as above, were not so competent.

My personal challenge is to see how many days (or weeks!) it takes to "win the students over." Usually

the better the previous teacher was, the longer it takes, although that does not necessarily hold true. Once I struggled for eight weeks against a wall of resistance and yes, even hate, as I tried to introduce learning and standards into a class that had had none.

Few people like change, and students—and their parents—are not exceptions. Routines, even bad ones, are still familiar and expected; a new teacher brings in strange unknowns.

mastered until you have opportunity to interact with them.

Be more flexible with how you introduce a topic or what you do first, for example, spelling or grammar studies. Perhaps you will want to present the material differently than it is given in the text, to excite students.

At first, you can more easily effect change in the areas of class scheduling and physical environment. These will affect students'

You are going into a class where other standards may have already been established and accepted, and implementing that change is difficult.

KNOW YOUR GOALS

In any new circumstance, whether we be new teachers or experienced teachers in new situations, we need to know our goals and standards. Jot down your objectives for the time you will be with the class; they may be general math or reading goals, or goals related to attitudes or behaviors. Be aware that yours is a *tough job!* You are going into a class where other standards may have already been established and accepted, and implementing that change is difficult.

EVALUATE THE SITUATION

Sometimes you may not have a chance to become familiar with student learning levels and needs in advance. Usually, I want to form my own impressions before I hear other teachers' comments and see office records. Of course, you will want to see the texts and find out what specific subject matter students have already covered, but you will not really know what they have

attitudes and feelings about you and the methodology you use as much as your behavior.

To get a feel for the class atmosphere, stand in the room when it is empty. Is it friendly, warm, and comfortable, suitable for learning? Is it set up for child use, with reference books at their levels, hands-on activities, and student-centered? Or is it stark, with ragged bulletin boards and displays, chairs in rigid rows, with the teacher's desk as the focal point of the room? Are the bulletin boards made for active student learning, or are they teacher-made, and have they obviously been up all year?

Observe with critical eye what changes you could make, with the time that you have. You may not be able to do all that you want, but begin to make the room fit you and your teaching style. Change at least one bulletin board. Since I use bulletin boards as teaching tools, I find my time well spent in making several new boards; these then become part of the lesson. Move the

teacher's desk; this will attract students' attention immediately. If there isn't one there already, plan a corner for a learning center. Materials can be prepared at home and brought into the room and easily assembled before students come. Such effects will show that you are interested in learning and will excite students about your ideas from the beginning.

Sometimes it is necessary to move more slowly, especially if you are not in complete control of the schedule or room. For instance, once I entered a team-teaching, English/reading/ESL position for migrants one week before the quarter ended. I continued the previous program for the week, assessing each activity; then, at the beginning of the next quarter, I instituted changes after talking with cooperating teachers.

ESTABLISH YOUR CREDIBILITY

Especially if you are following a very capable teacher, it will be necessary to establish your competency with the students. One class I had in math insisted I was giving them the wrong information; arguing would do no good, and they followed through with their threat to call the other teacher—to my advantage! After that there were no questions about my math abilities.

Students will challenge you. Face the challenge; take the risks! Do not be afraid to say, "I don't know" or "Let's look that up together." Teach with a servant attitude rather than an authoritarian one (I Cor. 9:19), and you will win the students over to "your side" so they can go forward with learning and not continue to concentrate on confrontation.

KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS

Know what subjects you are best at and what teaching style you are most comfortable with. Teach within your strengths and you will build your own self-confidence. Student respect will follow. When I encountered eight weeks of resistance, I had to say to myself every day, "I know I am teaching

Children cannot help but talk about their other teacher. If she or he was well liked, they will, of course, feel sorry that the teacher has left. They may even resent you at first.

them what and how they should be taught!" Students began to believe it too, as, one by one, they understood they were learning new things.

Start with something you know well. Especially if you are a permanent replacement, you have more of a chance to plan your sequence of topics to teach. Choose something you either know well or already have taught, so that you can concentrate on classroom interaction rather than worrying about making new lesson plans. In one classroom, the upcoming science unit in the text was about light. I know more about weather and had taught it before, so I skipped to that chapter, planning to pick up light later. After the students' first shock of skipping around in the text, they learned to view the text as a helper to learning and not a determinant of their learning.

Another time, as a long-term substitute, I asked the teacher if I could teach my own unit on fairy tales. She was delighted; she did not have to make up lesson plans for me, and she continued the unit upon her return. I was happy also because it was an enjoyable topic, and I was very familiar with it.

DON'T BE JEALOUS

Children cannot help but talk about their other teacher. If she or he

was well liked, they will, of course, feel sorry that the teacher has left. They may even resent you at first. Do not take these comments personally; feel no hostility toward that other person. Instead, build on what was begun. It may be necessary to remind students that things are different now, but make no derogatory remarks (Ps. 34:13). Remember that you are their teacher now, and eventually they will come to like you as they did the other person.

PRAY

The most important thing you can do to change attitudes, behavior, and learning is to pray for your students. Even before you know the students, stand in front of each desk and pray for the child or children who will occupy it. After you know them, you can pray more specifically (Rom. 8:31).

Taking over a class is an adventure. There are uncertainties, and there are risks. But the challenge of creating a congenial classroom composed of students who become excited about learning can be yours as you work to meet students' individual needs. If you bring a sense of prayerful assurance to the position, you can follow your objectives and remake the room into an environment where students will grow into active participants in the learning process. **CEJ**

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How much should our veteran teachers be expected to do for new teachers on staff to welcome them and help them adjust to a new school setting?

Teachers often arrive shortly before school starts, when everyone in education is extremely busy preparing for a new academic year. Board members sometimes assist with housing needs, and principals, with the logistics of the school system. However, before the actual whirlwind of staff activities begins, some time of social gathering should be planned. Teachers don't always practice what they preach about acceptance. The initial, official days might seem less foreign and the "inside" jokes less rude if some personal contact had been planned previously to ease the social tension accompanying all the other confusing adjustments.

Personalities vary; not everyone on staff will be "friends." In fact, realistically, teachers socializing only with other teachers is a rather limited, even occasionally unhealthy and threatening, perspective to the profession and life, particularly in small schools. Initially, however, staff members are the only social contacts many new teachers have until they have settled in the church and neighborhood of their choice. Whenever possible, teachers should introduce new colleagues to other people in the community. Then frequent, brief, casual contacts extended over the school year can fill a void without causing the frustration of excessive, but short-lived, invitations treated as social obligations.

The needs of teachers new to the profession, not just the area, may exceed the previously mentioned welcome techniques in light of the April-May CEJ issue addressing the beginning teacher's fears and fail-

ures. Rereading those articles in the fall now may spur creative, helpful responses from veteran teachers, which would alleviate some of the pain and pressure associated with that first year of teaching.

Experienced or not, though, new teachers need to take the initiative to ask questions and seek help. Veteran teachers need to patiently allow the new teacher time to develop in his or her role, not judging too quickly, and tactfully standing beside to offer assistance. Sometimes new teachers might not even know what questions to ask, or, fearing the label of "rookie," they might avoid asking.

I regretfully recall an incident when one of my colleagues was

having difficulty with student attitude and behavior. I asked this teacher, too casually, how things were going. I did not really want or expect an honest answer. Anyway, I eased my conscience temporarily when the answer came back, "Fine." I quit asking but suspected the difficulty did not improve. By the time I did pursue it, some really negative patterns had established, making change much more difficult. The teacher quit. Again I can excuse myself by saying that's the principal's job, which it is—if he or she knows about it. Embarrassment and/or pride may prevent the teacher from sharing the problem, but other teachers pick up on students' comments before administration



ever does. Sensitivity and professionalism combined could perhaps prevent some "bad" habits and preserve some potentially good teachers. We are in this profession together.

Sometimes mistakes are made because an educator might think all Christian schools and communities function similarly. Such an

assumption possibly caused the problem in the other situation. Without gossiping or being judgmental, veteran teachers and administration need to inform the incoming teacher about the uniqueness of their particular constituency and community.

The work environment of Christian educators should be

supportive, not competitive or self serving, so that students and parents see a sincere effort on our part to demonstrate the body of Christ. I Thessalonians 5:11 reminds all Christians to encourage each other and to build each other up. What an exciting witness and productive team a staff could be if they practiced that daily!

I am an experienced teacher in a new setting where parents disagree with my discipline on the basis of the children's reports. Instead of coming to me, they call each other or even a board member to discuss the matter. What should I do?

The question is a legitimate professional concern; however, lack of information allows for a variety of possibilities to be feeding the dilemma. The community/school may function that way due to a combination of several factors: lack of strong administration and board, intimidation by previous and/or current teachers, negative "back fence" chit chat, modern child-run families, power struggles, or unrealistic expectations. Regardless, confrontation of the issue is vital. The principal should be willing to advise and assist; but if not, delayed reconciliation or hoping the issue will dissipate could tarnish the teacher's professional reputation or even cause some resentful feelings to develop. Refusal on both sides to confront these assumed

wrongs could create disharmony with other parents, too.

The teacher must make the initial contact now, creating a collaborative mood to alleviate any fears regarding a lack of objective listening or retribution of the student. Some parents actually do suspect retaliation, but hopefully not based on any current trends. Possibly these parents were simply justifying their own concerns by seeking confirmation elsewhere, not biblical according to Matthew 18, but somewhat understandable if a defensive response to criticism is expected and no previous encouragement of teacher contact was practiced or recommended. A wise colleague and friend once taught me that ignorance can easily be forgiven. Blaming solves nothing

and prevents the healing process that is so necessary to dissolve the personal disappointment and professional affront.

As with any problem, after other parties have vented feelings and listened attentively with no solution, a third party, appropriately the principal, should be consulted to work on a mutual resolution.

To avoid future difficulties, the teacher should begin the year with a letter of introduction, general class information, and encouragement of direct parent contact if questions or disagreements should arise. At an open house and in frequent newsletters, the administration should reiterate a willingness of all teachers to listen and recommend the proper "chain of command" approach to classroom problems. **CEJ**

You are encouraged to send questions on any topic related to the Christian teacher's role and response, regardless of grade level. The editor will solicit responses from additional sources when appropriate.

