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Administrators: Partners in the Education Process

—by LORNA VAN GILST

Walk a Mile . . .

Our grade school principal had two suits: one blue and one brown. Rumor had it that blue meant peace in his classroom that day, and brown meant the "beware" sign was out. We developed the habit of predicting the tone of the day in the brief time it took for our principal to step from his house to the school door.

From the opening paragraph you can probably find three reasons to justify that principal's brown days: he lived in a fishbowl on the school property; he was the victim of rumor; and he had to teach in addition to running the office.

I grew up thinking that principals were men—always they were men—who taught math and science during the day, punished offenders at noon hour, and went to meetings at night. Until I became a teacher, I didn't really understand to what extent cost efficiency and principles of management could distract administrators from matters of scholarship and learning. Nor could I understand why anybody would want the job.

The role of administrator is a more recent development than the role of teacher. Supposedly, it holds more prestige, and, supposedly, it puts a little more money into one's pockets. The role developed in the nineteenth century when common school reformers implemented standards that required supervision of instruction. Already early in the century one teacher would be designated as head teacher, whose responsibility it was to observe assistant teachers and report to the board.

This principal teacher, usually the teacher of the highest classes in the school, gradually assumed more power and management over the teachers, thus patterning the school more like a factory than like the agrarian community of the one-room schoolhouse.

Large school organizations would probably falter without administrators who understand scientific management. School communities, including Christian school communities, tend to look for administrators who can manage both the school personnel and the school budget efficiently. That's good management.

But teachers sometimes experience a sense of loss when one of their colleagues leaves the classroom to "move up" to administration, especially when that colleague gets so caught up in budget balancing that the dollar seems to dictate educational policy. That new administrator probably experiences loss too, for with the job comes an enormous load of confidential baggage and responsibility that tends to distance him or her from former equals in the hierarchical structure of school staffing. Furthermore, in small schools, as many of you know, the principal is expected to teach as well as supervise. We ask principals to wear many hats—or suits.

And so I quite easily could wrap this up by saying, "Principals, stick to one thing and give it your full energy. If you want to supervise, then get out of the classroom. You must find a way."

But I won't.

Rather, I hope you get back into the classroom and do some teaching. Arrange to teach maybe one course a year. Principals who never teach quickly forget the reality of being "on" from 8:15 till 3:30 with no time to reflect or recollect. So quickly they forget how maturely mere kids can talk in seventh grade. So quickly they forget the full story on the child who really can't explain why he tears up a classmate's art project. And the anger that causes a longsuffering teacher to erupt when Roger trips over the computer cord and blitzes the stories of six classmates. And the exhaustion that sets in before the end of the term. They see and they hear, but they don't feel those instances. And sometimes, then, their advice rings hollow in a teacher's ears.

Not that Christian school principals need more to do. That's not the point. What they need is a shared presence among those whose work they coordinate. What they become, sometimes, are mediators between teachers and parents or between teachers and school boards, as if there are opposing sides.

Teachers, you can help reduce the distance between teachers and administrators, particularly principals. Make a point to take an interest in their needs until you can get past the polite surface conversation and really commune as sisters and brothers working together for the Lord. Involve your principal in a class project that, in a positive, informative way, draws him or her in among your students. Consider an exchange with your principal, so she or he can teach and you can experience some of the work of the administrative role.

When teacher and principal get a first-hand taste of each other's roles, they become more supportive, less judgmental, of one another.

It's called "walking in each other's shoes." **LVG**

Reflection

Ineffective teachers cause chaos
Effective teachers initiate order
Wise teachers create harmony

Arrogant teachers sow dissension
Humble teachers seek unity
Wise teachers are united

Insensitive teachers are followers of their impulses
Sensitive teachers are followers of reason
Wise teachers are followers of their hearts

Arrogant teachers force
Effective teachers lead
Wise teachers allow

Foolish teachers see the world as a playground
Excellent teachers experience the world as a place of learning
Wise teachers view the world as a mirror

Mediocre teachers are empty
Humble teachers are full
Wise teachers are complete

Ineffective teachers read very little
Excellent teachers read book after book
Wise teachers read the Book of Life

Arrogant teachers go through life armed
Effective teachers arm themselves with words
Wise teachers disarm with love

Foolish teachers dream
Sensitive teachers awaken
Wise teachers are awake

Arrogant teachers disregard life's lessons
Effective teachers study life's lessons
Wise teachers are life's lessons

Insensitive teachers look with their noses
Excellent teachers look with their minds
Wise teachers look with their hearts

Arrogant teachers reflect on how wonderful they are
Humble teachers reflect on how they can improve
Wise teachers realize they are to be a reflection of Jesus, the Master Teacher!

by Gerty Heinen

—by BRUCE HEKMAN

Letter to a New Administrator

You are the key person in your organization as the leader of the school. In order for your staff members and your students to grow spiritually, you must be growing spiritually yourself.

Dear Dennis,

Your letter was a vivid reminder of my own state of mind more than ten years ago when I first ventured into school administration, somewhat reluctantly. Your questions have reinforced my conviction that a one- or two-week leadership training workshop is needed for people like you, who find themselves facing the challenges and opportunities of a leadership position. My journey into the wilderness of school administration may not be the same kind of journey you will take. But your letter has prodded me to reflect on the principles I have learned through my own mistakes.

The first requirement for leadership is spiritual. God has been preparing you spiritually during the course of your life, through your prior training and experiences. You can prepare yourself for this new challenge by recognizing your need to remain close to God as an ordinary person called by God to become a shepherd of his sheep. You will need daily grace to face the challenges and seize the opportunities. I have never been tested more severely than during my service as a school administrator. During that time, I have found several things helpful to my spiritual life, which I will try to explain in this letter.

Maybe it's the Peter Principle, but I have frequently wondered why God has called me into school administration. Although I have seen and personally experienced the riches of God's blessing and grace in the schools I have served and in my own life, I have also experienced discouragement, despair, feelings of being completely inadequate in the face of daunting problems. It has been a great comfort to me to realize that God delights in using my weakness to display his power. I have had to make this discovery again and again because I'm such a slow learner.

In the process I slowly have come to understand the biblical model of leadership to be one of servant leadership, requiring an attitude of biblical humility. In addition to Bible study, personal devotions, and an intense personal prayer life, I have found several other resources helpful in my spiritual pilgrimage.

Two books have been especially helpful to me: Lewis Smedes's *How Can It Be All Right When Everything Is All Wrong,* and Deitrich Bonhoffer's *Life Together.* I have taken the liberty of enclosing them with this letter as a gift to you. If you find them useful, please share them with others. I have used them often in my efforts to nurture others and especially in the process of nurturing a caring community within the schools I have served.

There are other books, too, but one of the ironies of life as a school administrator is that there isn't much time or energy left in most days to do much serious reading. Therefore, I've come to appreciate small books with wisdom, as opposed to big books with information.

Another suggestion from my experience is that you seek a spiritual mentor who will disciple you, listen to you, and promise to pray for you regularly. I've had several such people over the years. Most recently, a friend offered to be my prayer partner. Whenever I had a special need, I would jot him a note, and he would faithfully and confidentially pray for that special need. During times of crisis I have felt the hands of God through such people, enabling me to work my way through complicated problems in the school calmly, patiently, and humbly. The mentor must be spiritually wise and mature, and able to keep a confidence. The people God has sent me usually have come from outside the school, but from within the community. I pray that God will send you such a mentor.

As an outgrowth of my own search for spiritual growth, I have found that a short retreat with my administrative staff, during which we spend time

together looking at biblical models of leadership (Moses, David, Jesus), has gone a long way to building a team vision of what we are about. I also lead the faculty retreat (which can be held right on campus) in which we spend time preparing ourselves spiritually for another school year. We spend time praying for each other, for our students, for their parents. We continue this process by having a ten-minute time of prayer and praise (singing, brief Scripture reading, no sermon) with the staff at the beginning of each day. Staff members take turns leading. This idea comes directly from Bonhoffer's book.

You are the key person in your organization as the leader of the school. In order for your staff members and your students to grow spiritually, you must be growing spiritually yourself. It's hard work, requiring real effort and diligence. I have been helped by taking the Bethel Bible Course, by asking two or three others to join me in reading books and discussing them (Richard Foster's books, Charles Colson's, Philip Yancey's), and by agreeing to lead Bible study classes that forced me to do hard, careful Bible study.

I wish you God's richest blessings in your new role. There is a very real need for Christian leadership in all areas of life, and I believe that your calling and mine is a high one. If you will let God work through you instead of trying to do it on your own, he can do great things in your school and your community.

One final suggestion: Christian Schools International holds an annual conference in late July. If you can manage to attend, I would recommend it. You will find other colleagues there who can become part of your professional network—people you can call for advice when you need it.

I will try to set down other thoughts in response to your questions in another letter. I have a special interest in the area of nurturing a healthy school climate and can share some ideas with you on this topic as well as some others.

Congratulations on your new position!

Your brother in Christ,
Bruce Hekman

Bruce Hekman is headmaster and high school principal of the Christian Academy in Japan at Tokyo.

STEEL

Act i. The Newer Student: Stage Left

Do you know how impassive your face is?
Do you know how unwelcomed I feel?
If you're going to help me in this classroom,
You'll have to show feelings, not steel.

Act ii. The Newer Teacher: Stage Right

Do you know how rejecting your face is?
Do you know how uncertain I feel?
If we're going to succeed in this classroom,
You'll have to be clay and not steel.

Act iii. The Older Principal: Sotto Voce

Lord, You know what's behind all those faces,
You know tangled depths they all feel;
Bring blendings, compassion, new trustings;
Let them all become fine-polished steel!

by Elva McAllaster

—by BRUCE HEKMAN

A Cord of Three Strands

"Two are better than one," the book of Ecclesiastes tells us, "because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up" (Eccl. 4:9-10a).

Effective principals recognize the value of this proverb. A one-man show in administration might play for a while but almost always leads to trouble eventually. Developing an effective team is one of the critical needs and demands of the leadership role of the school administrator. But how can a school administrator effectively nurture a team spirit, by which all members of the team work together in a common cause, and each member makes a unique and valuable contribution?

The first requirement is to establish a climate of openness and trust in which all members of the staff recognize that you value and welcome their insights but reserve the right and responsibility for making the decision. Administrators often erect intentional and unintentional barriers that signal the opposite of what their lips may be saying. If your office is hard to find, the door is always closed, no one can cross the threshold without an appointment or permission from your secretary, if you place your enormous desk top between you and your visitor, and if you take your coffee breaks in the office instead of the staff room, you may be communicating more forcefully than words that you are too busy or too important to listen.

In an open, trusting, honest climate a team-building exercise can be a very helpful exercise. For the last ten years, in three different school settings, I have used a simple tool and worksheet exercise with various members of my staff to help us understand each other better and work together in a spirit of teamwork.

The tool is called the "Personal Profile System: a Plan to Understand Self and Others," published by Performax Systems International. The personal profile system is a short diagnostic analysis of a person's work behavioral patterns—those distinct ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that characterize the way each of us functions in a work environment. The tool takes about thirty to forty-five minutes to complete and is self-scoring and self-diagnostic. Without exception, those who have used this instrument are amazed at how accurately it describes the way they function. It focuses the attention of the user on work-related values and behavior and provides laymen's language for understanding and discussing that person's strengths and weaknesses. Finally, the instrument also provides practical advice for capitalizing on strengths and working with weaknesses.

In the second part, a team-building or nurturing exercise, the people who have completed the personal profile sit down together to talk and work their way through two simple worksheets (see copy on next page). The entire exercise can be completed in a couple of hours. It's an excellent retreat activity at the beginning of the year.

The test and worksheets are also very useful when a new member joins the staff. In addition to their use with administrators, they have been invaluable for building a positive relationship between administrators and their secretaries and other staff members.

The "Personal Profile System" can be purchased for $8.00 each from PractiCom Inc., 432 Lakeside Dr. N.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49503. PractiCom was established by Dr. Del Nykamp in 1985 to provide practical diagnostic and training assistance to business, industry, churches, and Christian schools. PractiCom publishes a free newsletter for schools, called *Team-Builder,* and can provide lectures, workshops, and consulting services to Christian schools.

In teamwork there is not only great strength, but also a model of Christian leadership for the school and the community. In a cooperative working environment, students, teachers, staff, and parents can thrive. As Ecclesiastes 4:12 reminds us, "A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." **CEJ**

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* Forms on pages 9 and 11 are adapted by Bruce Hekman. He uses full page forms, but he encourages you to adapt his ideas to serve your needs.

—by BRUCE HEKMAN

You Can't Fix It Unless You Know It's Broken

One of the "rules" of management, at least in theory, is the 80/20 rule. This rule says that administrators will spend 80 percent of their time on 20 percent of their tasks.