Address questions to:

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2135 S. Pearl
Denver, CO 80210**

CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED.

OILING THE GEARS

FOR NEWCOMERS

A few years ago we decided to take a year's leave of absence from our current positions and return to school. This entailed moving to another city for one year. We thought it best to make the move before our four children, ages 2, 5, 7, and 10 at that time, were any older.

Our oldest's initial reaction, "Why do we have to go? Can't I stay here?", did not change even up until moving day. Going into fifth grade, he had established friendships and did not eagerly anticipate making new ones. The idea of walking into a strange school and not knowing anyone was terrifying. Both of us had similar unhappy memories from our own childhood, so we were determined to make the transition as smooth as possible for our children.

In early June, soon after getting settled into our new home (a family housing two-bedroom apartment bursting at the seams with six occupants), we made a visit to the new school to enroll our children for the coming school year.

For a favorable first impression early June is not a good time to visit any school, and this was no exception. The construction going on made it difficult to find a front entrance, and it was even more challenging to locate an office. We did eventually find the office (temporarily located in a closet due to remodeling) and a cheerful principal (retiring as of that day). We successfully enrolled our three oldest into kindergarten, second grade, and fifth grade, but our initial visit only increased our son's negative feelings about the move.

Soon, our apprehensions began to fade, however. Being in close

proximity to college family housing, the school was accustomed to receiving a large number of new families in the community each year. They had worked out a detailed system of welcoming new students and making the transition pleasant.

In August, a few days before the start of school, all new families were invited to an ice cream social at the school. At the social we visited each of the children's classrooms and met their new teachers. We were impressed by the emphasis on the *students* being made to feel welcome. It was not a show for parents. In fact, when we introduced ourselves to our son's teacher, she immediately drew him into a one-to-one conversation, almost as if we were not there.

Our son was then introduced to a "buddy," a classmate who would be Joel's right hand man for the evening and the next few weeks of school. Joel and his buddy, Michael, looked around the room, found their seats (next to each other), then disappeared down the hallway to check out the rest of the school. By the end of the evening they had discovered several mutual interests and had made plans to meet in front of the school on the first day of classes. Michael and Joel did not become the best of pals that year, but the organized buddy system provided Joel with a friend to answer his questions, to hang around with at recess and, overall, to make the orientation easier. (Our second grader was also assigned a buddy.)

Our family's experience is not unusual. Moving to a new community is a common experience for families in today's society. While the reasons vary, the majority of

these transfers are the result of a family move. In fact, about one in five families move each year. Moves that include a change in community and school transfers can greatly affect children. Inevitably, children and teens who move will go through a period of both psychological and social adjustment. The ease of this adjustment depends on many factors including personality differences, prior experiences with moving, relationships with friends, parental attitudes, and age.

Studies suggest that children in lower grades seem to adjust better than teenagers, who often feel a strong sense of identity with the friends they must leave. The making of new friends can help children and youths adjust more quickly.

Fortunately, schools and teachers can do a number of things to help children overcome the expected difficulties of their first term in a new school. These efforts can be both informal and formal. Informal efforts may include welcoming new students by introducing them to classmates and encouraging other students to include new children in play and leisure activities. Many schools have found it preferable to establish formal programs with clearly developed orientation plans to help new students adapt.

While each school should develop a plan with particulars that meet the needs of their community, a good plan can be based on strategies of other schools.

Identifying New Students

Whenever possible, schools should attempt to identify new students before the school year

begins. Administrators should try to identify new families who have school age children and are likely to attend their school in the fall. Sources for such information might include churches whose children normally attend a certain school, groups such as Welcome Wagon that are active in most communities, and parents who contact the school requesting registration information.

Registering Them Early

As soon as new families with school children are identified, parents should be encouraged to enroll their children. Early enrollment will allow the new school to obtain school records from previous schools so that relevant information regarding students may be obtained. Such information may include special learning needs, past concerns, and other data that may aid the adjustment to the new school. Early enrollment will also allow the parents to become familiar with the school and orientated to school policies and practices.

Welcoming Families

The transition of children to new schools can be greatly enhanced when new children get to know other children who attended the

school previously. Sometimes this occurs naturally when children meet and become friends in neighborhoods or other places such as church. Schools can encourage acquaintances by asking established families who have similar aged children to make a special effort to welcome new families in the community through such efforts as picnics. The school might even choose to have a picnic or potluck where new families are invited as guests of other families.

Orientating New Students

Shortly before the school year begins, students should be allowed to visit the school and become familiar with the physical setting, teachers, and some students. Some schools have found it beneficial to have an open house where new students and families may visit the school. During their visit students get an opportunity to meet their teachers and some of the students who will be their schoolmates. The focus for such an open house should be on the students, not on the parents. For example, meeting the teacher should allow for an interchange between teacher and student, as opposed to a visit between parents and teacher while

the student listens.

Some schools choose to match new students with a "buddy" who will help orient them to the day-to-day routine of the school. Selecting and recruiting buddies should be done with care. Good buddies should be relatively secure about their social position in the school and should not be viewed in either an excessively negative or positive perspective by peers. Ideally, buddies should share similar interests. They should always be of the same gender. When a student does agree to be a buddy to a new student the teacher should feel relatively secure that he or she will stick with this commitment for at least a couple of weeks.

Making a start in a new school can be very traumatic for children and adolescents. A smooth, comfortable transition to the new school will do much to ensure that the new student will quickly overcome his or her anxieties. No one set of strategies will fit every school and community situation, so it is important that schools develop a fitting plan to help new students feel welcome and begin to function as an integral part of their new school. **CEJ**



The Eigenbroods live in Sioux Center, Iowa, where Holly teaches in the resource room at Sioux Center Christian School and Rick teaches in the education department at Dordt College.

"I Was a Stranger"

The teachers' lounge of Omni Christian High didn't really resemble an idyllic pasture scene with a herd of contented Holsteins chewing their cud and dreaming their milky dreams. It's true that lunch time was nearly over, that brown bags had been emptied and stomachs filled, that a quiescent spirit of reverie seemed to be floating around the room. It's also true that John Vroom's shiny face evinced a bovine-like fulfillment as he munched the last sweet remnants of his favorite jelly doughnut. But a pastoral idyll? Not really.

There was Lucy Den Denker, worrying how five-year-old Scotty would react to his first dental visit after school. And Ginny Traansma riffling through the gospel music she wanted her choir to try out this year. And Matt DeWit chuckling over the humor sections in the latest *Readers Digest*, trying to find a few jokes he could share with his next hour's class. And through the "asylum" walls, the shuffling and squealing of hundreds of growing bodies gave ample proof that lunch hour offered a reprieve, maybe, but no retreat from the daily challenges of Christian education.

Now the door burst open and secretary Jenny Snip rushed in, alarm in her gray-green eyes. "Somebody come quick," she panted. "There's a fight in the gym and Dr. Carpenter is trying to break

it up, but I think she needs help. It's that new kid Velasquez again." Bill Silver abandoned his *Wall Street Journal* and quickly strode with intent into the hallway.

"My lands, what next?" moaned Ginny.

"I s'pose Velasquez will get the heave-ho this time," observed Steve Vander Prikkel. "And that's a shame. I've got him in biology, and he's not a bad kid. He just seems to have trouble making friends."

"He's got a strange way of trying," quipped DeWit.

"Well, I understand those Voddema brothers have been picking on him, calling him 'spic' and stuff like that," responded Steve.

The door opened again, and a slightly ruffled Esther Carpenter strode in, Silver on her heels. "Everything under control, doctor?" inquired Ginny, not quite able to suppress the concern in her voice.

Carpenter poured herself some hot water and searched for a tea bag. Then she turned to Ginny and replied, "The Voddemas and Jose are waiting for their parents to come and get them. I'm going to visit all of them after school for a little talk." She dangled the bag of caffeine-free herbal tea inside the hot water and resumed: "But that little talk won't solve the problem of making Jose feel at home here at Omni, will it?"

The principal wearily dropped herself into an easy chair across from Vroom. "I don't think it's really an ethnic problem, either," she continued. "Most of our ethnic minority students are integrated fairly well, as well as most of the 'majority' students. But what do we do for the new kid on the block, like Jose Velasquez?"

John Vroom shifted his well-fed thighs as a preliminary clue that he was about to say something. "I don't know what we can do," he began, "but I do happen to know something about being a new kid on the block. I was a PK, you know, and we moved three times between my kindergarten and college years. I don't think I ever told you, but when my dad accepted another call when I was fifteen, and we were going to move clear across the country, I wanted to die."

Vroom's voice trembled as the memory began to stir the tempest of emotions from those many years ago. All eyes were on him when he continued. "I didn't want to go. It had taken me two years to get some friends, not many, but it was all I needed. And I had finally gotten a part-time job I liked. I felt at home there. It was where I thought I belonged. I didn't want to leave.

"But Dad took the call, and we left. I hated that new place—the people, the church, the school, the teachers, the kids. It was never easy



—by H. K. ZOEKLICHT

for me to make friends, you know, and then to . . ." John's voice trailed off, and he shifted his position again, uneasily this time.

His colleagues waited respectfully for him to continue, moved by the past hurt deep inside the Bible teacher whose corpulent surface had always hidden his tormented youth.

Struggling for control, John resumed. "I don't know why I'm telling you all this. Except to say that for some kids who happen to be shy and maybe awkward, who have a hard time fitting in, to be the new kid on the block is hell. High school was three years of hell for me. I was mad at everybody. And all the time I felt, well, worthless, you know. Girls wouldn't look at me, nobody invited me to join anything, nobody cared about me. I don't know this kid you're talking about, but I know what it feels like to be a stranger who doesn't belong anywhere."

Extremely self-conscious now, John Vroom awkwardly began to grope inside his brown bag for the truffle he'd sneaked in there and had meant to save for a mid-afternoon delight. But the principal's gentle voice reassured him: "Thank you for sharing that with us, John. I'm so glad you did. I hope you will consider talking about that in a

chapel speech sometime; I think the students would really be blessed by it."

"I really appreciated it too, John," added Lucy softly. "It makes it clear how absolutely important it is for us as a school to make new students feel welcome."

"But how, for instance?" asked DeWit.

"Well, for starters," responded Dr. Carpenter, "let's make sure every teacher knows who the new students in his or her class are. That should be easy enough to do."

"Yes, that's a good idea," agreed Steve Vander Prikkel. "But beyond that, how about asking one teacher to function as a mentor for the new student. This teacher would make it a point to take an active interest in the student, talk with him or her at least once a week, and just generally get to know that student and keep an eye on how things are working out. Of course, it would have to be the right match. I mean the student should be able to feel at home with the mentor. Speaking of home, it might even be a good idea to invite the student home sometime. What do you think?"

"Excellent," remarked the principal. "I feel much better already. And would you be that

mentor-teacher for our friend Jose Velasquez, Steve?"

"Sure, I'd be happy to give it a try."

"Wonderful! Any other suggestions, anybody?"

"Yes," responded Lucy, "I wonder if it would be a good idea to use a buddy system for the strangers among us. We would try to match one of the regular students with the new student. The one would take the other underwing, so to speak, make him feel welcome, show him or her around, introduce him to others, to extra-curricular activities and so on."

"Yeah, that sounds good too," agreed Matt. "I guess there's really a lot more we can do that we're not doing now."

Carpenter rose, walked up to Vroom, shook his hand, and said, "Thanks again, John, for inspiring us to some good thinking. Our next faculty meeting will focus on this issue. And I think my visits this afternoon will be all the more valuable now."

With that, the principal briskly exited the lounge, leaving behind a beaming John Vroom, his heart too full now to respond, and his mouth too, as it savored the delectable taste of the rum-flavored truffle.

No, this had not been a pastoral idyll. Omni's asylum offered no reprieve from Christian education, not even during lunch time. **CEJ**



Professional Principal or Just "New Girl"?

So you are a successful, professional educator just stepping into your first full-time position as a Christian school principal? Congratulations are surely in order. But if you happen to be a woman, you may have a few surprises ahead as well.

One would assume that sexism died with the expiration of the last two decades, when women's rights were actively pursued. But the reader of recent studies of women school administrators soon realizes this is far from true.

Even in this decade women are reluctantly chosen as leaders. Gloria C. Fauth's research from the mid-eighties shows that, while women fill 83 percent of the nation's elementary teaching positions, only 20 percent of all elementary principals are women. I would hazard a guess that these percentages are even more widely separated in Christian schools, where married women (especially) are not taken seriously as professionals and seldom occupy the principal's office. Gross and Trask reported in 1976 that female principals had more years of teaching experience (fifteen for women, compared with five for men), and that 34 percent of male elementary administrators had *never* taught on the elementary level, compared with only 3 percent of the women principals.

Does it surprise you that women are seen as out-of-ordinary if they are able to bring effective leadership to a school? Studies by Bach (1976)

and Fauth (1984) show that female administrators possess all the same qualities of leadership and administrative capabilities as their male counterparts: they can create school "climate," perceive and solve problems, take appropriate actions, and facilitate favorable relations between the school and community. It just takes longer for women administrators to hit their stride. A man begins his administrative career surrounded by an aura of positive expectations. A woman must expend a great deal of time and energy to convince others of her leadership capabilities, as well as juggle the important details of the administrative position she has assumed.

One woman Christian school administrator is still being asked two questions by people within her home church: 1) whether or not the school has found a "permanent" administrator yet (which implies that she is mere "interim"), and 2) how her "little school" is doing these days (expecting to hear of its early demise). When she replies—courteously, of course—that she *is* the permanent administrator and in the fifth year of her tenure in that position, and that her "little school" has grown to 500 students and more than forty faculty and staff positions, her interrogator moves swiftly away, not altogether sure that the principal is being truthful!

Besides being seen as ineffective leaders, women administrators are subject to another myth: that they are never able to gain the support of the community. As a

matter of fact, women principals work effectively with parents. Parents become more involved in the entire educational process under the leadership of a woman than they do when a man is principal, says M. H. Messinger.

Nevertheless, according to Messinger, women administrators often have to contend with what he calls the "mafia mothers," a small but significant group of (usually) bright, attractive women not employed outside the home. They often talk of going back to work or establishing a career when their children are older. In the meantime, however, they are harshly critical of leadership emanating from the woman principal. Perhaps they see her role as a condemnation of their own lack of education or meaningful goal setting.

Most of us find it difficult to believe that such a "mafia" could possibly operate within a Christian school; yet, a number of principals affirm that they have had to overcome such a group. One woman's first year as principal was a particularly trying time. Because she had been promoted from within the ranks of the faculty, the "mafia" also included some of her own staff who gloried in shooting her down at any moment. It took stamina and just plain guts to maintain her equilibrium and poise, not to lash out, condemn, or retaliate in kind. In the years that have followed, her reorganized staff has rallied into a unified, loyal group, and the parents have likewise become staunch

supporters. The principal readily admits that she has become a wiser, more sensitive person because of the refining fire kindled under her during that year.

It may come as a surprise to aspiring, competent women to learn that they are perceived as having no experience or training in administration. According to Yeakey, Johnston, and Adkison (1986), many more women hold administrative certification than those who apply for or fill administrative posts. Sex-role stereotypes and sex-role socialization have effectively diminished the probability that women will actively seek these positions. In Christian school communities many well-qualified women are not given serious consideration as principals, especially in the larger, urban schools. (Count the women administrators in the various Christian school directories.)

I must clarify that I am not a so-called feminist with an axe to grind. In my own case, I did not struggle to become a principal. The school board decided to appoint me to the position even before I knew there was an opening for the job. I am extremely grateful for those who showed confidence in my leadership abilities, and the joy and gratification I experience daily in my work is a confirmation that it is my calling from the Lord.

What can other women teachers do if they desire to become principals? Perhaps mentoring is an idea whose time has come. Judith Dodgson defines a mentor as a trusted and experienced counselor who influences the career de-

velopment of an associate in a warm, caring, helping relationship. Mentors are most helpful and necessary when the woman makes the transition from teacher to vice principal. At this stage it is often the mentor who urges the teacher to apply for the position and then encourages her as she assumes the task. A teacher cannot force her principal to become a mentor, of course. She must show by her attitudes, preparations, and work that she aspires to become an administrator—and then trust God to work it all out in his own way and time.

"Old boys" networks have been in place for many years, even in Christian schools, and it has only recently occurred to women to network as well. Rather than to have an "old girls" network competing with the "old boys," it is of greater value for all to work together. This is being achieved to a certain degree by such groups as the Northwest Association of Christian School Administrators (NACSA) on the Seattle Pacific University campus, begun by Dr. Judith Fortune in 1986. Monthly breakfast meetings provide not only informative professional programs, but an excellent exchange of ideas and helps as well as networking on an informal, personal level.

That it is a tougher job to be a woman administrator seems to be universally agreed upon. June E. Gabler (1987) tells of the shock of finding that becoming a principal meant relinquishing her old friendships with teacher colleagues. It often takes a principal more than a full year to realize that a loss of

close friendships is more or less permanent, not because of diminishing care or respect, but because of the changed role in becoming "the boss." This, then, is another surprise for the new woman principal; her close friendships probably will not be established with her own school colleagues.

Being competent and credible in the role is even more important for the woman administrator than for a male counterpart. Bringing leadership to a school takes long hours, hard work, planning, organization, and decision making. More important for a Christian woman, it takes faith and prayer that the work she does will have nothing at all to do with gender but everything to do with glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. This must be shown in the way she relates to others in the school community as a whole and in the leadership she can provide for the staff and students God has placed in her school.

The core problem of women administrators remains that of low expectations, not of ability, competency, or training. Many of us have "come a long way, Baby," but we still have a long way to go. All of us, male and female, must work for the day when we are no longer recognized as "new girls on the block" or "old boy insiders," but as respected administrators serving our Lord in Christian schools. **CEJ**

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WHOLE LANGUAGE FOR "OLD" TEACHERS

Something is frightening many teachers these days. It's called the Whole Language Philosophy. I'd like to allay those fears by sharing some of my experiences with you.

I'm an old teacher. For the first thirty years of my career I used basal readers and workbooks religiously. Monday—read story; Tuesday—phonics; Wednesday—comprehension, and so on and so forth. Writing was something that was done on Fridays if we got the rest of the work finished. You get the picture: a rigid system in which we proceeded from page to page until we reached the end of the book. The students learned to read and to write with varying degrees of success. Some of them enjoyed the process, but more hated language arts and workbooks and never knew what to write when it was time to write. If the assigned writing had to be finished another day, the completed project seemed to be two completely different stories.

Through the years I did make some changes, one of which was the use of personal journals. One year something happened that was to have a dramatic, radical, and permanent effect on my language arts program. It was September. The new grade three students began to write in their journals. I read them and I was amazed. These students were exhibiting writing skills that no grade three students had ever shown before. They wrote in poetry, in dialogue, and in story form, as well as in the personal narrative!

I dashed down the hall to Alvina Dost's grade two room. "What have you done to get this quality of writing?" I demanded.

"Ah!" she replied. "That's Whole Language." Alvina patiently explained the rudiments of the

Teaching became more exciting than it had ever been. With the students having more ownership of the learning process they were much more committed to completing a project and took much more pride in doing quality work.

approach and recommended a Whole Language conference.

Whole Language, I discovered, is a child-centered holistic approach that ensures the active involvement of the child. It surrounds the child with language at various levels and provides multiple opportunities for the child to use language in a meaningful way. Skills are taught as part of the writing process, and never in isolation. Some of the strategies that have been developed to achieve this are 1) provision of a literate environment, 2) experiences, 3) shared reading using quality literature, 4) dictated stories (at primary level), 5) process writing, 6) conferencing and publishing, 7) interpretive language arts activities, 8) evaluation (mainly summative).

After three days of intensive work at the conference, I returned to Neerlandia and began to hesitantly experiment with some of the suggested techniques. With lots of encouragement from Alvina, I forged ahead. I was delighted. Teaching became more exciting than it had ever been. With the students having more ownership of the learning process they were much more committed to completing a project and took much more pride in doing quality work.