Our experience tells us this rule isn't far wrong. We know that one problem with an angry teacher or parent or the cheerleading squad can consume a disproportionate amount of our time and problem-solving energy. We also keep a mental checklist of things that need our attention in and around the school, a list that sometimes grows faster than our ability to check things off the list.

But how can we evaluate whether we are directing 80 percent of our time and energy toward the 20 percent of the most important problems facing the school? How do we know whether our list of problems to be solved and their order of priority is in tune with our colleagues' lists? How can we identify people who can work together with us in defining and solving these problems?

I have used a simple tool to answer all of the questions above. The Problem Evaluation Process (PEP) is an exercise I learned at a workshop by Dr. Harry Wong and Dr. Rosemary Tripi several years ago.

The PEP takes an hour or more, depending on how large the group is and how many issues surface. But it is a very good use of time not only for identifying and ranking the importance of a wide variety of school needs, but also for identifying people who are willing to work together to meet these needs.

You will need to gather your faculty, staff, student council, board, or whatever group whose insights and help you are seeking. You will need an overhead projector, a transparency of the chart included in this article, and a transparency pen.

I introduce the exercise by explaining that the participants will be taking part in an exercise to identify needs and problems the school community must address if the school is to continue its progress toward accomplishing its goals and mission. The procedure is a simple one. The names of the participants are recorded across the top of the chart in any convenient order.

Participants are then invited to brainstorm, briefly describing needs or problems in the school that should be addressed or solved. Discussion is limited to defining the need or problem so that everyone understands what is being said, whether they agree or not. The need or problem is then recorded on the chart in a word or two, such as, "dress code," "new students," "respect for authority," "slow learners."

The listing of problems continues until the group can generate no more. You may discover that more than one copy of the chart will be needed to record them all. The recorder/leader of the exercise must resist the temptation to editorialize, comment, or defend current efforts to address issues that come up.

The second step is an effort to assign priorities to the list of problems and needs that have been generated. The leader/recorder reads the names of the participants and the problem and asks each participant to personally evaluate the seriousness and importance of finding a solution to that problem. The answers are recorded with a number between one and five, with one representing top priority and five representing the lowest priority. The numbers are written on the line labeled "OI" (for order of importance). The problems are evaluated on their own, and not compared with the others, so there is no attempt to ask the participants to rank-order all the problems. If a participant wants to, he can rank all the problems as immediate

and important, and give them all a one rating.

The leader moves quickly and methodically through the list, with no discussion, recording the answers of each participant for each problem.

The third step is to assess the personal commitment of the participants to solving the problems that have been listed. If anyone has a burden, need, interest, or skill for working with others to solve any listed problem, the degree of that commitment is recorded on the chart on the line called "PC" (personal commitment), using a number from one to five, with one representing a very high interest and commitment to finding a solution and five representing a low level of interest, ability, or commitment.

Again, the leader moves quickly through the names, recording the answers of each participant for each problem.

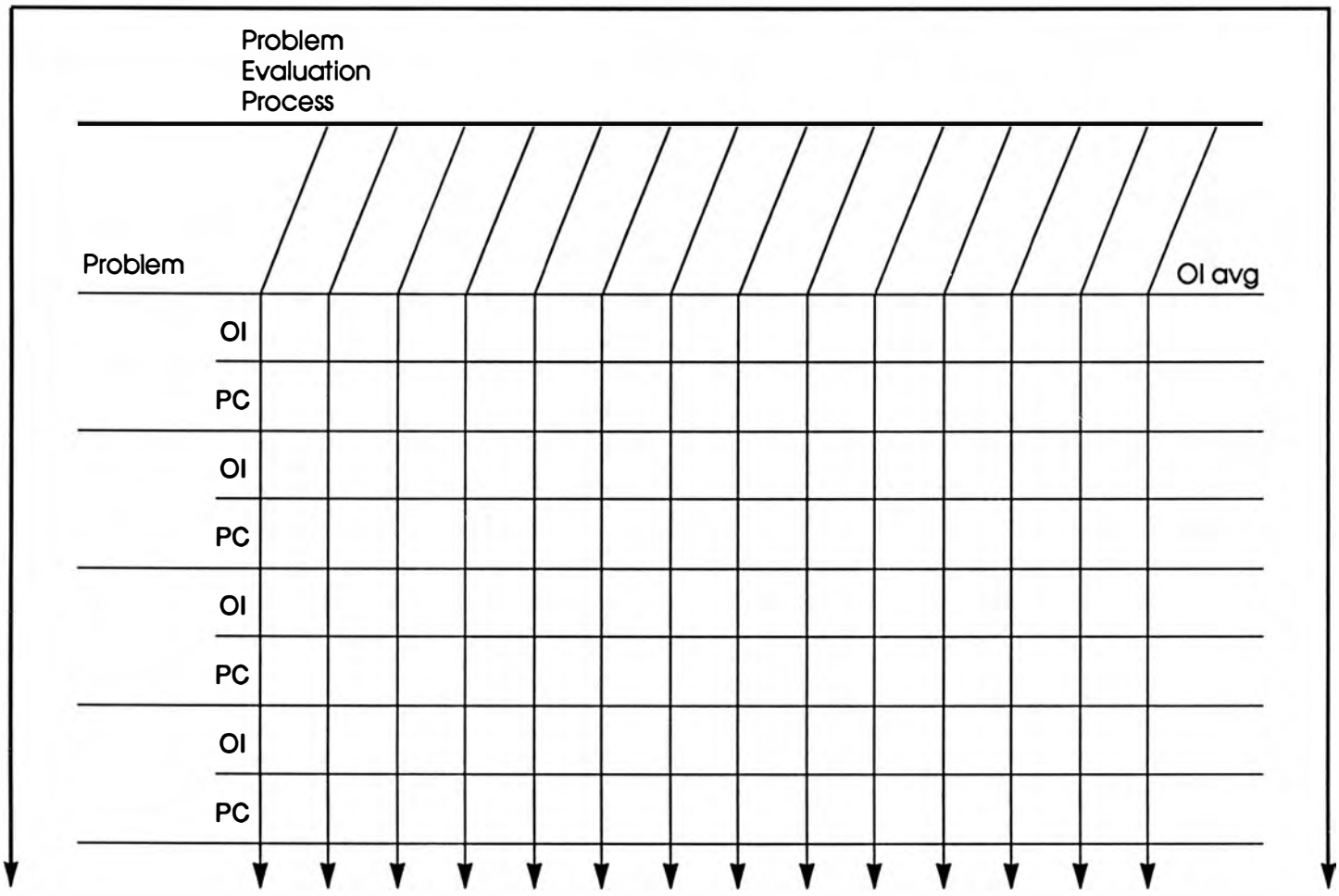
The final step can take place after the meeting. The order of importance for each problem is averaged and recorded in the column listed "OI avg." A summary of the results can be easily typed and distributed, listing the problems in order of their averages from top priority to lowest priority.

Follow-up includes a study of the participants' personal commitment ratings and the formation of task teams, which include people who have indicated a strong commitment to finding a solution to the problem. These task teams can be given a deadline for a report on their progress to the group that generated the list, and for a report to the administrator with their recommendations for solving the problem.

This exercise has produced excellent results where it has been used wisely. It is an inclusive approach to cleaning up the messes in any organization. It indicates respect for all participants by listening to their perceptions and including them in finding the solutions. The task force approach works well, because it doesn't promote more endless committees and committee meetings. Each task force has a specific mandate and a timetable for completing work. When members are finished, they can be thanked and used for other needs. Working together in this manner develops teamwork, mutual respect, and higher morale among the participants.

It is a useful tool for the administrator because it helps identify the 20 percent of the problems that need our priority attention, and it reveals the voluntary interests of the participants who could make excellent committee members for solving the problems.

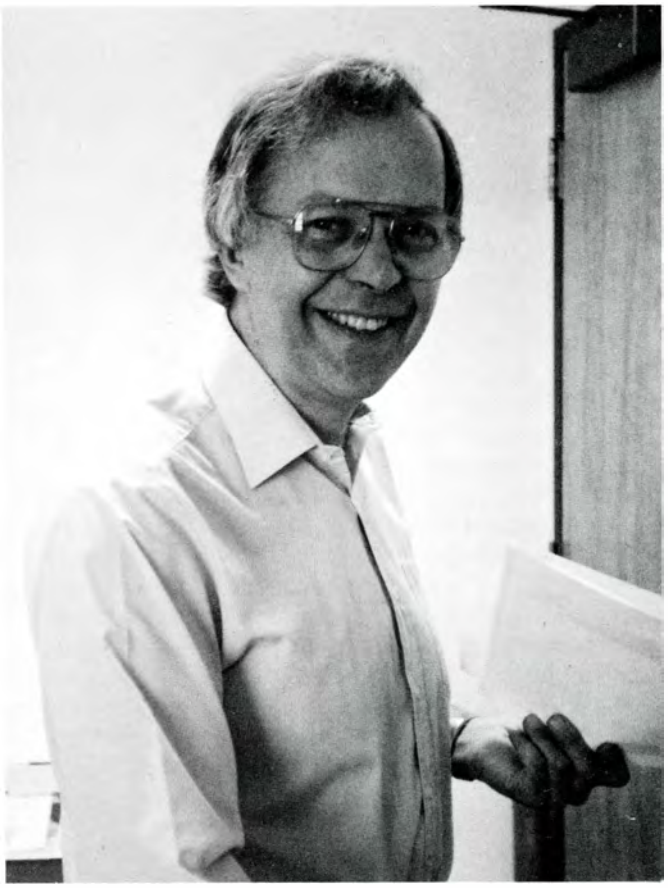
CEJ



PROFILE

—by LOUISA F. BRUINSMA

A Look over the Shoulder: Profile of a Principal



It was 1957. He was sixteen and was invited to John De Jong's birthday party. They were having such a good time, John asked his mom if his friend could stay for the night. "Sure, if he comes to church with us," said Mrs. De Jong.

"The Spirit brought me to those people," says Stuart Williams, principal of Edmonton Christian High School. "The next day I did go to church with them. At noon, because their farms were miles away, the church members shared lunch together in the church's low-ceilinged basement. While they cleaned up afterward, I heard these immigrants' songs. I didn't understand the Dutch; I just felt the meaning of what I knew must be Christian words. These people had something I wanted. (Never underestimate the power of music.)

"My foster mom and those God-sent immigrants of the Christian Reformed Church made the difference in my Christian life," says Williams. Although his own mother attended the United Church, she allowed him to attend the Christian Reformed Church. "If you live the way they believe," she said, "then you should go."

There were many tragedies and disappointments along the way: his father died while he was fourteen, a foster brother was killed in a train crash, another died of cancer at fourteen, and his brother-in-law died while visiting Stuart and Marian on a weekend.

These experiences and what he calls "God's graceful wound binding" have helped shape the ECHS principal into one who strongly identifies with the "bruised reed and the flickering candle" that Isaiah refers to.

It has helped him pick up the struggling student. "I feel we as staff have to hold on to the hurting kids. It would be easier if we didn't accept difficult students. But this should be a safe place for them to be. It should be safe to be here, to say things, to disagree, to not understand, to say 'Praise God,' and to pray," says Williams.

This safe place is not an isolated place. "It would be easier if we didn't read certain novels, or if we banned dances," says Williams. "But you can't be a salting salt if you stay in the shaker."

Stuart's career took many turns and twists. He repeated grade three. With his characteristic deep laugh he tells of the year that caused him to repeat grade thirteen: "We had a ball."

He adds, "I had wanted to be a vet. Initially I was accepted at Guelph; then they rescinded it. The rejection turned into a faith crisis."

He escaped to Dordt College [in Sioux Center, Iowa]. Two and a half years later his foster brother died, and "I didn't want anything to do with God again." He left Dordt and went back to work on the farm.

While substitute teaching at the local public school, he acquired a taste for teaching. "It forced me out of my dramatic way of grieving. I just loved it. But I had no money," says Williams.

That summer the family was sitting around the big farmhouse kitchen table when the check came in for the cattle. "Bud Cain, my foster dad, leaned down the length of the table, handed it to me and said, 'You're going to college.'

"Jesus said, 'When you plow, don't look back.' But sometimes it's good to look over your shoulder to see where you've been. That helps you to see better where you are," he says.

"When I look over my shoulder, I see that the Lord has

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* Reprinted with permission from the Edmonton Society for Christian Education's *Society Bulletin*.

brought me here, picked me up, patted me on the shoulder, and sometimes kicked me in the duff.

"At Dordt I heard about Evan Runner and Stan Wiersma (then professors of philosophy and English at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan), and that led me to Calvin. I squeezed in every credit and audit course I could take from those men. I overdosed on perspective and Wiersma's wit and charm.