I won't say there wasn't a lot of nail biting on my part and peri-

odically a slavish return to the basal reader and the workbooks. The withdrawal symptoms from the basals are every bit as painful as for any addict (at least so it seemed to me). What happened, though, is that every time I returned to the workbooks, I became more critical of them and began to see that many of the exercises had little value other than keeping the students busy (and giving me something to mark). I used them less, but the following year I ordered a complete set of workbooks again—I just didn't dare to rely on my own ability as a professional to decide on activities for my students without someone, some person who must know more than I, to decide what was best for my students.

Nevertheless, I persevered. I began to use original stories instead of the watered-down versions in the reader. On comparison, the originals were overwhelmingly more popular with the class than the reader versions. Of course! They're rich in language and description. No matter that there were words they didn't understand. We used the context to help us determine meanings.

The second year I planned themes (integrating with other subjects) to cover the whole year. I collected lots of books on the chosen themes, and away we went. We read,

sitting or sprawling anywhere in the room. We shared our reading. We created new endings for stories. We read together and told what we would have had happen next if we had been the author of the book. And we wrote! Since we had so many books on the theme in our room, students built up vocabulary and knowledge of the topic. All the techniques of brainstorming, listing, charts, and so on (many of which have always been used by teachers) gave students lots of words and ideas to draw upon in their writing (though they were not bound to writing about the theme). Stories or, rather, books—which took weeks to write, share, revise, and publish—were written.

Then we discovered that we could use any of our own books to study story grammar, find descriptive passages, and do all the other things we were doing with commercially prepared material. What an exciting day when a child discovered that he or she was a real author whose work was recognized by class and teacher, along with that of adult authors, as worthy of use in lessons, as a choice for independent reading time, or for sharing with a grade one reading partner. It was great.

There are so many things to tell about our Whole Language experiences, but I'll focus on the writing aspect. Each day we have a forty-minute writing period. Though the writing often is an outgrowth of some activity (book, story, poem, excursion), and sometimes the format is dictated by me, the students usually are free to choose their own topics. There is never any student who doesn't know what to write. By the time I reach the classroom they have their writing folders out and are writing. I could stay away the whole period and the majority would continue writing. I emphasize this because it indicates the attitude they have toward writing and is something that rarely happened in the past.

Stories continue from one day to the next. No longer do I get

writing that seems to be two different stories. Now the student has control of the topic and is vitally interested in completing the story. He or she has something to tell and isn't just writing on a topic assigned by me. One grade four girl told me she is writing a sequel to a story she wrote in grade three. Sometimes the students lose interest in a story only to pick it up later in the year and rework it.

During the writing process we conference—teacher-student, student-student, or whole class sharing and critiquing the work. No changes are made without the author's approval; the student has ownership of the writing.

The culmination of all the students' hard work in writing is publishing the story. It may simply be posted on the bulletin board; it may be printed in the school newsletter; it may be read to the principal or to another class; or it may be typed, illustrated, laminated, and bound.

Ownership of the learning process may be one of the most important aspects of the Whole Language approach to teaching

language arts. That is not to say that the child controls what goes on in the room, rather that he or she has much input. Isn't that what we as Christians believe—that each of us is responsible before God? Let's enable our children to take responsibility in the learning area, too.

Another very important aspect is that every child succeeds in this approach. No one is forced to struggle through textual material that is too difficult for him or her. One child may not progress beyond the personal narrative and the use of only capitals and periods, while another is writing lengthy books divided into chapters and using complex sentences, or writing plays. The important thing is that both are learning, both are progressing at a rate that is right for them, and both have a good self image because both are successful.

One of my concerns of using the Whole Language approach to teaching was how one goes about teaching such things as spelling, punctuation, and grammar. I do continue to have weekly spelling lists, though purists insist this is not necessary. Though I still have some



concerns about how well the students do learn punctuation skills, I believe they learn the various skills when they are ready for them—when they need them for the piece of writing they are working on. Sometimes I take either the whole class or a group of students and teach them some specific skills. Then I expect them to be aware of and attempt to use these skills when writing. One student used no punctuation in his writing. Since I had repeatedly dealt with the use of capitals and periods, I was not expecting him to produce them out of a vacuum. One day when attempting to read his journal, I wrote to him, "I am having some difficulty reading this because you have used no punctuation marks." In his next journal entry he wrote, "I've decided to use punctuation." From then on he worked on attempting to punctuate his work correctly. That, I think, is one of the beauties of Whole Language—the child learns a specific skill because he is ready for it and sees the need for it.

There are still times I worry whether or not the students are learning all the proper suffixes, syllabication rules, and all those other things I had been taught were so important. (It's hard to break old habits.) But when they write things such as, "It was a misty morning in the dawn of time . . .," I realize that they are learning to express themselves beautifully without knowing whether they are using phrases or clauses, adverbs or adjectives. Someday they may learn all of the proper terms, but for now they are doing what is more important—learning to communicate through reading and writing.

Since using this approach to teaching, I have grade three students using ellipses to show that time has passed or asterisks for a footnote, colons, dots, parentheses—none of which have been in any third grade program that I've seen—and all learned because the students have seen the need for them. Sometimes they pick up these skills from their reading, sometimes they ask how to indicate the passage of time, and

sometimes I point out these possibilities to them while conferencing with them.

So many exciting things happen in my class each day. When we read or discuss something, one or more students will often say, "I feel like writing in my folder now!" And sometimes they do. One morning we rejoiced in the beautiful sunrise God had given us that morning, and even before we had opening devotions, the students were writing descriptions of the sunrise—some of which found their way into subsequent writing—and poems and prayers of praise to God.

The data is not all in on Whole Language yet and won't be until it has been in use for many years. As with every method, there are advantages and drawbacks. All educators know there are a variety of learning styles and a variety of teaching styles. For thirty years I taught the traditional way. Hundreds of children learned to read and write

using that method. For the last four years I have been using the Whole Language approach, and the students are learning to read equally well, but to write much better quality material. The big difference, I believe, is that they are having much more fun doing it, learning much more about how stories are put together; and they see themselves as authors, too—as worthwhile people who can read and write.

It's scary to start something new. The scariest thing I did was to break my reliance on the basals, but the rewards are tremendous. I heartily encourage all of you to try it. Start gradually. Try one theme for a week or two. Then branch out. Gradually switch completely. Remember, you are still directing the learning. **CEJ**

Elsie Navis teaches third grade at Neerlandia School in Neerlandia, Alberta.

—by TYKE TENNEY

WINNING ATTITUDES

Last year in an exhibition game, a major league baseball player intentionally hit a batter with a pitched ball. The batter's "crime" was that the previous season he had hit a home run off this same pitcher. This is just one example of the decline of sportsmanship in North America. Problems in U.S. sports arose when sports began in the nineteenth century, and they have increased in number and intensity.

A positive approach to character development in our coaching can be

a good example for other athletes and can be profitable for the team's performance.

The coach has been entrusted with great responsibilities. These include not only teaching the techniques of required movements, but also developing each player's character and attitude. The enduring values of sports are more important than the simple accomplishment of certain physical acts.

Play your best every minute that you are in competition. Athletes need to know how to get the best

from their talents. The coach needs to know not only how to motivate the athletes but how to manipulate the game situations to achieve 100 percent efforts. In a game where the other team is far ahead or far behind, the coach can work on developing the bench or one particular aspect of the game, perhaps a better defense.

For this reason, I believe it is never proper to ask an athlete to turn in a performance that is less than 100 percent unless there is injury involved. I would rather see a team work on bunting than strike out on purpose to speed up a game that is a rout. A basketball team can work on passing if that team is superior to its opponent. It is the responsibility of the coach to keep the game from getting out of hand. Revenging a loss or embarrassing a team has no place in sports, and it is up to the coaches to act professionally in such situations. Each athlete should play to the maximum ability, as if it were his or her last game. Each team member should also try to bring out the best in each teammate.

Love a challenge. Each athlete should want to play against the school star. Too many times, I hear coaches and players hoping and counting on one of their opponents to be injured or not to play. Athletes should desire to match their best effort against the best of their opponents, knowing that it will bring out the best in them.

Know the rules of the game and play by them. The athlete should know the situation that he or she is in and how the rules of the game can help the team to win. For example, understanding the infield fly rule and when it applies can result in a good defensive play. My infielders go out after any close pop fly near the infield to get the infield fly call because the rule states that the ball must be "caught by an infielder with ordinary effort." The coach should insist that the athletes play by the rules and should not allow any hedging. Cheating on rules carries over into later life. It does matter whether you win or lose, but also important is how you play the game.

Show respect. The coach needs

Athletes must be taught to keep their composure on the field. They should learn how to be gracious winners as well as graceful losers.

to instill a love for the sport and its people. The athletes must respect all the coaches and groundskeepers. Competitors should show respect to parents and other team supporters that come to the event. Opposing players, their parents, and supporters deserve first-class treatment when they come to your school or field. During the game, players should not yell insults to other competitors or fans. My athletes have a rule that they are allowed to yell only positive comments to their teammates during the game.

Team equipment and school facilities need to be treated with care by the athletes who use them. An equipment manager is usually in charge of bringing the equipment to and from the game site, but the athletes are in charge of the equipment during the game. Equipment should be used only for its designed purpose. (Baseball bats and football helmets are not used to pound loose nails into the bench.) Each player must take on the responsibility of protecting the field against any vandalism or damage. A player should treat opponents' facilities with the same respect.

Athletes must be taught to keep their composure on the field. They should learn how to be gracious winners as well as graceful losers. Regardless of score, the competitors need to shake hands and congratulate each other for doing their best. Athletes cannot allow hecklers or bad calls to distract them from what they have to do in the game. When the game begins, the player cannot be thinking about not being awarded a scholarship, not being selected for an all-star game, or not starting. Complete attention must be placed

on the job he or she must do as part of the team. Each team member should take long road trips and cancelled games all in stride. He or she needs to realize that blisters, bruises, and other injuries are all part of the game.