"We students were poor, had part-time jobs, procrastinated, and loved life. We were a real community—probing, and probably offensive, young Christians.

"I did not want to teach in Christian schools," he says, "mostly because I had seen some pretty abusive situations—critically underpaid and overworked female teachers." So, when he graduated, he taught for four years at Dag Hammarskjold High School in Thunder Bay, Ontario. "That's where I wanted to be. It was a new showcase school that had started a few years earlier with a hand-picked staff. (Everything was typed and run off.)"

He eventually went to study for his master's degree at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (University of Toronto) and went to England because of an interest in the British Primary School Movement of the early 1970s.

"Ann Tuininga of Edmonton brought me a letter from Harro Van Brummelen (principal of ECHS) asking me to teach in ECHS," says Williams. "I thought it was stupid to even consider going. But a month later I heard myself say on the phone, 'Harro, we'll come.'

"The first year was terrible. At Dag Hammarskjold I had been privileged and spoiled. We had to put together the first Man in Society course at ECHS, and I had no background for that.

"Worse, I felt I needed to prove that Christian philosophical models and Christian perspective were relevant to me. I felt that, if only I could show people that I had the right perspective, the community would believe I was a Christian. I was terribly anxious and very easily hurt. I also was terribly difficult to live with. Marian was more than loyal. She was a God-send, a very grace-full gift to me. She and our kids are my survival factor."

He has been at ECHS for nineteen years. During those years he has taught all of the English courses, been vice-principal in charge of student services, and had a leave of absence to complete a second master's degree. He took on the principalship in 1985 while continuing to teach the Career and Life Management (CALM) course as well as the Work Experience component of the curriculum.

Williams has seen a lot of changes:

"At one time we had so much perspective, we had not much life. We spent a lot of time looking at life as if it were a couple of inches off the ground.

"There were things we had once that I wish we still had. Most of those are tied to our being free to build courses from a core of Christian perspective, then out to the content and methods, which allow that perspective to flourish.

"We were more free to pursue our own locally designed courses. Now we are more inhibited by externals than we were in the '70s and early '80s.

"The Christian school community has become more conscious of being recognized by the broader public. There is a real tension in wanting to live with Christian integrity and at the same time be viewed by the Department of Education as operating credible schools. We are working at keeping the truth alive in the statement, 'You should go to a Christian high school to get an education, a Christian education; you can go to another high school to get a diploma.'

"We have to recognize the cultural pressures on students. Sure, they have part-time jobs, and a lot of their energies go into the making and spending of money. But there are a lot of us adults who also see money as essential to gaining acceptance in our peer groups as well as the route to independence."

If he were given *carte blanche* to do whatever he wanted in Edmonton Christian High, what would he do?

"Dump the Department's Diploma Examinations and re-do curriculum. The current Alberta curriculum is disunified and focuses on learning as process and skills. Such an approach militates against creative thought and too easily dismisses emotional expression and involvement.

"It would be great to spend a year pursuing the issue of the Old Man River Dam or the place of minorities in society. Through issues like these a student can learn how to access information on the full story, and the school subjects have everyday, real contexts.

"Have we gotten better over the years, or have we just kept the machine oiled? I am proud of what we have accomplished here over the years. Come to our Spring Festival, or a basketball game, or one of our dances.

"I am thankful for the parents, students, and people with whom I have worked, played, and prayed as teacher or principal. It's not a case of 'better' or of 'well-oiled.' We've been blessed."

It is dinner time and the Edmonton Christian High School principal is still working at his computer in the school. He does not keep regular hours. He loves his work.

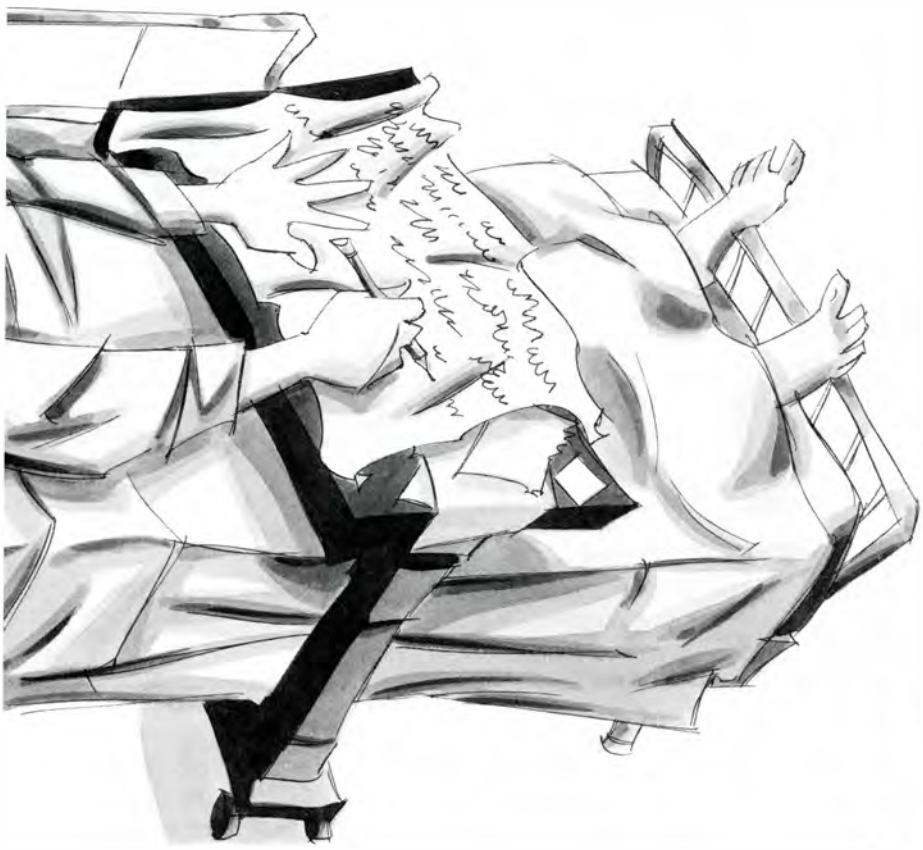
In early March the students celebrated his fiftieth birthday by presenting him with a number of gag gifts, among them a pair of fluorescent orange socks, a tribute to his color blindness. And fifty bumps, gently administered.

He suffers with his students in their crises and rejoices in their youthful enjoyment of life. "Looking back—that's how you see that striving for the mark has not been in vain," says Stuart Williams. **CEJ**

Louisa F. Bruinsma is editor of the Society Bulletin *and Director of Development for Edmonton Christian Schools in Edmonton, Alberta.*

—BY H. K. ZOEKLICHT

"Promises to Keep"



Update on the Condition of H. K. Zoeklicht

Late word is that the condition of H. K. Zoeklicht is worsening rapidly. A family spokesman indicated that physicians offer little hope for his recovery. He is expected to expire on or before April 1. Regrettably, therefore, this month's "Asylum," the manuscript of which was found scribbled on hospital towels, and not well organized, will be the last. The editors have done their best to reconstruct the column according to what they surmise Zoeklicht's intentions were.

A Friday noon break. A few soft snowflakes drifting lazily from a clear blue February sky.

Faculty in the Asylum languid; tired; eager for weekend . . . for spring time.

John Vroom ready to wash down a bite of sugar doughnut with a swig from his thermos—a Minnie Christmas present—containing Minnie's perfect mix of Sanka, milk, and sugar.

Rabbit paging through *Sports Illustrated,* thinking about writing a letter to the editor.

Snip and Katje quibbling over answers to a crossword puzzle in *Literary Cavalcade.*

Ginny, Steve, and Lucy in the corner by the new computer terminals, talking.

Then Lucy says it: "I won't be teaching here next year." The sentence hangs in the air like a wisp of smoke from Bob DenDenker's pipe . . . years ago. Her colleagues stare at her, at her large brown eyes with more pain than joy.

Ginny Traansma gasps: "Lucy, what are you saying . . . why?!"

All come to attention. Poor John Vroom—just in the act of swallowing the sweet liquid when Ginny's exclamation startles him, diverts the flow down the wrong pipe. Poor Jenny and Susan—they try, but not in time, to get outside spraying distance from John. Poor Rabbit—when it's clear that a doughnut morsel must've sneaked down along with the coffee, the wiry coach has to apply the Heimlich Maneuver

—a bit like Groucho Marx trying to embrace Orson Welles.

Poor Lucy—she had not meant to make a fuss at all. But she did. Lucy *leaving*. After all those years. After all that happened. Back in '73 when she joined—a beam of brightness, a current of excitement. Later, wife of Bob DenDenker—that voice of sanity silenced abruptly in '87 through a horrible accident. Her own idealism even stronger since . . . always trying to make Christian education better at Omni. One of the most respected and loved. Asylum family could never be the same without her.

Blue in John's face returns to red. Insistent questions are aimed at Lucy: "Why? Why?"

"Because I am tired . . . getting burned out here . . . hurts me, hurts Scott and Monica, hurts my students, hurts the school."

Steve: "Slow down, Lucy—you're trying too hard."

Lucy: "No, that's not it. I like to try hard. Couldn't stand to slow down. But trying hard isn't getting me anywhere here. Can't do it alone. At least feel encouragement, support."

Ginny: "Is it the hurt because the school board turned down the proposal for an honors program?"

"That's just a part of it, Gin. It's . . . the atmosphere itself, I think. Nobody here—in the community or school or classroom—expects us to disturb the universe . . . nobody *wants* us to do something different . . . as if Christian education has been perfected. There's nothing left to shoot for . . . as if changing times have no impact on schools and preparation of young. Only concern is to collect money to make it happen. Nobody asks, 'Make *what* happen and *why?*' That's what burns me out. I need a community of educators and supporters who still have a dream, a quest for excellence for the spiritual, social, aesthetic, and intellectual education of God's images."

That's what she says. It's quiet for a long while.

Then she adds, "Bob used to say, 'If teaching doesn't make you happy anymore, and there's nothing you can do to make the kinds of changes needed to make you happy, then get out. An unhappy teacher cannot be a good teacher.'"

Vroom, sufficiently recovered to be eating again: "God has called me not to be happy but to be faithful."

He earns the scornful stares of even Katje, the "Sourpuss."

More voices then: Please don't leave us. We need you. We are behind you. We want change, too, when it's needed.

And another question: "What will you do?"

"My heart is in Christian education. I want to be able to share my own spiritual odyssey with my students. Be able to ask them questions like 'Does Christ confront us in the *Lord of the Flies* or in the poetry of Emily Dickinson?' But there's going to be an opening at Carver High next year. An integrated multi-racial school . . . commitment to a first-rate education for all their students . . . visionary principal and hand-picked staff . . . maybe the Lord wants to use me there."

Rick Cole: "I've been thinking, Lucy, we need a committee . . .variety of representatives . . . groups related to educational enterprise . . . mandate to find out strength and weakness, review and revise goals and methods, appropriateness of present programs, look at programs in other places, propose changes that will help us live up to potential. . . . I'm going to talk to Carpenter about that today. Can't imagine such a committee without you.

Bill Silver: "I'll confess that I've been skeptical of your new ideas at times, Lucy, but I do think you're needed here. I too would feel terrible if you left, and I sure hope you'll reconsider."

And Steve: "You've influenced this school in more ways than you realize, Lucy. You've influenced students in ways that would make parents grateful. I know you've influenced me. I'm getting to be a better teacher because of you. But it's just beginning. I know it's taken too long. But we need you. We need you a lot."

All of a sudden it's too much for Lucy. Gets up, picks up her stack of papers, exits the asylum.

The door closes. The asylum is as it ever was . . . a place where teachers gather for some respite, for some madness . . . occasionally for some confrontations with fundamental questions of place and purpose, of calling and commitment . . . of promises to keep.

—by J. J. PIKKERT

Teaching Students to THINK

Most math teachers have probably seen students do well on separate, individual types of word problems, but when test time came, and all the different types of word problems were mixed up, the students suddenly suffered from a bad case of amnesia. Students had learned to follow blindly the example for each section but had not learned the thinking skills necessary to discern when to use which formula for which word problem.

In 1983 the National Science Board defined its strategy of preparing students for the twenty-first century:

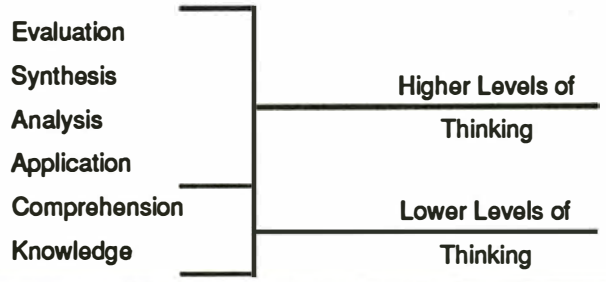
> We must return to the basics, but the basics of the twenty-first century are not only reading, writing, and arithmetic. They include communication, higher problem-solving skills, and scientific and technological literacy—the thinking tools that allow us to understand the technological world around us. . . . Development of students' capacities for problem-solving and critical thinking in all areas of learning is presented as a fundamental goal.

Government and businesses are demanding initiatives that support a greater stress on thinking in our educational systems (Beyer, 1984). Not only has this inability for students to think effectively disturbed the educational and business leaders, but it also concerns Christian educators.

The necessity for Christians to integrate the lordship of Christ into every area of their lives demands that they be equipped with the skills necessary to critically reflect on the world around them and the ability to apply the mandates of Scripture to their life situations. Can our students adequately defend their faith when challenged by false cults? Can they critically reflect on political and social issues and define their merit from a Christian vantage point? When asked to define their position on issues regarding ethical and moral concerns, have our students been adequately prepared to integrate, reflect, and make judgements that allow them to "make a reasonable defense of their faith"? The active application of the lordship of Christ in all areas of life demands that we as educators teach our students how to think.

Critical thinking skills are those skills that become part of a student's tool chest, regardless of the subject matter. They allow students to feel confident when faced with problematic situations because they are familiar with a strategy to analyze, reflect, and move in a sequential pattern to solving the problem at hand. Allan Bloom first made a hierarchy of levels of thinking to encourage a pedagogy that gradually increases the degree of thinking skills by the students. His model is usually represented as follows:

Bloom's Taxonomy of Thinking Levels



Lower-level-thinking questions require students to list, describe, or name items from the text and usually do not require a great deal of cognitive effort on the part of the students. However, when students are asked to compare, synthesize, judge, and classify items or bits of information, the cognitive effort on the part of the students is greatly increased.

Bloom's taxonomy has been reworked in recent years (Winocur, 1985), but educators still agree that if students can think effectively, they are able to compare, evaluate, and make judgments on the subject at hand. The problem for educators is to be able to present material that is conducive to having students use higher-level-thinking skills.

Recent research has shown that presenting classroom material in lecture format reduces the possibility of students looking at the subject matter in terms of higher levels of thinking (Brandhorst, 1989). However, when information is presented in a schema or matrix form, students can easily compare, contrast, and make judgments on the information at hand. The following science illustration describing moths and butterflies illustrates this point.

Lecture or Text Format

> A moth has two sets of wings. It folds the wings down over its body when it rests. The moth has feathery antennae and spins a fuzzy cocoon. The moth goes through four stages of development.
>
> A butterfly also goes through four stages of development and has two sets of wings. Its antennae, however, are long and thin with knobs at the ends. When a butterfly rests, its wings are straight up like outstretched hands.

Test questions that are based upon a narrative like the one above usually result in the teacher asking questions such as "Describe the wings of the moth" or "What is the texture of

the antennae of the moth?" Such questions only require the student to be able to memorize the text and be able to retrieve the material from long-term memory for the test. The test evaluates only the ability of students to memorize and does not measure the students' ability to think. Higher-level-thinking questions ask the students to compare and contrast the antennae of moths and butterflies or require that the student analyze the key differences between moths and butterflies.

Such higher-level questions, however, are very difficult for students to answer because students need to do two things: (1) restructure the information in the text that will enable them to make comparisons, and (2) make the necessary cognitive judgment as to differences and similarities. For the teacher to get the students used to thinking at higher levels, the teacher can present the information in a manner that will assist the students in the higher-level questions by presenting information in a matrix format:

Matrix Format: Moths and Butterflies

	Moths	Butterfiles
Wings at rest	two sets folded over its body	two sets straight up
Antennae	feathery	long and thin knobs on ends
Stages of development	four	four
Cocoon	fuzzy	missing information

When we examine the lecture/text format and the matrix, we find the same information given. However, students have a much easier time answering higher-level questions if they learn the information from the matrix. One can ask students to compare the characteristics of moths and butterflies and expect a reasonable answer. However, to be able to answer this higher-level question on a written test requires many more steps without the given matrix. The students first have to retrieve all this knowledge from long-term memory, restructure it, and then compare and contrast the information in order to answer the question. In short, the students would have to come up with their own matrix.

Questions that ask the students to compare and contrast, analyze, and make judgments require cognitive action on the part of the students, not just rote memory.

Another benefit of presenting information in a matrix form is that it shows teachers where they may have gaps in their presentation. When examining the text/lecture format, the readers may not easily notice that the cocoon structure was discussed for the moth and not for the butterfly. This kind of information is easily spotted when subject matter is presented in a matrix format.

By encouraging and promoting thinking skills in the curriculum, teachers nurture abilities that go beyond the classroom. Teachers need to make students conscious of what they are doing. When a student is thinking about a question, the teacher should encourage the thinking processes and guide the student in the best decision-making strategy for the problem at hand. If students can effectively think through issues, they undoubtedly will do better in school, will be better equipped to address personal issues, and will be able to address effectively issues that are foreign to their faith. One may use the following broad outline and let students fill in the matrix in class to help them understand the differences and similarities between religious beliefs:

Comparing Traditional Christian Beliefs and Those of the Cults

	Jehovah's Witness	Mormon	Christian Science	Traditional Christian
View of Man				
View of God				
View of Jesus Christ				
View of the Bible				

The matrix can be used when comparing and contrasting functions of grammar, showing differences in mathematical formulas, mapping wars, and comparing religious beliefs. It provides a way for students to see the big picture at a glance without losing sight of the important facts. It also gives the teacher more freedom to ask questions that demand a higher level of thinking on the part of the students. The ability for a student to compare, contrast, and recognize similarities and differences is of key importance when learning to think at higher levels.

As educators, we need not have a separate class to help our students learn to think; rather, such a skill should be integrated into the entire curriculum. We need to present our content in a manner that will allow easy retrieval from the students' long-term memory. Our goal should be not only to encourage knowledge of content, but also to give students the skills to be able to reflect critically on the given content.

CEJ

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—by STEFAN ULSTEIN

GIANT ISSUES on screen

The fragmentation of curriculum into standard disciplines, and the practice of studying only texts that are old and in the "canon" probably contributes to the general lack of intellectual and spiritual curiosity on the part of many students today. While an understanding of classic texts is indispensable, the ability to grapple with current texts is just as important.

Current movies provide an excellent way to unify the curriculum into a vigorous, ongoing discussion of the Big Questions. Here are three examples of current films that can be used to do just that.

City of Hope, The Samuel Goldwyn Company, 1991

City of Hope

While Europeans tend to see their cities as eternal monuments to national culture, built around Roman roads and medieval cathedrals, North Americans see their cities as transient places of business and housing. New immigrants move in; old ethnic groups become assimilated and flee to the suburbs. Buildings and neighborhoods are razed to make way for the new.

Civics classes that stress the "on paper" workings of city government—the council meetings, the mayor's office, the chamber of commerce—fail to teach the *realpolitic* of modern city life. Big business, organized labor, and corrupt officials plunder cities with the help of organized crime, leaving many to wonder if big cities will become battlegrounds for the permanent underclass.

This is just the vision of John Sayle's gritty *City of Hope*, a story of cops, politicians, developers, and dropouts who populate the quintessential Rustbelt metropolis of Hudson City.

Sayles, who has lived most of his life in American cities, has created a compelling drama about a city at the social crossroads. A cynical white politician remarks, "In a couple of years this city will be one big garage sale. The blacks and Hispanics will be left to fight over what's left. If you're smart, you'll take what you can grab now."

City of Hope is an excellent film for high school and college students trying to make sense of the mess that is big-city America in the 1990s. It can be discussed as a treatise on corrupt machine politics or as a piece of literate cinema.

City of Hope is rated R for language and the one brief sex scene between a married couple.

Mindwalk

When Galileo felt compelled to argue for a new perceptual model of the cosmos that placed the sun as the center of the solar system, he wrote *A Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Views*. Galileo understood that the old model, while favored by the church, was inadequate to describe what science was discovering about God's creation.

Modern subatomic physics and quantum mechanics have reached the point at which the old Cartesian and Newtonian models are inadequate, yet schools continue to teach molecular structure by forging Tinker Toys into approximations of H_2O and CO_2. Such models fail to show the enormous distances between subatomic particles or their enormous rates of speed.

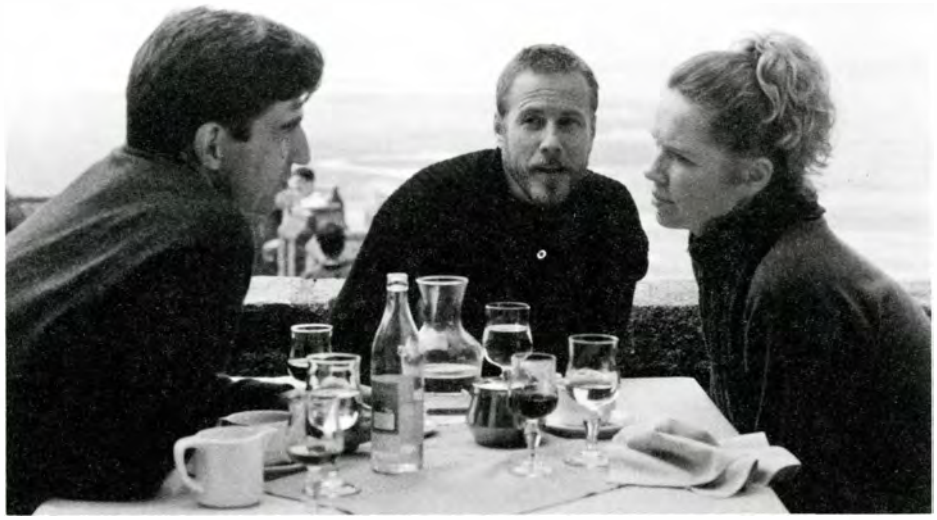
Likewise, the old model, which posited a cosmos that was merely a machine or clock, is inadequate to describe such impending catastrophes as global warming and nuclear waste.

Mindwalk is based on physicist Fritjoff Capra's best-selling book *The Turning Point*, which is modeled after Galileo's *Dialogue*. Like Galileo, screenwriter Berndt Capra (Fritjoff's brother) constructs a dialogue between three disillusioned seekers. This epic conversation between a physicist (Liv Ullman), a failed presidential candidate (Sam Waterson), and an expatriate poet (John Heard) examines the need for a perceptual shift in modern society.

Some Christian viewers will be troubled by the obvious New Age leanings of the film, but there's plenty to grapple

Top, *The Rapture*, New Line Cinema, 1991.

Bottom, *Mindwalk*, Triton Pictures, 1991.



with here. Ultimately, any model is just that: a model. The cosmos is simply too complex to be encompassed by any human model.

Capra proposes replacing the clockwork model with that of a living organism. "Every system," he told me in an interview, "is deeply embedded within other systems." As we find out more about the earth, we learn how much we didn't know before, when, for example, we were casually blowing up Eniwetok and Nevada with atomic weapons. Capra's model helps explain the downside of all the industrial "progress" of the twentieth century.

Mindwalk provides a tremendous springboard for discussion. I sent twenty eleventh and twelfth graders to see it, and they spent two hours discussing it on their own after the show. It's an attempt to construct a unified world view that draws from art, politics, literature, science, history, and math. Rated PG, it's suitable for thoughtful teenagers.

The Rapture

Writer-director Michael Tolkin was confused when he saw a bumper sticker that read, "Warning: in case of rapture this car will be unmanned." Such was his introduction to premillenial rapture theology. Later he read a newspaper account about a woman who threw her two children off a bridge to "save" them from the evils of the world.

From these two threads he wove *The Rapture*, a compelling drama that begins with the premise that we are indeed in the last days, and that the saints will be literally taken up into the clouds when the trumpet sounds.

The main character in the film, Sharon, is a telephone information operator who is crushed by the monotony of her automaton job. She is a spiritually dead soul who seeks ecstasy through reckless sexual experimentation at night.

But Sharon dreams of a brilliant pearl, a dream shared by "born again" co-workers, and she eventually accepts Christ as her personal Savior. Sharon soon becomes as obsessed with the apocalypse as she was with promiscuous sex, and she works herself into a moral quandary, which she resolves by committing a grievous sin.

As the trumpet sounds, Sharon is torn between her anger toward God for allowing her the free will to do what she did and her desire for eternal life. She must not only accept God, she must love him as well.

I spoke to actress Mimi Rogers in Seattle recently about her portrayal of Sharon. She said the film is not intended to make fun of the faith. In fact, at the 1991 Tellerude film festival, a woman came up to her with tears in her eyes, saying she found the movie moving and affirming of her faith as a born again Christian. Rogers said that, whether or not people shared that theology, they seemed to like the movie and engage with it.

The Rapture takes a cosmology that is professed by millions of evangelical Christians and asks, "What if?" It's a tremendous opportunity to explore the moral implications of evangelical theology.