One important job of the coach is that of keeping everybody in touch with the game. This concept begins in practice; everyone should be involved. No athlete should feel that he or she is just standing around or wasting time. During the game, the non-playing athlete should encourage and compliment teammates, realizing that starting positions are won with skills. Each player is to act as a cheerleader, helping to pump up the team. The player who is not playing should stay alert and watch the game so that he or she will know the situation and tenor of the game when called to play.

Finally, *be gentlemen and ladies off the field.* Athletes should act appropriately on the bus or van and in the restaurants. In addition, student athletes must understand that their primary responsibility is academic work. This must be explained and encouraged by the coach.

Every coach realizes that coaching involves much more than just filling in the starters in the book. Besides techniques, it deals with relationships, effort, and attitudes in a competitive setting. Many professional sports present our young athletes with poor examples of sportsmanship. The responsibility of teaching good sportsmanship, therefore, falls on the coach. Teaching winning attitudes not only builds character but also puts more games in the "win" column. **CEJ**

Tyke Tenney, currently a kindergarten teacher at Friendship Central School in Wellsville, New York, has also taught intermediate grades in addition to writing professionally.

—by RON B. DE BOER

A Christian Mold for Media Values

You've heard the statistics: by the time you're sixty, you will have seen or heard about fifty million advertising messages; eighteen-year-olds have already witnessed 13,000 televised murders and five times as many violent acts; there are 1,194 television stations in the United States, 8,000 radio stations, and the same number of daily newspapers; ninety-eight percent of all households contain one television set, and fifty-nine percent have more than one set, not to mention the radios, magazines, and video cassettes that permeate our households every day.

Psychologists spend entire careers studying the effects of television-viewing and radio-listening on both children and adults, and investigative reporters are paid thousands to inform consumers when they are getting ripped off by products sold by companies willing to pay millions for slick advertising campaigns.

The media dominate contemporary North American culture, and every day Christians are forced to make decisions regarding television, radio, advertising, film, and newsprint. Christian educators are increasingly aware of the tremendous need for a high school values course in mass media.

Why We Set Up a Course

Considering these sobering statistics and the role of the Christian in the media culture, Anton Brink and I designed a course that would teach our students to be discerning Christians in a world that is increasingly shaped by the values and beliefs set by the media. Brink, the media teacher at London Christian High School in Ontario, encourages his students to become junk detectors.

Dr. Quentin Schultze, a Calvin College professor in media studies, writes that over time, we will become like those with whom we communicate. It doesn't take a detective to find a lot of junk (and some good) in the media. As Schultze suggests, without discernment, Christian media consumers face a dangerous situation. Other more traditional high school courses alone are not adequate for building critical media users. In today's world, media courses may be as important as literature courses.

While our media course is designed to instill in our students an awareness of the tremendous influence and effect of the media, we hope that the course will also stimulate our students to struggle with the fundamental question of how they, as Christians, should respond to and use the various media for the furtherance of God's Kingdom. We try to cultivate some

hope, not just criticism. Keeping in mind these two basic goals, we set up our media course.

How We Set Up the Course

The first thing we decided to do was compile a folder of readings for our students. The folder is divided into each of the units in the course—communication, radio, newspaper, television, advertising, and film—and provides students with articles, exercises, introductory quizzes, and assignments for group work on the various units. Students buy the folders from the school (as insurance against damage) and are refunded the money upon safe return of the folders for resale the following year. The folder is a valuable resource, and our arrangement gives the school's photocopier a break.

Some teachers also use a textbook in their media courses. One of them is Jeffrey Schrenk's *Understanding the Mass Media*, which focuses on media in the United States. The Ontario Ministry of Education is currently working on a much-needed text that will have Canadian statistics and readings.

We begin our media course with a unit on communication and perspective in media. In this unit, we study the conditions necessary for real and meaningful communication and the biblical norms for communication; we do self-examinations of the influence of media in our own personal lives, and we look briefly at the historical development of media from hieroglyphics to VCRs.

Following are the radio, television, and newspaper units, on which we spend from two to three weeks each. During this time we make great use of our audio-visual equipment. We not only listen to early radio plays and view television sit-coms and soaps but also write and produce our own radio dramas and television shows.

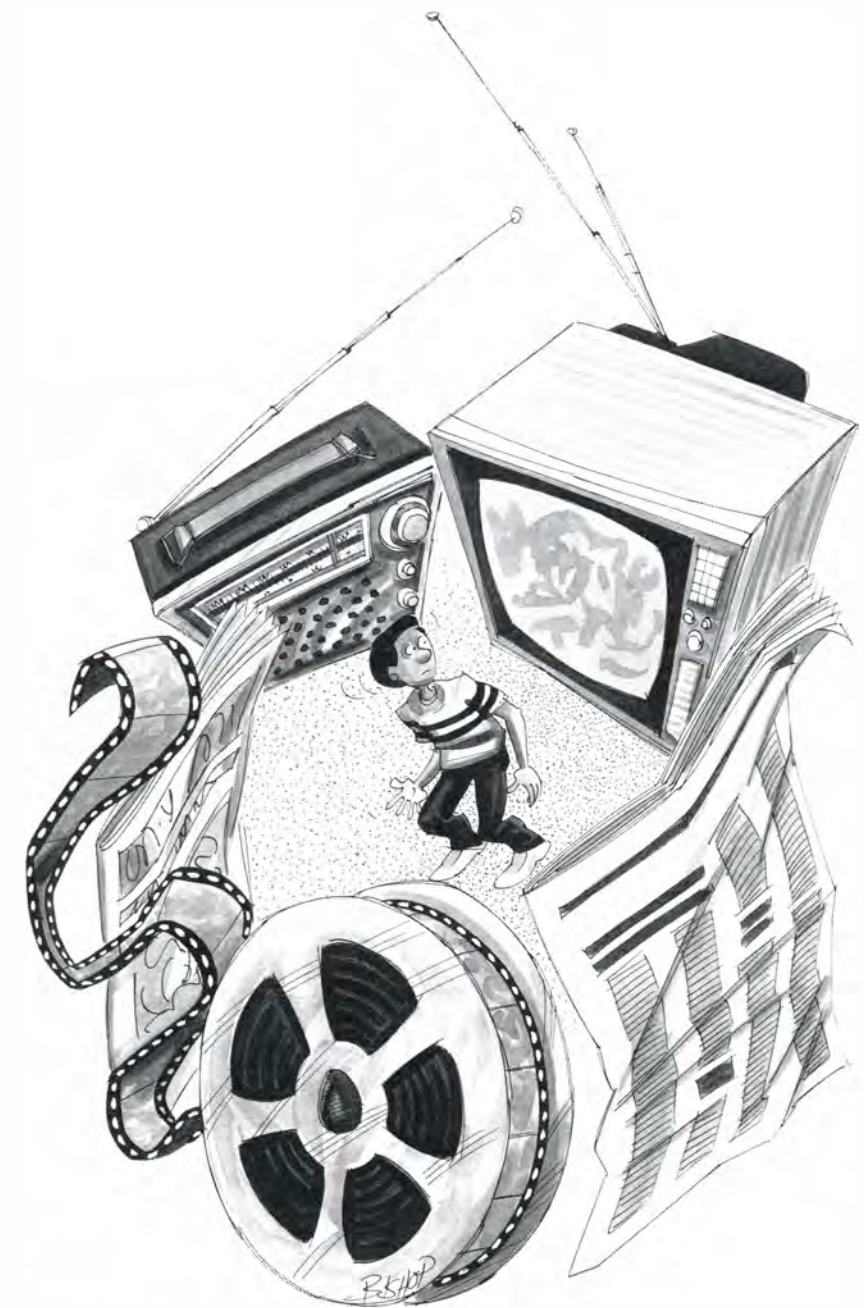
In the newspaper journalism unit we spend a week examining the

contents of a variety of daily papers. Students work on a series of activity sheets based on sports, political cartoons, and front-page headlines. They discover the tone of a well-written editorial by clipping it out and explaining why it is included in that particular newspaper. They cut out the day's front-page headlines and explain why the editors have chosen to give certain stories front-page space and why some headlines are larger than others. Each of these units is completed with a tour of a local television and radio station and newspaper plant.

Perhaps the most intriguing unit for our students is the one on advertising. In this unit we study newspaper, magazine, and television advertisements, analyzing them and evaluating them for hidden messages, unethical approaches, or misleading information. We discover the importance of perception on the part of the viewer and the effect of advertising on television programming. More important perhaps, we discuss the need for Christians in the field of advertising, and we challenge our students to consider careers in this area so that advertising, too, can be redeemed for Christ. When students film their own commercials at the end of the unit, they begin to realize the difficulties a Christian advertiser faces.

The course culminates with the film unit, which greatly interests our students. Movies—whether at the theater or at home on the VCR—are high on the list of entertainment for high school kids. In this unit we study the techniques of film production, and we examine the history of film, including silent movies and Soviet films. We also discover the importance of movie reviews by reviewing contemporary films from a Christian perspective and verbalizing our opinions through a "Siskel and Ebert" type simulation in front of the class.

The highlight of this unit and the course as a whole is the student production of a movie. In groups of four, students act as directors, actors, and cinematographers in the making



of a "premiere" movie shown during the last week of school. Every student gets caught up in the excitement of making a movie.

Putting It to the Test

We placed our newly-structured media course into our respective curriculums for the first time last year, and, although we found the course to be highly effective, we also realized the need to update the resources almost annually to enable the course to remain effective. This, we agreed, is a small task in light of the many positive comments we received from our students during

and after the course. Administrators, too, are excited about a media course, agreeing that students are challenged to become discerning Christians in contemporary society, a major goal in every high school.

CEJ

Ron B. De Boer teaches at Chatham District Christian Secondary School in Chatham, Ontario.

Studying God's Story



What makes a Christian school a *Christian* school? To some observers, the one thing distinguishing a Christian school from the public school down the street is that the Christian school includes mandatory Bible classes. Of course, readers of this journal know better. Indeed, the Bible provides a foundation for the program of a Christian school, suggests a perspective on all subjects, and serves a devotional purpose in the life of the school. But as theologian John Bolt notes, the Christian school "also considers the Bible in a distinctly 'academic' way, as a subject among other subjects. This role of Scripture must not be confused or merged with the other valid roles Scripture plays in the school. The teaching of Bible must retain its own integrity."

The teaching of Bible has changed over the years, with various emphases predominating in different eras. Recently the story approach has attracted much attention. This is the approach that provides the basis for Christian Schools International's new Bible series, *The Story of God and His People*.

God's Word is a given. The way we study his Word must reflect our understanding of God and of the way he reveals himself to us in the Bible. The teacher guides of the new series point out that "God chose to give us his Word in the form of a story. His people have been telling and retelling this story for thousands of years. When students are immersed in the wonderful, true story, they begin to understand who they are, where they have come from, and what their lives are all about."

The academic study of the Bible must take into account the contours

of the story, without restructuring the material or imposing another framework on it. It is not by mistake or accident that the Bible comes to us as it does. This divinely inspired book is a record of God's dealing with his people, expressed in a variety of genres—narratives, prophecies, poems, historical and legal documents, wisdom literature, letters, and apocalyptic visions. In its broad patterns it tells of the creation of the world and human beings, the fall of the human race into sin, God's work of redemption and the sending of his Son to the world, Christ's ministry and atoning work, the founding of the Church, and anticipation of Christ's return. The Bible's story has its own shape and structure, and our teaching of it should reflect that structure. Thus, the presentation of the Bible in CSI's curriculum is organized chronologically rather than thematically or doctrinally.

That doesn't mean that major themes are omitted or overlooked. Rather, the individual stories are studied in their own right and in the way they relate to the overall story. "The individual stories are not isolated from each other, and every story leads to the next one. The same kinds of events happen over and over, and the same themes echo

Aims of *The Story of God and His People*

1. To present the Bible as the story of God's acts and words, written so that his people might know God and themselves, accept his gift of salvation, and live lives of joyful service and obedience.

2. To teach the Bible not as a history book, a theological treatise, or a rule book, but as the divinely inspired and infallible Word of God, each part of which has a particular purpose and fits into the overall purpose of the Bible.

3. To help students make an informed commitment to Christ as Savior and Lord and to live out that commitment through love, obedience, and service in ways that are appropriate for their spiritual maturity.

4. To immerse students in the stories and the writings in the Bible so that they may grow in knowledge, wisdom, sensitivity, and creativity.

Goals of *The Story of God and His People*

Primary Grades	Intermediate Grades	Middle school
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- | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| 1. Remember Bible stories..... | | |
| 2. Believe that the Bible is God's Word | | |
| 3. Understand basic Bible themes | | |
| 4. Remember the overall story of the Bible as God's plan of salvation. | | |
| 5. | Understand the following dimensions of the Bible: | |
| | -literary | |
| | -cultural | |
| | -geographical | |
| | | -historical |
| | | -linguistic..... |
| 6. Imaginatively respond to Bible stories | | |
| 7. Retell Bible stories | | |
| 8. Recite Bible passages | | |
| 9. | Read the Bible | |
| 10. | | Interpret the Bible . |
| 11. Love God, others, self | | |
| 12. Desire to serve God | | |
| 13. Desire to be close to God | | |
| 14. Accept the Bible's call for repentance, faith, discipleship, and praise ... | | |
| 15. Use judgment based on the Bible | | |
| 16. Ask questions about the Bible and Christianity | | |
| 17. Relate the Bible to daily life | | |
| 18. Witness to others | | |

throughout the Bible. To understand the story as a whole, we must follow the story from beginning to end."

Central to this understanding of Scripture and to this method of teaching the Bible is the need to *listen* to God speaking through his Word. This is literally the case for students in the early elementary grades, who pay attention as their teacher retells familiar narratives. It is also true for students in the intermediate grades and in middle school, who read the Bible themselves, listening to the voice of God. From preschool through grade eight, the entire scope of the Bible is studied five times (preschool, kindergarten, grades 1-2, 3-5, 6-8), with increasing depth and complexity as students grow older.

As children and young people study the Bible, they gain an understanding of the relationship between God and his people throughout human history. They also become better able to read and study the Bible on their own. The Book is not a collection of unrelated facts or disconnected episodes. It is not a gathering of didactic platitudes or tips for healthy living. Neither is it an anthology of intriguing or deftly told tales from antiquity. Instead, it is a record of God's work in and through his people, a living community to which the students also belong.

To help students move from recalling the story to understanding it, the series emphasizes the context of the Bible, paying attention to the setting—customs, culture, and geography of Bible times—so students can imaginatively participate in the events that are recorded. The materials also note carefully the way in which the story is told, looking at the different types of writing, the different authors, the different audiences for various books, and the different ways in which the inspired writers recorded their pieces of the story.

Children study the Bible in both the school and the church, but the school and the church use Scripture in different ways. John Bolt suggests that "the goal of the Christian

community as a whole is that its sons and daughters come to biblically-informed commitment to Christian faith and a Christian life. The primary focus of the church is on realizing informed *commitment*; the focus of the school is on realizing *informed* commitment." Knowledge of or about the Bible is not the end of the matter; students' hearts must also be touched by the story. The series aims to nurture faith at all grade levels, so that students can grow in their relationship with God. It also emphasizes that "the Bible is not just a story—it is a normative story, which calls us to live out the story in our own lives." Applying God's Word to daily living is a continuing challenge for Christians, and the series prompts students to look for ways in which the Scripture speaks to them about everyday concerns.

The curriculum also stresses the value of memorization, not as an end in itself, but as a way for students to "learn by heart" the words and deeds of the Lord. Throughout the series, the memory

passages correlate directly with the topics covered in each unit, and the emphasis is on longer passages rather than isolated or scattered verses.

From the earliest times, God's people have passed down to their children stories about the way in which the Lord has worked in the lives of his people. In creating this Bible curriculum, Christian Schools International has not embraced a faddish methodology or trendy pedagogical approach. Rather, we have worked to recapture a centuries-old approach and apply it to the contemporary classroom. Our hope is that the curriculum will enable students (and teachers) to grow in their faith, their hope, and their love as they encounter God in the pages of his Word. **CEJ**

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Christian Schools International
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Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

Illustrating God's Story

—by ANNE R. STRUYK

A young boy named David topples a giant with a stone from a brook. Rahab saved from being crushed by her crumbling building because she has hung a red cord from her window. The excitement and thrill of dramatic stories like these bring bright-eyed looks from attentive children.

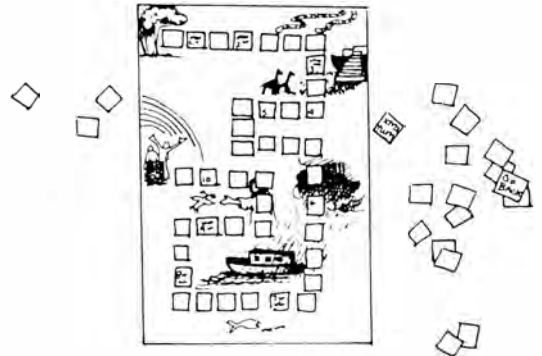
Telling children Bible stories in various ways helps them gain ownership of the stories. Tapes, dioramas, readers' theater, puppets, and other teaching methods help young children to recall the events of Bible stories. Older children begin to comprehend the significance of each narrative, growing in their understanding that God faithfully keeps his covenant with a disobedient people.

As Christian educators, we are interested in the richness of the Bible stories touching students' hearts as well as their minds. This means we must assume the privilege and responsibility of providing activities that go beyond the immediate Bible story. We must consider the needs of students with varying attention spans and different levels of developmental skills when planning learning experiences.

The following activities expand on a few of the concepts covered in CSI's new Bible series, *The Story of God and His People*. As with all suggestions, they will have to be adjusted or modified to meet the abilities of your own students.

Characters. The K-2 sequence pictures can be used to develop a matching game entitled "Who am I?" As a class, or in small groups with an aide, students can identify each of the Bible characters they have studied. For example, you may say, "God promised me children that would number as many as the stars of the heavens. Then he asked me to sacrifice my only son. He surely had me puzzled!" The students then match the quote with the picture of Abraham putting Isaac on the altar. To make this a self-checking activity, put the quote in a "balloon" with only one balloon fitting the correct picture card.

For another method, ask students to draw their own pictures in brilliant colors with wide- and fine-tipped markers. The drawings can be made into slides or a filmstrip. (Check with your local educational agency or an area college to see if they provide the

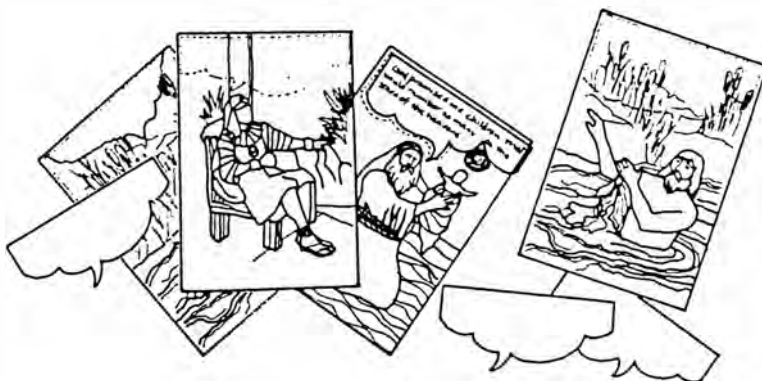


service.) Students can tape record their quotes describing a particular character as part of the script for a sight/sound production.

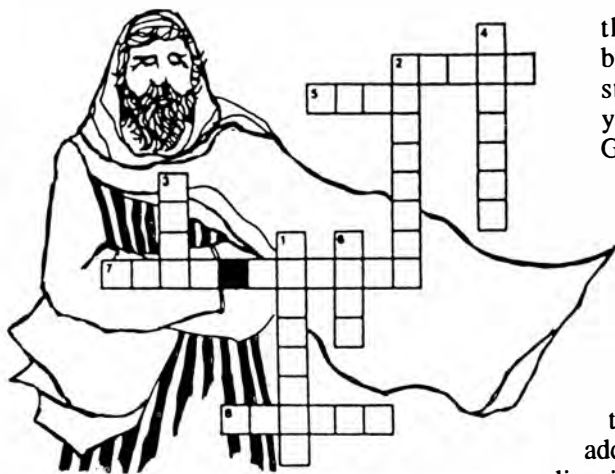
Still another option is to make a video of the students in costume, holding appropriate props and speaking their clues. A presentation like this is appropriate at a grandparents' open house or a mothers' club program.