The R rating is for sex and nudity at the beginning of the film. The scenes are valuable in that they establish a motive for Sharon's promiscuity, but they aren't suitable for teenagers. It would be possible to edit a videotape version of *The Rapture* without altering its thematic content, however.

Our students are seeing many movies, but the movies they see are, generally, bland escapism. By including thoughtful movies like *City of Hope*, *Mindwalk*, and *The Rapture* in the curriculum, we teach our students to participate in the ongoing debate. We also force ourselves to apply our curriculum to the *zeitgeist*. **CEJ**

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—by CAROL M. REGTS

What motivates students to work, and how can that motivation be incorporated into a structured system of rewards and responsible choices?

STUDENTS IN CHARGE

"Hey, Jon, how many points do I got?" Brian asked quietly as he nonchalantly leaned over Jon's shoulder to check the chart. "Your mom goin' to let ya come over this weekend to skate or what?"

"Sure, no problem. Um . . . says here you've got 23 points. No, wait. You took candy yesterday, so it's only 13. Shoot, how come you didn't wait until Friday, man? You woulda had 30, and we could've started working up a skating story together, maybe inspire ourselves." Jon had a sly grin on his face that made Brian look at Jon's total.

"You fool. You got 4 measly points. What ya going to do with those? You know we both need 30 to work together. Besides, I'm busy rewriting my letter to *Thrasher*." Brian chucked Jon's shoulder. They laughed and then glanced over at Ms. Regts to see if she noticed. Yup, there she was giving them that "You'd better be at your business now" look.

Brian lowered his voice back to a whisper. "I'm going to take a piece of candy. And, no, I ain't givin' it to you."

While Brian walked back to his seat and started editing his letter, Jon jotted Brian's name under the candy column and looked up to find Gerry waiting impatiently to schedule a conference with Marcus. After first making Gerry fill out a conference sheet, Jon wrote down their names and the time their conference would begin, assigning them the back corner table where he knew Ms. Regts could keep an eye on them. Blythe and Jen wandered up a few moments later and asked to go to the bathroom. As he recorded their names, he let Blythe go but made Jen wait until Blythe returned. Scanning the room from his seat by the door, he caught his friend Darryn's eye and grinned, checked to see if Gerry and Marcus were actually looking at Gerry's essay, and noticed Ms. Regts waving her pen around as she conferenced with Karen and Megan over their self-edited writing project. With a sigh he settled down to brainstorming ideas for his "Invasion of the Potato Heads" science-fiction story.

No more than five minutes had passed and there was a good half hour yet of class to go.

☆ ☆ ☆

Jon's primary task that period was to function as my classroom monitor. Two years ago, I was desperate for a way to encourage my students to become more responsible and self-governing. I was tired of students thanking me for a good grade or, more frequently, blaming me for a bad grade as if they had nothing to do with which one they received. I was tired of students sitting passively in my classroom acting as though life (which, from the look on their faces, was mostly bad) happened to them, and they had no way to change it. I was tired of their being angry or afraid or apathetic.

So, I read my Skinner, reviewed my Glasser, checked over Dewey, and even examined the dictates of assertive discipline. But philosophy and psychology seemed to leave me in the middle of the road with rush-hour traffic zooming haphazardly by on each side. I needed my own system of traffic signals, one which could operate without my pushing all the buttons. I wanted students to want to push the buttons themselves, to think of learning more as a privilege, of getting to do something rather than having to do it.

I began what became a rather lengthy, thought-provoking process of constructing a system whereby my students might enjoy being responsible for their actions, know how to negotiate with me and their peers to solve problems, make choices about how they achieve educational tasks, and take turns being in charge of the classroom.

First, I had to decide what it was I really wanted from my students and what I could realistically expect. Well, I needed them to use class time responsibly while working on their individual writing or reading projects without inappropriately disturbing classmates or me. I wanted them to take risks and share their ideas in class. I also wanted to see more evidence that they are concerned about acting and thinking as Christian readers and writers, as part of a community. Above all, I wanted students to feel that they are in control of what happens to them, that they can choose to be treated negatively or positively, and that they share in the operation of the classroom.

I discussed these concerns with my students, and we tried brainstorming some different rules, but I still had problems making them own their responsibility.

That led me to think about what I used to force or encourage my students to accomplish classroom tasks. What motivated my students to work, and how could I incorporate that motivation into a structured system of rewards and responsible choices? Although I tried to give as much direct praise as possible for work well done, I knew I relied quite heavily upon the school's carefully developed warning and punishment system to keep everyone in line doing their work. (See December *CEJ* issue on teacher and student power.) I was scrawling off

demerits every day, tossing in a detention here and there, but I just wasn't getting the change in behavior and attitude I wanted.

It was as though the students and I had reached a saturation point for punishment, and tiny incidents tended to escalate into more dire consequences than the situation really called for. Yet, I also needed to maintain a connection between my expectations and students' actions, even though I decided I wanted to find a way to emphasize the positive. I had to figure out a way to deliver with equal force both positive and negative consequences and to use the positive ones as the basis for motivation—rather than the punishment system I had been depending on.

I considered grades a primary positive force; certainly that "A" rewarded good work with something tangibly positive. However, when I asked my students whether my grading system motivated them to want to do their work, many said grades were not much of a priority, except for the few moments those who lagged behind were confronted by irate parents or were shepherded through a teacher-checked daily assignment sheet. I thought I had stacked the grading system in their favor by using whole-class assignments in which I gave full credit if an attempt was made and by developing individualized goals in conferences with my students, but they still tended to see grades as controlled by teacher's power rather than theirs.

We talked about how I could evoke more output by suggesting I would give homework if they didn't work reasonably hard than by saying they could earn an "A" if they just tried. But we agreed that not giving homework was more an absence of actualizing a threat, motivating through a fear of painful labor and restriction than desiring to do well. So, I needed a system that relied not too heavily on grades but on some other motivator to help produce consistent effort from my students.

A good decision, but where was I to find something my students and I could appreciate? I returned to my students for ideas, and we reminisced about the rare times I had used candy to reward correct responses in games —what a flurry of action then. But I certainly was not going to spend my time tossing candy at students whenever they did what I wanted them to do.

They did say they liked to be able to talk freely. Considering social interaction as a reward, I scanned through my lessons, but I failed to see how I could add more group work than I was already doing. Besides, part of my language arts program required that they go to other students for help in editing. My students suggested I give five minutes at the end of class for free time if they worked well during the period, but I feared one or two malcontents could ruin it for everyone. They agreed.

Finally, I conceived of a plan we agreed to work with. I decided to reward my students with two points for attempting to do their job of being a student in a language arts classroom, a task whose components we defined together in class and outlined on a chart. I considered the two points as their base salary, which most received each day. To earn additional points, they had to take on more responsibility in the classroom by bringing in outside material to share with or teach to the class. They had to take more risks volunteering answers and opinions, responses to, or critiques of each other's writing or assigned reading. They had to go out of their way to help other students, not just their friends, building each other up rather than cutting each other down. Since I expected some of this behavior as part of their regular job, I decided to praise as many instances as I could see but not to reward every instance.

I handed out an extra point here and there, on some days more than others, in random fashion—we talked about it as an act of grace. I also balanced the positive with negative consequences. Students lost points and were liable for the traditional punishments like homework detentions for not doing the minimum amount I expected, for talking during whole-class silent reading or writing, for doing work other than language arts. We tried out various amounts of points they lost, ending up with one for a first

warning, three for making unChristian remarks, five for a demerit, and so on. If any student felt unjustly punished, she or he could negotiate a change with me, and if still not satisfied, the students could ask for a classroom council. (Few did so because they found their peers more ruthless in cutting points than I.)

But how does a point value, a number, motivate? Just as I exchange my money for things I want or need, so my students can cash in their points for a variety of perks ranging from a piece of candy to extra time on a project, or partner options on a project others would have to work on alone. Individuals also create one-time deals, such as when two boys asked to exchange ten points each to work together on a history writing project during a class period. Sometimes, when I feel overwhelmed with appreciation for three straight days of marvelous behavior or an extremely good discussion, I offer special deals: getting a candy for five points versus ten.

The first year I tried this system I found that many students became more eager to settle down and work, at least for a good part of the period. They liked feeling they had more power and choices. Even as they teased each other about responding just to get more points, they spoke up more in class. They had fun planning ahead about how they would use their points, many deliberately maintaining a total of thirty, which they would need to exchange for extra time to hand in an assignment. Others spent points as quickly as they earned them.

I found that taking those few minutes to jot down a point value each period for each student and adding them up each week gave me a general, regular handle on my students' attitude and behavior. This left no doubt in either mine or my students' minds how I felt about what they were or were not accomplishing. On the other hand, I found more of my time being used by students wanting to know their points, wanting to cash in their points for this or that. I needed more uninterrupted time to work with individual students.

To correct that problem and to make my students feel they had even more control and responsibility in the classroom, I developed the position of the classroom monitor. I set aside a desk by the door for that person to sit in during the assigned class period, created a form with columns for each category of responsibility, constructed a separate chart of students' names on which to record their points (kept on a clipboard with the form), and had each student take a turn in alphabetical order. The monitor's first priority was to deal with requests to get a drink, to find out point totals, and to record cashing in points. If no one came to the desk, the monitor worked on class work. Initially, I had the monitor warn students who were talking, but I soon took back that responsibility myself because students were taking revenge. When I brought the problem before the class, we decided to have the monitor jot down the name of any student I rebuked or come to me if someone was causing trouble or asking questions the monitor didn't know how to answer.

Having my monitor record names of participants freed me in classroom discussions to focus on the content and direction without worrying about the risk students took; they knew their contribution to the class would be recognized, if not with points that day, then some other day. (The monitor's record also has come in handy sometimes when the principal wondered who had scratched graffiti on the walls: I could check the list of students who went to the bathroom.)

Having a student in that position also allowed students a brief opportunity for the light-hearted, but purposeful, social interaction when they needed a break from their work. Many waited to check their total or cash in points until halfway through the period. Certainly, some students contrived to draw out the moment, but I needed only to treat it like any other instance of testing limits, to reassert my expectations, and to negotiate with them more appropriate ways to meet that need to talk.

Giving everyone the opportunity to be a classroom monitor avoided calls of favoritism and taught some important basic tasks in relating to students and responsibly recording accurate information. Even the shy students liked taking their turns, liked having that power and that safe, structured interaction with their classmates. And if a student with a disability was monitoring, the other students helped her or him write their names in the correct column (it was in their best interest, after all) and identify the point value for whatever reward they were taking.

Such a system is particularly helpful for anyone running a classroom with a focus on individualized instruction such as whole language. However, some of my colleagues also have used it for short periods of time when they were conducting discussions over a few days or working through a research unit during which they needed more time to go around the room to help students instead of being concerned about checking out research books or handing back corrected work or taking attendance. Instead, they had students take turns handling those responsibilities.

My students and I are happy with this system although we continue to experiment with ways for me to give them even more control. And each new class requires negotiating specific ways to balance my and their needs. I'm committed to and excited about this system of rewarding students for actively doing what is good because my students increasingly feel good about themselves and, I think, more of them *want* to be good. Most important is that they seem to feel less afraid and more responsible because they share control of what happens to them in the classroom. **CEJ**

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—by ANNETTE HUIZENGA

MORTIMER

FORMAL DRAMATICS IN GRADE ONE

"Mortimer, be quiet!" The entire student body at Abbotsford Christian School chuckled and cheered at the humor and wonderful language of Robert Munsch's *Mortimer* as dramatized by a grade one class. By request, the production was also given to a high school assembly.

In our literature-based reading program we find reader's theater or formal dramatics an effective way to make stories come alive. Robert Bruinsma underscores this approach in *Language Arts in the Christian Schools:*

> In a language-centered approach to the language arts, drama is an active social process that draws on children's capacity for role-play to explore and express ideas through the body and the voice. Used in this way drama concerns children's inner world of emotion and imagining. The emphasis is on creativity and oral skill rather than on acting ability. (107)

Mortimer, a well-known children's book, is an excellent book to work with for the following reasons:

1. It allows the entire class to be involved.
2. It helps children develop oral language and listening skills.
3. The story includes extensive use of pattern, making it easy for the children to memorize.
4. The use of musical instruments develops a sense of rhythm and is an integral part of drama and literature.
5. It allows the children to be creative.

Begin by reading the story to the children with appropriate expression. They will often begin chanting and singing along.

List the characters in the story. Brainstorm with the class for words describing each character. For example, ask, "What kind of boy is Mortimer?"