Games. When teaching or reviewing a Bible story that includes several events, game boards that the students design themselves provide excellent reinforcement. Together you and the class list approximately ten events on the chalk board. Before the next lesson, make and copy a worksheet with thirty 1.5" squares. On eight to ten of the squares are the events that were compiled in class; those squares are numbered in order. The remaining squares are blank.

During the following day's activity have each student cut out the squares and arrange them in the correct sequence on a 12" x 18" sheet of lightly colored construction paper. The path of the game board squares will vary according to each child's design.



Once the pieces are glued down with rubber cement (white glue will make the paper buckle), the students can fill in the empty squares with penalties and rewards according to the positive or negative outcome of an event. Illustrations can be added with a fine-tipped marker along the story path. These visual clues become good reminders for students who have difficulty reading words; they also allow children to recall details of the story in pictures that they couldn't add in words because of the limited space.



Playing rules can be made up by each class or by an individual. The final product should be laminated for durability. An envelope or locking plastic bag attached to the back of the board keeps all loose pieces with the game. After the excitement in class wears off, the students can take the game home to play with a family member.

"Traveling." Map work is essential to understanding some Bible stories. The same map can be updated for each successive lesson. For a project involving the Israelites' wanderings, duplicate a large map of Palestine, including Egypt and the Red Sea. Make it large enough to fill



up one of your bulletin boards or a large empty space on the wall. Divide your class into groups of four or five to represent Old Testament families. Have each student draw a family member; larger groups may add an animal or a wagon for transportation. Paper should be 6" high for adult figures, slightly smaller for the children. (Having pre-cut 3" x 6" paper is helpful so the students know the figure's head must touch the top and the feet touch the bottom.) Clothes can be made paper-doll fashion from patterned wallpaper.

Have students assemble these "families" on the bulletin board map with staples or thumbtacks. As you tell the Bible story of God's people being released from Pharaoh's rule in

Egypt, have students move the figures through the Red Sea to another place on the map and tack them in their new location.

When Israel is camped in the desert, each group can add a tent for their family to live in and so on, as the story develops. Every time the Israelites move, draw a visual reminder in the form of a monument or a "thought bubble."

If it is necessary to add words to the map, write the words on a sheet of acetate with permanent markers so the word can easily be removed when no longer needed. **CEJ**



Anne R. Struyk is marketing coordinator at Christian Schools International in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



Lessons From Chas

My student died today. There was a lot of fog, and a road covered with skid marks, and a dead boy in a truck.

Oh, he wasn't enrolled in one of my classes, and had not been for several years. He had graduated from high school, had gotten a job and kept his good reputation, and suddenly he was dead.

So, other than the sorrow people usually feel when a young person dies, why do I feel this wavery empty feeling in my heart? Why do I feel an urgency to call all of my students and make sure that they are all right? Why is it important to try to recollect some specific memories of this young man as a ninth grader?

I suspect these emotions are tied in with the sense of urgency that surrounds most teachers. Unfortunately, too often that sense of urgency has more to do with parts of speech and theorems and dates than with the real issues of life. It is easy to "major in the minors," and in reality, an education is what parents and kids expect to gain from attendance at school. But education is so much more than books and tapes and films and tests. It is, besides all of these strategic things, values and growth and truths that burrow deep into the heart of a child and help to prepare him or her for the journey ahead.

Two questions arise out of musings of this sort. These are not easy questions, but then most folks who are out for easy questions turn to jobs other than teaching. The answers we give to these queries should act as mirrors, in which a teacher can see clearly and accurately who he or she is. Too often we "see through a glass darkly" when what we should be doing is sitting under several glaring

light bulbs to examine ourselves.

The first question that slammed into my consciousness after the initial shock was, "Did I say everything, do everything, use every moment to the utmost with this boy?" A quick inventory yielded some achievements, some specific instances of positive influence. I did teach this child some things about English, and he did know that he was valued in Room Seven. We laughed a lot and fussed a little, and beyond that, the memories get vague.

If I am to recoup something from this death, it must be a fresh zeal to "redeem the time" with every boy and girl God sends to me.

On the other hand, I have no specific memory of a conversation or transaction with this boy that yielded a "Now I understand!" kind of response. There was never, to my recollection, a time of gut-level exchange during which we met as teacher and pupil and came away changed, stretched, matured into new people. If I cannot remember such an interaction with this boy, one of the easy-to-love students, then I must wonder how many other chances have slipped away.

If I am to recoup something from this death, it must be a fresh zeal to "redeem the time" with every boy and girl God sends to me.

I just cannot afford to take a lackadaisical attitude toward a class period, a conversation, or even a

glance when it involves the lives and souls of my students. And the simple, painful reason for such passion is both simple and painful—there are no guarantees when it comes to time.

So, the second question follows rather squarely on the heels of the first. If the time is fleeting and the kids are constantly on the move, then how can I better use these moments and encounters with these often-enigmatic students? The answer must come from two sources: the Word of God and my response to his call in my life.

The only place to find both wisdom and direction demanded by such a commitment is the Bible. I must immerse myself in Scripture so that the depth and breadth of God's wisdom can invade the very fabric of who I am.

The "lamp" and "light" of the Psalms are the only ways to see down those amazingly murky paths. The temporary knowledge of empirical studies, the trendy classroom behavior techniques, and the chutzpah of a brash personality will not provide sufficiently for the myriad of questions and problems that face every teacher. The prayer of every teacher must be that of the Psalmist as he said, "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous truths from Thy law."

But, then suppose God answers that prayer, as he is wont to do? What is to be my response, and if it is not what it should be, how can I move from where I am to where I should be? As I walk in obedience and allow Jesus Christ to live his life through me, I must make some practical decisions about my time, my abilities, and my goals. Taking into account my class load, extracurricular activities, and family

—Edited by STEVE VANDERWEELE

needs, I need to be sure that time—that quicksilver commodity—is never wasted.

Lunch times can be spent more profitably than in rehashing old gripes or "frying" students. Those few minutes between classes are perfect times to touch base with that quiet student who never demands attention. After-school activities provide chances for non-adversarial talks, as well as for sending the message to my students that I care about more than just their performance in my class.

My goal here is not to inject some unnatural gloom-filled element into the time spent with students. My goal is, however, to use every minute as it is provided to touch with God's hand the lives of the students entrusted to me. His wisdom will provide his balance so that his changes can be implemented in their lives.

This particular student stands now in the presence of his Lord. Mistakes made and opportunities lost are of no further effect. But, in my class and in every class sit students on whom those mistakes and lost chances are taking effect daily. Though perfection is unattainable, that fact can never stand as the wall behind which teachers huddle and beyond which students surge. Teachers must tear down the barriers and grasp eagerly every instant of fleeting time. Our students cry out for it. Our God requires it.

CEJ

Nancy Wade Zappulla has taught English in grades seven to twelve and girls' physical education. She has also served in various social work roles. She resides in Chesapeake, Virginia.



Christian Ecology: Building an Environ- mental Ethic for the Twenty-First Century

Edited by Frederick W. Krueger

The North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology, Inc. P.O. Box 14305, San Francisco, CA 94114. 1988, 139 pp. \$12.00 pb. Reviewed by the Reverend Peter Van Tuinen, pastor emeritus, Modesto, CA.

This book embodies the proceedings of the first North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology (NACCE), held in Indianapolis, Indiana, in August 1987. The conference represented the fruit of a concerted two-year-long effort to engage Christian churches in ecological concerns. The official announcement of the book's appearance states, "What makes this publication significant is that its very appearance announces the arrival of a new dimension to ecological action. Church concern for earth healing brings an important sector of society to the ecological scene, which can provide new impetus for earth healing."

It points out furthermore that

"ecological action must be taken, not only because of the seriousness of our predicament, but because it is morally, ethically, and spiritually correct. It is time we recognize that lasting solutions will require deep changes in the fabric of social behavior. Christian ecology provides the religious well-spring for a simpler way of living—a life that includes voluntary simplicity, the recycling of waste materials, the embracing of appropriate technology, the support of clean, organic foods and their cultivation, the transfer to alternate transportation systems, the elimination of toxic wastes, the conservation of energy, the development of renewable energy systems, and many more like items of practice."

The book opens with a brief history of the very young NACCE and a report of press conference statements by the chairman Fr. Al Fritsch, S.J.; the vice-chairman, Dr. Calvin DeWitt, professor of environmental studies at the University of Wisconsin and director of the Au Sable Institute in Mancelona, Michigan; and Dr. Wes Jackson, consultant to the NACCE.

Then come the conference proceedings. We read Highlight Talks by Dr. Hans Schwarz of Regensburg, West Germany, Wendell Berry of Port Royal, Kentucky, and Sr. Miriam Therese MacGillis, OP of Blairston, N.J. Also included are excerpts of papers presented by representatives of ecological concerns from a wide variety of churches in the United States and Canada. The papers were presented under five main headings, represented by as many sections in the proceedings: I. Theology and Spirituality; II. Food and Agriculture; III. Nature and Natural Resources; IV. Applications of Christian Ecology; and V. Church and Pastoral Activities.

In the first section, conferees discuss the theological basis for ecological action. Based on the

declaration in Psalm 24:1 that "the earth is the Lord's," two biblical considerations especially provide the motivation for Christian ecological action: the assignment given to man at creation to "dress" and to "keep" the garden, and the fact that God takes pleasure in his creation (Genesis 1:31).

To address the vast indifference of Christians to this biblical sanction for ecological concern, the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson discusses the reasons why Christians lost an environmental ethic. "First, the Christian faith in the West has been captive to the assumptions of modern culture which sever God from the creation and subject the creation to humanity's arrogant and unrestrained power. . . . One cannot underestimate the way in which the enlightenment, the scientific revolution, and the process of industrialization . . . drastically altered humanity's relation to the physical environment." He discusses further how man-centeredness has replaced God-centeredness as the basis of our cultural assumptions, and in our thinking and action in ecological issues.

"Modern culture has been waging war against nature, and the ecological foundations for sustaining the earth's life are eroding."

Subsequent sections suggest the kind of impact that the Christian perspective should make on dealing with the critical issues at stake. An important consideration the contributors make repeatedly is that nature is designed to be self-regenerative in certain important areas of human usage, and that a truly Christian approach would rescue nature from the depletion of resources caused by greedy exploitation.

Section IV suggests specific applications and makes clear that the situation requires a radical change of outlook springing from an authentic theocentric worldview.

The final section suggests how

Christians can heighten awareness of the need of ecological action.

A Christian approach to ecology problems is not only biblically sanctioned but also demanded. But, as Granberg-Michaelson points out in his previously cited paper, "Modern culture has been waging war against nature, and the ecological foundations for sustaining the earth's life are eroding."

It seems to me that to leap the hurdle of ecclesiastical lethargy on this score, Christian schools have an opportunity and challenge to get the message across to the generation that will be compelled to deal with the issues. On this score the NACCE can be helpful. It publishes a book list on ecological concerns and issues a quarterly called *Firmament Publications* that could be useful for classroom projects in some disciplines. To begin with, the book under review is very informative and well adapted to stimulate concern and encourage action.

The publisher (see address, above) will respond to inquiries about literature on ecology and activities of NACCE. ■

Teaching and Religious Imagination

by Maria Harris

San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987

Reviewed by Harro Van Brummelen, Trinity Western University, Langley, BC V3A 4R9.

It may be tempting for Christian school educators to dismiss Maria Harris' *Teaching and Religious Imagination* out of hand. Her streak of mysticism and her emphasis on the sacramental nature of teaching may make you as uncomfortable as the idea of your evangelical pastor

participating in a Solemn High Mass. Her claim that the intent of teaching is that students receive the grace of power in order to re-create a world of communion, justice, and peace smacks of a Christian social gospel and even an existentialist position, especially when you search in vain for the corresponding need for personal redemption in Jesus Christ.

It would be tempting to dismiss Harris. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to do so. As North American evangelicals, we are an integral part of an individualistic, result-oriented, management-by-measurable-objectives culture that we have helped to shape. We have often

accepted educational theories and practices to fit that mold even when they were rooted in and led to further secularization. Yet we have tended to neglect Christian educators from non-evangelical streams because their theology does not quite fit our own. How many of us have read the liberation theology educator Paulo Freire, or the Catholic Thomas Groome, or the Quaker Parker Palmer?

I do not deny that we have to sift carefully as we read such educators, reading "worldview-ishly," as James Sire put it in his *How to Read Slowly*. That is also true for the ecumenically-minded Catholic Maria Harris. Sometimes

Harris describes and illustrates five criteria or paths that help teachers work out of their own imaginations: taking care, taking steps, taking form, taking time, and taking risks.

her thoughts, expressed in familiar theological terms but in an unfamiliar context, seem to slip through our fingers. But her ideas are rich in implications for teaching, also in Christian schools.

Harris stands with many recent Christian educators in emphasizing what Peter De Boer has called a responsibility theory of education: teachers must "ordain" learners into a world of responsibility and responsible choice. She emphasizes that as images of God learners are subjects, not objects, for whom the "revelation" of subject matter must lead to communion, reconciliation, and *shalom*. In this way, she holds, teaching can lead to "the grace of power" and, in turn, to the "re-creation" of the world.

Often without realizing it, we look at teaching in terms of metaphors. Such metaphors then shape our classroom approaches. The most influential metaphor in North America during this century has been that teaching is a science. Labored research has yielded only common-sense generalizations on this approach. Other metaphors of teaching have also failed to break through the technological mindset in education: Highet's teaching as an art, Postman's teaching as a subversive (later, conserving) activity, Egan's teaching as story telling, Tom's teaching as a moral craft.

In *Teaching and Religious Imagination* Harris shows that we must grope for new, deeper images. Her metaphor is teaching as religious imagination. The heart of teaching, she says, is imagination that "characteristically looks at

reality from the reversed, unnoticed side," involving all of our faculties and resources and not just reason alone. Such imagination must be based on religious perspective.

Christian educators would agree with Harris that teaching always is a religious activity if we look at religion in the broad sense of being concerned with ultimate meanings of our being and our world. (In my recent book *Walking with God in the Classroom*, I develop the metaphor of teaching as a religious craft.*) Nor would we find fault with Harris' emphasis on imagination. Christian Schools International in the late 1970s already saw the shortcomings of the teaching as a science metaphor by taking the then unusual step of including the creative dimension as one of the three in its taxonomy of educational objectives.

The value of Harris' book, however, is that she goes beyond the current writings and practices of Christian school educators. She shows how her five-step model for teaching uses the incarnation of subject matter to lead to its revelation.

While each teacher's approach will be idiosyncratic ("We teach best when we are most truly ourselves"), Harris describes and illustrates five criteria or paths that help teachers work out of their own imaginations:

**Walking with God in the Classroom will be reviewed in an upcoming issue.*

taking care, taking steps, taking form, taking time, and taking risks. Most of us take care of our students, but do we also, as Harris urges us to, take care of ourselves and of our subject matter? Do we take enough time to *be* with our students, not just to keep moving and covering ground? Do we ever take the risks of losing the world in order to gain our soul—risks that lead to human re-creation and transformation?

Harris sees that culture needs transformation and that education must contribute to such transformation. Regrettably, she does not place Christ's transforming grace central as the gospel demands. Nor is her metaphor of teaching as religious imagination as comprehensive, I believe, as my "religious craft" metaphor. Yet Harris' thinking adds new depth to John Van Dyk's model of teaching as guiding, unfolding, and enabling. Her biblical vocabulary, used in new ways, allows us to explore the contours of teaching along paths generally untrodden by North American scientific naturalism or, for that matter, by child-centered pragmatism. Thus, reading Harris' book can enrich our teaching. ■

NEW RELEASE

Bakker, Gerald and Len Clark.

***Explanation:
An Introduction to the
Philosophy of Science.***

Chapters on various models, science and reality, theories of explanation, and religious and philosophical issues. The authors build bridges between general philosophical issues and more technical literature in the philosophy of science.

Mountain View, California:
Mayfield Publishing Co., 1240 Villa
St., 94041. 1988. 213 pp., \$14.95.

READER RESPONSE

Dear Editor,

I wish I could adequately describe for you the jubilation I felt and several of my colleagues also experienced upon hearing of your magazine. For years I have longed to know of a magazine for Christian school teachers; to receive yours was the making of my day. Thank you for being there. I only wish I had known of you earlier.

Nancy Wade Zappulla
Chesapeake, VA

Dear Editor,

I want to congratulate you on an excellent [February/March] *CEJ* issue. The articles were right up my line of interest. I particularly enjoyed the wide range of articles that were included.

One of the articles, "Swinging Off the Popcorn Beat," was just a bit disappointing. First of all, the author used the term "Christian teacher" several times, when being a Christian teacher had nothing to do with the technique or the teaching strategy. It would have served any teacher just as well. There was nothing particularly "Christian" about the approach. Doing that makes light of Christian education and Christian teaching. In addition, the author put down public schools by pointing out that it's particularly public school children who transfer into our system who need additional help. I'm not so sure that's true: however, even if it is, it was not necessary and somewhat out of place in *Christian Educators Journal*, which always upholds the highest ideals for Christian educators and respect for those who are not within our circle.

I mention that as constructive criticism, because I do very much appreciate *CEJ* and the work you put into it. It is inspiring, informative, and serves us well.

Sheri D. Haan
Executive Director of CSI
Grand Rapids, MI

CEJ

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALVIN CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP

Calvin College announces that the Governing Board of the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship is now reviewing applications for Visiting Fellowships for the academic year 1990-91.

The Center was established in 1976 to promote rigorous, creative, and articulately Christian scholarship addressed to the solution of important theoretical and practical issues. Each year a team of scholars is appointed to study a single topic. The study topic selected for the year 1990-91 is "Theory and Practice of Christian Schooling in the Reformed Tradition."

ADMINISTRATOR NEEDED

Sioux Center Christian School will need a full-time administrator for 1990-91. Teaching and administrative experience and a master's in administration are required. The deadline for applications is October 10, 1989. Send inquiries and/or resumes to Search Committee, Sioux Center Christian School, 630 1st Ave, SE, Sioux Center, IA 51250

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN WRITERS CONFERENCE

The Calvin College department of English announces a conference on "Contemporary Christian Writers in Community," April 19-21, 1990, on its campus.

The focus will be on creative writings of authors who, however nonsectarian their intentions and audiences, are identified as participating in or originating from a religious community.

Pre-registration: \$35; on-site registration: \$40; single session: \$7.50. Contact Henry Baron, c/o The Department of English, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI 49506

LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH TEACHERS

Language Arts/English teachers are encouraged to submit ideas regarding a framework document for teaching of elementary/junior high language arts to be developed by Christian Schools International. Please send your input to:

Robert Bruinsma
Associate Professor of Education
The King's College
10766 - 97 Street
Edmonton, AB
Canada T5H 2M1

CHICAGO CONFERENCE

The "Chicago Conference," a grassroots forum on Christian schooling, will again convene in June 1990 for the purpose of discussing and applying the *12 Affirmations* published by the Conference.

Place: Trinity Christian College,
Palos Heights, Illinois
Date: June 27, 28, 29
For more information, write to:

GLPSA
P.O. Box A-3220
Chicago, IL 60690-3220

THIRTY-FIVE-YEAR VETERAN

Vernon Boerman—Bible, English
Illiana Christian High School,
Lansing, Illinois—1960-present
Western Michigan Christian
High School,
Muskegon, Michigan—1954-1959

We welcome names and information about other teachers who have taught in Christian schools for at least thirty-five years. All names submitted prior to January 15 will be listed in the April issue of *CEJ*.