1. Mortimer - pest, loud, doesn't listen
2. The father -
3. The mother -
4. The policeman -
5. Brothers and sisters -

Then choose a student narrator to read the story. Students are generally very eager to be part of the play. So they should all be given a chance to play one of the various roles sometime in the use of the story. Allow the students to help in the decision making. Students are very perceptive in choosing which child best suits a role. Once the main characters are chosen, the rest of the class acts as the many brothers and sisters of Mortimer.

Costumes needed:

Mortimer - pajamas
Mother - apron, slippers
Father - earmuffs, jacket, slippers newspaper, tie
Policemen - hats, flashlights

Props needed:

cot with blankets	teddy bear
xylophone	telephone
woodblock or drum	

The xylophone is used to create the ascending and descending sounds on the stairs. A woodblock or drum makes the opening and closing sound of the door.

Enjoy the book and have fun with the ideas that come from the children. Listen to your students. They develop the best ideas of all! **CEJ**

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—by FRANK DE VRIES

how to spellit

Of all grade school subjects, one of the most difficult to teach is spelling. There is often no rhyme or reason to the way many words are spelled—and to those that do make some spelling sense there often are many exceptions. For words to be spelled correctly, we depend mostly on the memory of the student. And that's where our trouble starts, for most memories are fickle.

I have a great memory for retaining information no one else seems to know or care about. Who in the world would want to remember that flatworms belong to the phylum *Playhelminthes*, or that one of the sons of Isaiah was named Mahershalalhashbaz? But take an item that is important, relatively speaking, and ask me the difference between nieces and nephews and cousins once removed (Is there such a thing as a thrice removed cousin?), and my eyes glaze over; I'm ready to be gently led away to the peace of a padded cell. And who can remember the difference twixt cows, calves, heifers, steers, and bulls?

Many students appear to suffer from similarly constructed sievebrains. It seems that randomly selected items are put in storage, but others are readily forgotten. But now, after nearly thirty years of teaching, I think I have come upon a way that seems to change all that.

Twice weekly I teach spelling to a grade six class. The number of words I teach varies but usually lies between twelve and eighteen words every other week. The words come from four different sources: from the students' own work, from the media and the novels they read, from the school's intermediate science teacher, and from lists of words brought in by the students themselves.

In the lesson to be learned words are listed in two rows, with words spelled correctly on the left and, on the right, the same words spelled incorrectly (sometimes showing more than one incorrect version). For several spelling periods I let the students work in twos and threes as they try to master the correct spelling. To aid them in that, I suggest, or they invent, all manner of mnemonic devices. These ways of remembering are also shared with the rest of the class, and some students then exchange their way of remembering for a way that is more helpful to them.

Examples that come to mind:

-MANTEL—not "mantle"
students here visualize a telephone on the mantel above the fireplace: MAN-TEL
-PIECE—not "peice"
students think of a PIEce of PIE
-A LOT—not "alot"
students visualize A - - - LOT of space between A and LOT
-FRIEND—not "freind"
a friend may stay over for the weekEND, hence friEND

An important part of the program is the collection of words the students themselves take to class. For every spelling error they glean from advertisements, novels, flyers, or whatever, they get an extra point. These words are then used again in a forthcoming spelling lesson. Finally, after two weeks, a spelling test is given, set up as follows.

First there is a largely nonsensical paragraph where all lesson words are used at least twice, sometimes spelled correctly, sometimes spelled incorrectly. Students must encircle the incorrectly spelled words and write the correct version immediately above it. The second section of the test shows a number of actual advertisements (collected by the teacher) containing spelling errors. Students are asked to list the incorrectly spelled words followed by their correct spelling.

I have taught this way since the fall of 1990 and have found the results most gratifying as students' performance in this subject improved drastically and quickly. Perhaps the following aspects of the learning process played a part in that:

1) By comparing correct with incorrect spelling, students learn to pinpoint their spelling deficiency and to deal with it. They learn *discrimination.*

2) As they find themselves in a situation competing with and actually out-spelling adults who write up advertisements, flyers, pamphlets, and even governmental and educational publications, they begin to find spelling *challenging* and *fun.*

3) Inventing ways to remember how words are to be spelled correctly, they stretch their *imagination.*

4) As students begin to read all manner of reading material with their minds open to the possibility of finding spelling errors, they begin to practice *critical thinking skills.*

5) When scanning nonsense paragraphs for spelling errors, they are actually learning to *proofread.*

6) Finally, as now (much more than before) the students begin to look at words within their context, they experience more a sense of the totality of things. Instead of dealing with word lists only, they get a greater sense of the *whole*, and therefore also of the part, i.e., the spelling word.

For those interested in attempting this method of teaching spelling, I include some examples. You will find the preparation of such a lesson more work than you are used to, but more rewarding as well. **CEJ**

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—by GARY D. SCHMIDT

Retelling the Biblical Tale

Recent writers of children's literature have helped us to see the tales with new eyes, from new perspectives. In so doing they have rescued some of the tales from the mire of repetition and mediocrity.

It has been well more than a century now since the first collections of Bible stories were written specifically for children. Crafted in the context of a world that seemed utterly secure and at ease—Victoria sat firmly upon her throne, and North America seemed splendidly isolated from the difficulties that beset the Continent—the books were formal, dignified, moralized, and heavily didactic as a rule. The illustrations were stylized, the children Anglo-Saxon, and Jesus sentimentalized. But for all their faults, the stories seemed to assert two things. First, that the Bible is fecund with marvelous stories. Second, that it is legitimate to retell those stories as stories for a child audience.

Perhaps it was the potential pitfalls of writing in this genre—the sense that these stories were so well known that to retell them was merely to be repetitive—that kept major writers of children's literature away from such retellings for most of this century. Until the late 1970s, readers would be hard pressed to find a retelling of a biblical tale of high literary and artistic quality. And that is why Peter Spier's *Noah's Ark* was such a remarkable book. Published in 1977, it received national attention by winning the Caldecott Medal and suggesting that writers did not have to be repetitive if they chose to work with biblical stories. They could make children see the old tales in new ways, from new perspectives. The tales could be celebrated as stories, not as springboards for moral lessons; and they would suggest in their tellings some of the awe and mystery of God's interactions with his creation.

Since that time, there has been a true renaissance in retelling biblical tales within the field of children's literature. Bernard Evslin, in the preface to *Signs and Wonders: Tales from the Old Testament* (Four Winds Press, 1981), suggests that his task has been to preserve the beauty of the Bible's language while trying to "flesh out the giant bones." Lore Segal, in *The Book of Adam to Moses* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), sees his task as one of going back to the ancient Hebrew sources, a task echoed in *Moses' Ark*, by Alice Bach and J. Cheryl Exum (Delacorte Press, 1989). But these, together with many other retellings of the past fifteen years, are united by a single concern: the child should not be able to say with justification, after reading a retold Bible story, that this is old hat. Instead, the biblical story should be more vivid, more dramatic, and even more meaningful because of the retelling.

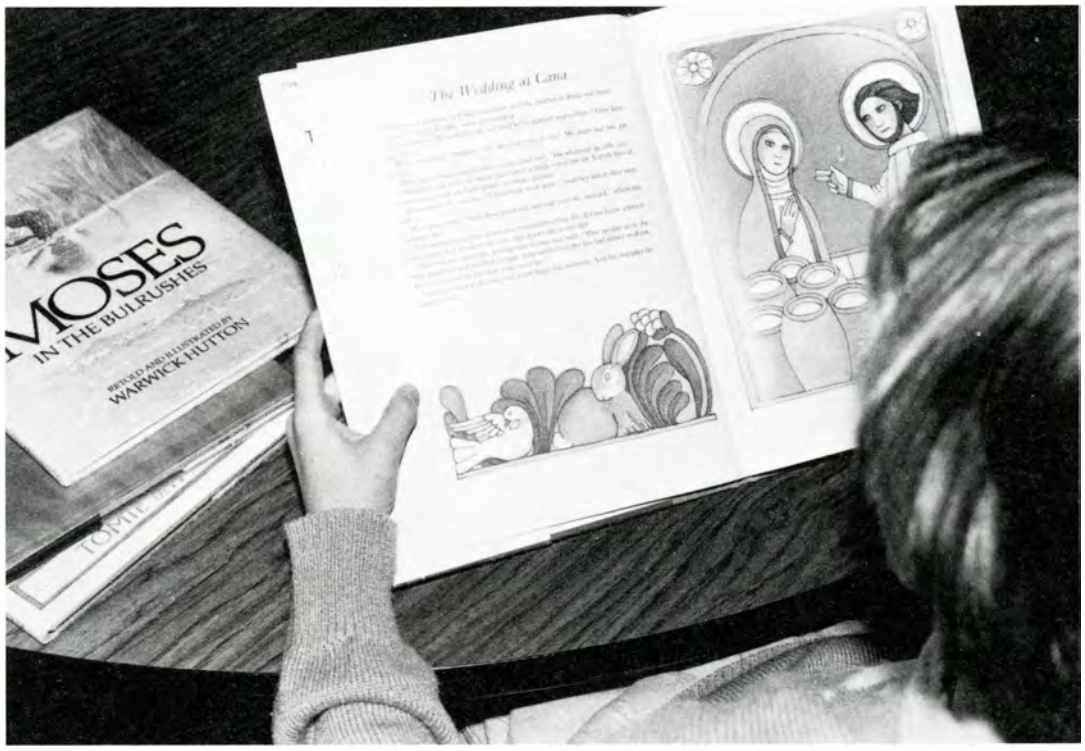
And so, recent writers of children's literature who have entered this genre have helped us to see the tales with new eyes, from new perspectives. In so doing they have rescued some of the tales from the mire of repetition or, what is even worse, mediocrity.

One approach to this kind of rescue is the picture book format, in which the text is quite close to the biblical narrative, but most of the information comes through the illustrations. In such books, the illustrations do not merely decorate; instead, they add to the force and meaning of the tale by directing the reader's eye to a certain detail, by coming at the visual image through an unusual perspective, by filling out the bare narrative with details that carry meaning in themselves.

This is Peter Spier's method in *Noah's Ark* (Doubleday, 1977). Except for a short poem at the beginning of the text, the tale of Noah is told solely through illustrations. And those illustrations extend the tale. They show the poignancy of separation, as certain animals are chosen over others. They show the chaos and noise and sheer mess of the ark. They show a Noah who is human: he is harried and bored and anxious and reverent. And they show the rebirth of the world, as even on the ark itself the animals begin to have young, and creation begins anew.

This is the format in which Warwick Hutton works as well. His *Moses in the Bulrushes* (Atheneum, 1986) is remarkable for the simplicity of the text and the poignancy of the illustrations. In one illustration Hutton evokes all the feelings of loss and fear of Moses' mother as she sits alone in her house, beside an empty cradle, watching a family of chicks just after she had hidden Moses in the river. The pain of this illustration is bearable only because the reader sees Miriam rushing back through the open doorway, filled with the news that will change this scene to joy. Hutton's *Jonah and the Great Fish* (Atheneum, 1983) is marked by contrasts, particularly Jonah's small size set against the enormity of the great fish. The contrast emphasizes God's care and provision for the rebellious prophet.

Leonard Everett Fisher and Jan Pienkowski also work in the picture book format, but their illustrations do not so much extend the narrative of the story as they do evoke a sense of wonder at the mystery and glory of the text. Fisher's *The Seven Days of*



The Bible is fecund with marvelous stories, and it is legitimate to retell those stories as stories for a child audience.

Creation (Holiday House, 1981) stays close to the King James version of the story of creation. The illustrations evoke the marvels of the created world; the muted colors, strong brush strokes, and simplicity of the illustrations complement the majestic and weighty tone. Jan Pienkowski's *Christmas* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1984) and *Easter* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1989) also use the King James text, though it is somewhat simplified. Pienkowski's illustrations are silhouettes set against brilliant colors, so that the figures stand out starkly and powerfully. Tomie de Paola's *The Parables of Jesus* (Holiday House, 1987), *The Miracles of Jesus* (Holiday House, 1987), and *The Story of the Three Wise Kings* (Putnam, 1983) simplify the text even further but again use illustrations to evoke a child reader's wonder and delight in the stories themselves.

The most controversial attempt of an illustration to extend the text in recent years has been Julie Vivas' *The Nativity* (Harcourt, Brace, 1988). Here again, the King James version of the text is used, though with some simplification. But to that familiar story is added a wealth of detail, all of which is meant to emphasize the humanness of all the events. Meant perhaps as a corrective for the overly sentimental versions of the Christmas story, this book focuses on the elements that stress the mundane part of the story, the common, ordinary things that go on even in the midst of the birth of the Christ child. Gabriel appears to Mary as she is hanging laundry, and the annunciation is made as they sit together at a table, holding bowls of soup. Mary is depicted as about sixteen months pregnant, and she and Joseph laugh together at their combined attempt to get her up on the donkey. After the birth, Joseph holds Jesus closely, crooning over him, as Mary leans against them, exhausted. At the end, Gabriel holds the baby, awkwardly, as if he is not quite sure how to do so, or as if amazed to be holding God incarnate. The heavy emphasis on Mary's pregnancy, the doughy and rather silly angels, and the nudity of the baby Jesus have given some pause over this text. Yet, there is a value in recognizing the humanity of the tale, the fears and joys and laughter that the young couple shared on their way to Bethlehem. This is a story of the intermingling of the absolutely ordinary with the absolutely supernatural, and Vivas' illustrations capture that sense.

Another way in which the stories have been made more vivid has been to change the perspective from which the stories are seen. Kathryn Hewitt's *Two by Two: The Untold Story* (Harcourt, Brace, 1984) tells the story of Noah's ark from the vantage point of the animals, a perspective also used in Brian Wildsmith's *Professor Noah's Spaceship* (Oxford, 1980), which changes not only the perspective but the genre to make the tale more vivid. By shifting the ways in which one ordinarily comes at such stories, a writer has helped the child reader to see their wonder and meaning even more clearly.

Perhaps this technique is used most successfully by Leon Garfield and Michael Bragg in *King Nimrod's Tower* (Lothrop, 1982) and *The King in the Garden* (Lothrop, 1984). Both books use a young child's presence in the story as a way of revealing the story's meaning. In *King Nimrod's Tower*, a young boy chases after a puppy while the tower is being built; as long as he aggressively pursues the dog in order to capture it, the dog escapes him. It is only when he recognizes that he really wishes to befriend, not control, the dog that they are able to become friends. At the end of the book, that incident is used to explain the meaning of the story, as God tells the angels that "My kingdom of Heaven is better reached . . . by a bridge than by a tower."

Peter Dickinson's *City of Gold* (Pantheon, 1980) changed its perspective on the old stories by changing the conventional narrator of the tales. This project began when a publisher suggested that Dickinson write a collection of retold Old Testament tales. Dickinson at first refused, but then agreed when he came upon a way of reinvesting Old Testament stories

with their oral tradition: he invented narrators, figures who actually might have told the tales he collected, and he put the tales in their mouths. The result is that the tales are returned to the oral tradition in which they began, and they are given new contexts, which help readers to see them all the more clearly. The story of the fall into sin is told by a Hebrew slave, at the command of a Babylonian nobleman during the captivity in Babylon. The story of Babel is told by a group of prophets traveling through a village during the time of the Judges. The story of Jacob at Bethel is told by a shepherd to his son, during the period of the Kings. The story of the twelfth plague is told by a father, hiding with his family from the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. And the story of David and Goliath is told by a Babylonian sergeant, preparing his troops to fight against the Hebrews, who are armed with slingshots. In each case the voices come from an authentic tradition, and the tales take on new meaning for the modern reader as one sees what kind of meaning they might have had for an ancient teller.

Walter Wangerin uses a very specific narrator to tell the story of creation in his *There Was No Sky* (Thomas Nelson, 1986). The narrator here is a father comforting his son, and he uses the story of creation to show his child how much God loves him. Reminiscent of the narrator of Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*, this narrator emphasizes the love that went into creation, and God's delight in his creatures, especially humanity. All is individualized, so that God's action in creation is linked to God's love for this individual child. Barbara Cohen's *I Am Joseph* (Lothrop, 1980) also shifts narrators, and here the story is told from the point of view of the character that lived it. The result is a fleshing out of that character, so that Joseph no longer seems such a distant character.

Other writers have suggested that, if one wants to retell the biblical tales and avoid simple repetition, a writer needs to go back to the original texts in the original language, and so avoid using common translations and common understandings. These retellings are then based upon biblical scholarship. For *The Book of Adam to Moses* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), Lore Segal consulted the Hebrew texts as well as modern scholarship on the Torah. His stories are notable for their refusal to flesh out stories by adding superfluous details; the stories are simplified very little, the only significant change being the deletion of tiresome or repetitive lists. "We mean the reader to run, afterward," he writes in his preface, "to read the whole Bible." The result is that the stories are not easy to read, but they are placed into a straight narrative framework; that organization helps a child reader to gain an understanding of the panorama of biblical history.

Moses' Ark (Delacorte Press, 1989), by Alice Bach and J. Cheryl Exum, similarly goes back to the ancient Hebrew texts. The purpose here is not simply to avoid conventional translations, but to find in the original nuances and meanings not available in the modern translations. For example, the authors show how the word *ark* is used only twice in the Bible: to name the boat that saved Noah and that which saved Moses. Moses' name is a pun on the phrase "to draw out," and it was understood in reference to his being drawn from the Nile and his drawing God's people out of Egypt. Samson's name is a pun on the word for sun, while Delilah's name puns on the word for night. The result is that the stories have been reinvested with some of their original meanings.

Finally, some writers have chosen to retell the tales by maintaining the original narrative line but adding to that line details and bits of dialogue and descriptions that are not in the originals. Of these texts, Bernard Evslin's *Signs and Wonders: Tales from the Old Testament* (Four Winds Press, 1981) is superior. It is especially noteworthy for its use of dialogue, which frequently reveals characters' motivations. Cain, for example, is powerfully drawn as he accuses Abel: "I was happy until you came. I dug the fields with my father, and the earth prospered under my care. . . . And now you have robbed me of God's favor" (21). The charge suggests Cain's twisted logic and deep resentment. And, in Joseph's assurances to his brothers, one hears the confidence and stature that he has attained as God has prospered him in Egypt: "Your eyes see me. . . .The eyes of our brother Benjamin see me. You hear the words of my mouth. And you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, of all that you have seen" (135). Paired with the powerful drawings of Charles Mikolaycak, these are dense tales, in which every line is filled with meaning and implication.

Now, certainly, there are pitfalls to any retelling of a biblical tale. Retellings can change the narrative, assign motivations that are not clear from the biblical texts, or omit significant details. They can treat the story as mere folktale and omit any sense that there is urgency and power and meaning to these tales that go beyond the non-biblical tale. They can remove the tale from its context and, in so doing, remove any sense of reverence, any sense of God's providential hand.

Both Helme Heine's *One Day in Paradise* (Atheneum, 1986) and Marc Gellman's *Does God Have a Big Toe?* (Harper and Row, 1989) seem to suffer from these difficulties. In both, God is pictured as a sort of curious old fellow who does not quite have control of everything going on. Creation begins, and he seems to withdraw, as if unsure of how things should proceed. The result is a belittling of the power and authority of God.

All retellings have to be judged according to their faithfulness to the biblical tale. But the retellings also need to be faithful to the sense of the biblical tales. They should convey some of the awe, the mystery, the love, and the reverence that these tales inspire. To retell the tales without these senses is simply to retell a plot line. To retell the tales with these senses is to reinvest them with vigor and beauty and meaning, which can in turn lead readers back to the scriptural version, where they may see the tale all the more clearly. **CEJ**

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Should principals require lesson plans from teachers, especially from experienced teachers?

Years ago I had a principal who collected all our lesson plans on Friday afternoon. Something was said about "sub plans" in case we caught some incapacitating or debilitating disease over the weekend. No comments were made about the lesson plans; in fact, they disappeared. Unspoken opinion was that they were never read. Should principals require them? I don't know. I think it would depend on their reasons for doing so. Whether or not the principal collects the plans is, perhaps, irrelevant. However, for the novice teacher, discussing lesson plans provides a valuable opportunity for principal/teacher review and accountability. For the principal, a quick overview of a teacher's plans allows familiarity with course content, although other long-range plans or frequent visits could accomplish that as well.

Probably a better question would ask whether lesson plans should be written. As Langer and Applebee contend in *How Writing Shapes Thinking: A Study of Teaching and Learning* (1987), we should, whether the principal ever sees our lesson plans or not, be able to articulate our intentions in writing. And then, of course, we can creatively use all the spontaneity generated in the classroom to build on or even divert from the skeletal outline scribbled in the designated square.

I think I could easily teach all year without making any lesson plans, but I believe I am a better teacher because I do. I have not been required to turn in written plans for many years; however, I dutifully fill all the spaces on my desk calendar. Perhaps no substitute teacher could ever read them; and if struck with a sudden lapse of memory, I doubt I could make sense of them. Those plans, however, are always there, giving me direction, shaping my discussion and questions, and sometimes keeping me on task. I also find that the physical action of making an idea visible transforms it into a real and meaningful plan.

Controversially, I'll say that if it isn't worth writing down, perhaps it isn't worth teaching. Slowing down to touch pen to paper allows the mind to "play" with the concepts more, like a mental dress rehearsal of the presentation. Maybe, though, this practice only works for visual learners.

I suspect the initial question alludes to principals who sometimes act like bosses, who treat teachers like hired hands, requiring busy work only because that is what is expected of them. Just as teachers should never do that to their students, I trust that no administrator would either. Open discussion of the pros and cons and a willingness to work individually and collectively to assure quality control seems to be a healthier approach. After all, we want to be worthy of our calling; to be diligent workers for the Principal of all learning, our Lord.

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.

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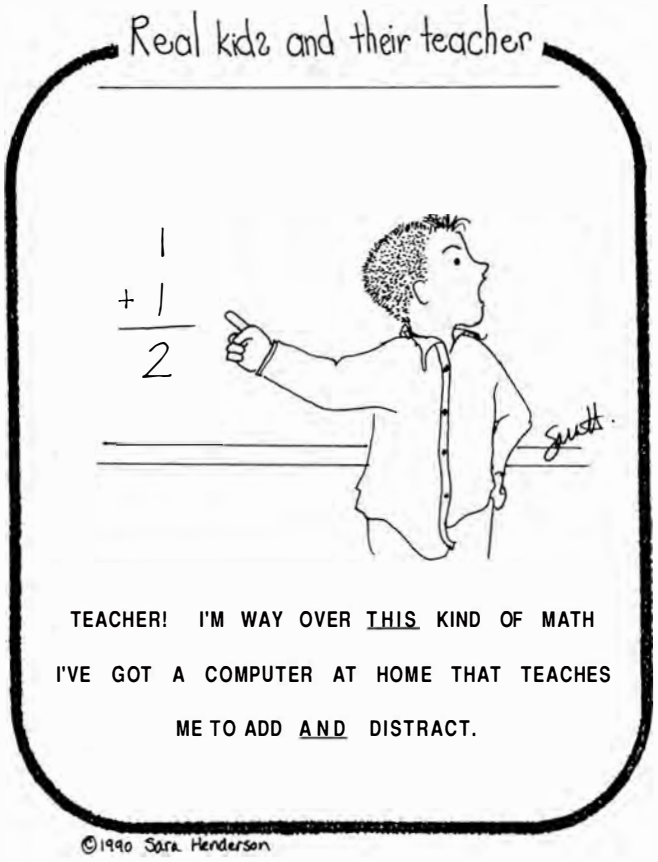

—by HARRO VAN BRUMMELEN

The Moral Life: Are We Countering Its Loss?

Walk the dark earth in wonder.
Walk warily, estranged, despairingly.

-Kenneth D. Benne

To point out that society has reached a crisis of values has become cliche. Its triteness, however, makes it no less true. For instance, the degree of personal and social aggression throughout North American society is disturbing. People do not only reject many biblical values by default, but they often seem to be insensitive even to the *need* for living righteous and just lives. Only blindfolds would prevent us from seeing that this erosion of the moral life has also touched Christian school communities.

The current emphasis on choosing and practicing values individualistically has led to a society in which, as Kenneth Benne put it, wonder has been replaced by wariness, estrangement, and despair. Often, Enlightenment faith in the inevitability of progress is being abandoned. Instead, we see a loss of hope and a heartache for a more moral and kinder society than few believe achievable. The widespread cynicism in leadership and in our future as a human race has bred personal and social irresponsibility.

Yet, we cannot live without believing and valuing. God has created us with an inborn sense of morality. Values and moral codes of conduct are endemic to any culture. If a moral vacuum exists, it will be filled. Today, for instance, such varied thrusts as a self-determined existentialist morality and the "politically correct" movement on public university campuses try to fill the void. For the latter, a new moralistic legalism defines thought and action, ranging from an absolute ban on smoking to the intolerance of any view other than that one sexual lifestyle is as good as any other. This movement, strongly opposed to Christian fundamentalism, substitutes a secular fundamentalism in its stead.

To a large degree, schools reflect their supporting communities, including their crisis in values. Public schools —though certainly not all teachers— lack a sense of morality. A popular current reading series, *Impressions*, thus includes a myriad of "nonsense" rhymes devoid of overt value content, and often seems to choose literature selections from books in such a way that value issues remain hidden. The new "unbiased" program initiatives in British Columbia emphasize that pupils must construct their own knowledge and values, without any reference to absolute principles. The relativistic agnosticism that is promoted, supposedly in fairness to all points of view, is far from neutral. The notion of "safe sex" as taught in many public schools, for instance, is far from acceptable to Christians and other theists. Nor is it unbiased, as our public school teachers' union would have it, for teachers to discuss with young adolescents how they become interested in exploring their sexual preferences (rather than their attraction to the opposite sex).

How can we in our Christian schools develop personal biblical morality and holy living, a sense of radical discipleship, a sensitivity to biblical justice that exemplifies forgiving, sacrificial love for the suffering and oppressed?

Within this context, a sense of urgency drives me to ask, How do we help our pupils and ourselves understand and experience the deep and ultimately solely satisfying paradoxes of the Christian life: strength in weakness, freedom in obedience and service, fulfillment in humility and self-sacrifice, life in death? Are we doing enough in enjoining our public to fulfill their callings by caring for a hurting world?

Value and moral education in Christian schools

Ten years ago or so moral and value education received a good deal of emphasis among us. *Christian Educators Journal* published a number of critiques on value clarification and on Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning. Nick Wolterstorff's landmark book, *Educating for Responsible Action*, was discussed at length, and teachers were reminded of their importance as value and moral models. Schools tried (and often later discarded) somewhat Christianized versions of value education programs developed for public schools.

Where has all that left us? Let me first state that one strength of Christian schools is how teachers model and expect their pupils to exercise personal morality in line with the Ten Commandments. I praise God for this and do not want to underestimate its long-lasting value. Much of a person's personal moral lifestyle is conveyed in

this way rather than formally taught.

At the same time, we have not made much progress in defining how our students can grasp the nature and implications of biblical morals and values. Wolterstorff spoke of the importance of helping students become responsible moral agents. Fostering moral sensitivity must lead to moral evaluation and choice based on an understanding of and commitment to biblical principles and norms. In turn, decisions must lead to consequent action.

Are our graduates better prepared in this respect than they were ten years ago? Generally, I feel, they are not, despite my recognition of some heroic initiatives with respect to Christian curricula and, more recently, Christian approaches to pedagogy. Morality, however, whether personal or societal, has received little explicit, direct attention.

Nick Wolterstorff gave us a four-part model for moral education: modeling, discipline, giving reasons, and casuistry. As a result, we have given more attention to the importance of modeling as part of tendency learning. Yet I see little evidence of his suggestions for "giving reasons" or for "casuistry" (i.e., teaching pupils to apply biblical moral standards to perplexing situations and giving moral guidance by showing the implications of acting in accordance with or contrary to the moral law) as an integral part of our classroom structure or content. As a result, students may adopt value positions unreflectingly.

Often values and morals are part of unexamined classroom methods or resources, rather than being the product of experiential or rational inquiry within a clearly defined biblical framework. Have we been so afraid of narrow, formula-like "character development" or of reducing Scripture's grand sweep of redemptive history to a string of "moralisms" that we have overlooked the importance of morality in life and failed to do justice to our schools' role as enculturing children to the riches and joy of the values inherent in following The Way?

Indeed, it is a sad irony that during the past decade the most significant educational writing about moral education has been done by critical theorists, often in a neo-Marxist, liberationist Christian tradition (e.g., Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, David Purpel). Yet such work, while offering oft-astute analyses, ultimately finds its basis in Marxist scientific materialism. This fails to satisfy, and thus Purpel most recently looked to a combination of the Old Testament prophetic tradition and New Age thinking as an answer for developing school programs that would aid in restoring a society based on compassion and justice.

Our faith gives us a vision, and our vision results in a task, a calling, that is squarely rooted in our values and has an important moral component.

Purpel has correctly pointed out that North American schools have replaced community with individuality, worth with achievement, justice for all with competition, and faith and vision with reason. And Dudley Plunkett, from his British perspective, does not find Christian schools much different from public ones:

> If Christian schools were really dedicated to spiritual values this would show up clearly in their curriculum . . . it is contradictory for Christian schools to be unable to break out of the vicious circle of academic learning for its own sake, still less for the sake of personal qualifications and advancement of privilege. . . . We are all obliged to face radical enquiry into how effectively we are addressing major human issues and commitments. (97)

Values are intrinsic to all subject matter, as well as to our methods of teaching. Our Christian faith has a great deal to say about morality and moral education. How can we give our students more help in fulfilling that calling?

The content and process of moral and value education

If Nick Wolterstorff rewrote *Educating for Responsible Action* today, he indicated to one of my classes, he would say much more about the *content* of the Christian life. Since education cannot but prepare for a certain way of life, the curriculum must particularly emphasize, he added, the concept of biblical *shalom*. Students must be helped to work and pray for its coming, enjoy its presence, and lament its absence.

Our teaching must be prophetic. It must proclaim the effects of sin in God's world, the need for regeneration, the possibilities of reconciliation and restoration, and our role in working out our salvation with fear and trembling. We must ask what it means for our students in their particular settings to bind up the brokenhearted, to seek relief for the hungry and the oppressed, to intercede for the troubled and angry, to provide for the handicapped, the sick, the poor, those in prison—and then build our programs accordingly. Our curriculum must go beyond discussion and include deeds.

Nurturing a love for *shalom* demands such key personal biblical virtues as love, compassion, forgiveness, humility, moral uprightness, truthfulness and self-sacrifice. These are developed in part through discipline (e.g., showing approval and disapproval) and modeling. But that is not enough. We need to pay more attention to incorporating content that will give students a cognitive understanding of *shalom* as it applies to today's society; and we must engage them regularly and frequently in situations where, through casuistry as well as direct action, they experience the meaning of biblical *shalom*.

Let me give some examples that are not uncommon but need to be practiced consistently and extensively. In a kindergarten class, a teacher promotes *shalom* by teaching children to "bear one another's burdens": Students are paired, and when one child is hurt or bullied, he or she first turns to the partner for help. Schools use buddy systems between different grade levels and peer tutoring within classes to

promote unselfishness and the joy of service—as long as teachers recognize that what they may consider the "weaker" partners always have something to offer the "stronger" ones! Some schools design units at higher grade levels about their own communities where service internships and action projects form an integral part of the learning experiences.

Literature ought to be chosen not only for its literary merit, but also for giving students vicarious experiences in facing moral and value dilemmas. One high school for many years has team-taught week-long, all-day units concurrently to four or five classes at several grade levels on topics ranging from Christian stewardship to native Indian culture and our Christian response, units in which students are faced with important questions relating to moral, social, and economic values.

Where Do We Go from Here?

While many individual teachers and schools are raising moral and value consciousness through activities like the above, many graduates still get caught up in individualistic, hedonistic lifestyles even when they commit their lives to Christ as their personal Savior. Admittedly, schools are limited in what they can do to counter an all-pervasive secular culture.

Yet, I believe, schools can do more than they have. They need help in pooling their resources, however. Can Christian Schools International organize a "values and ethics across the curriculum" project? Can we communally give more attention to how biblical *shalom* can permeate all aspects of our curriculum? Can we develop materials incorporating Wolterstorff's notion of casuistry that would become integral parts of our curricula?

Our aim may never be less than that every pupil be systematically encultured to a biblically-based value base and moral framework. Only if pupils understand and commit themselves personally to such a framework will the last—rather than the first—lines of Kenneth Benne's poem become a reality:

Walk the untrodden path from
last year into next year.
Move warily and trustfully,
estranged and lovingly,
despairingly and full of hope.
Walk the dark earth in wonder.

CEJ

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To Be A Cord

I need You.
They need You.
We need You.

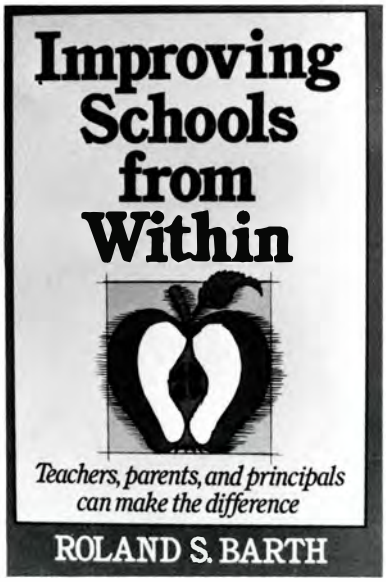
Now, Father,
Let this long heart-cry
Of my love and longing
Become a cord
Pulling open
Very windows of heaven
Over people and places
For whom I intercede.

I need You.
They need You.
We need You.

—by Elva McAllaster

BOOK REVIEWS

—by STEVE J. VAN DER WEELE



Improving Schools from Within

Teachers, Parents, and Principals Can Make the Difference

Roland S. Barth

Jossey-Bass Inc., San Francisco
1990, 190 pp.

Reviewed by Robert Koole, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Improving Schools from Within was the book I read to begin a year of study, discussion, and writing at the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship in June 1991. Barth provides the reader with many questions for reflection about one's own views and practices in schooling. The book is addressed to "teachers, parents, and principals who want to, can, and must assume the major responsibility for getting their own schoolhouses in order."

Barth accurately observes that even though numerous reform proposals have been designed and written and, in some cases, installed, only a few are having a lasting impact. He argues that most reform proposals fail because they have come from outside of the schools for which they are intended. Outside prescriptions and interventions often have disappointing results: ". . . increasingly proposals for reform that work have had strong connections with, and are often led by, those most directly involved—teachers, students, parents, and principals." Barth's thesis is that "only changes emanating and sustained from within are likely to bring lasting improvement to our schools."

Two themes form the guiding principles for Barth's way of improving schools. The first portrays school as a *community of learners*, "a place where students and adults alike are engaged as active learners in matters of special importance to them and where everyone is thereby encouraging everyone else's learning." Chapters one through six focus on the relationships among the adults who serve in schools. It is the quality of interactions between teacher and teacher, and teacher and administrator, that influences the learning environment of the school. Barth provides teachers with ways of examining their relationships with their colleagues and suggests that developing *collegiality* is crucial to improving schools. Collegiality, for Barth, does not mean congeniality; instead, it is a way of relating with each other that involves talking about practice, observing each other engaged in practice, working together on curriculum, and teaching each other by articulating and sharing pedagogical knowledge.

The second theme portrays the schools as a *community of leaders*, "a place where students, teachers, parents, and administrators share the opportunities and responsibilities for making decisions that affect all the occupants of the schoolhouse." Chapters seven through ten focus on the ways in which principals, teachers, students, and parents can establish and maintain *interdependent* relationships. Barth wants us to think about school as a place where students, parents, teachers, and principals all become school leaders in some ways and at some times. Schools should help all adults and youngsters who go there to learn to lead and enjoy the recognition, satisfaction, and influence that comes from serving communal and personal interests.

Barth's writing is directed by his personal vision of a good school, "a place where everyone is learning and everyone is teaching—simultaneously, under the same roof." Students are teaching and learning; principals are teaching and learning; and teachers are teaching and learning. School is not merely a place where there are big people who are learn*ed* and little people who are learn*ers*. Rather, school is a community of learners where all participants engage in learning and teaching.

This book does not purport to be *the* way to improve schools. Barth is not suggesting that his way of thinking about schools will solve the problems facing those involved in schooling today. As well, readers should not expect to find definitive strategies or well-formulated plans for changing their own school. Rather, teachers, principals, and parents involved in Christian and public schools will find that Barth's personal approach in writing stimulates reflection about one's own involvements in schooling. *Improving Schools from Within* is more than a personal vision; it provides ways in which the members of a school—students, teachers, parents, and principals—can initiate changes that will improve teaching and learning.

CEJ

We encourage elementary and secondary school teachers to write reviews to be considered for this column. If interested, call or write for information:

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RECENT BOOKS

Peer Rejection in Childhood.

Steven R. Asher and John D. Coie, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1990, 398 pp. plus references and indices.

Twelve essays on topics involving peer relationships, part of ongoing studies in what is being called "developmental psychopathology." Topics include characteristics of rejected children, loneliness in childhood, pre-school orientation as predictive of peer status, and the deleterious effects in later life of sustained rejection. A basic assumption is that "the difficulties of rejected children result from the way they interpret specific social situations, the way they react affectively, and their acquired strategies for dealing with them." ■

Children in Family Contexts: Perspectives on Treatment.

Lee Combrink-Graham, The Guilford Press, New York, 1989, 525 pp. plus index.

Twenty-five essays by a wide array of people involved with family therapy—child psychologists, sociologists, directors of family centers. The essays discuss a range of family problems, from obesity to adoption, from minority single-parent families to physical and cognitive handicaps, from the family and the school to family and the law. Notably missing are essays dealing with spiritual development and character training. But the anthology remains a convenient source of information about empirical research on a wide array of topics. ■

Autism: Explaining the Enigma

Uta Frith, Basil Blackwell, Cambridge, 1989, 187 pp. plus notes and index.

Autism, we now know, is a developmental disorder that affects the process of maturing from the very start. It is beyond cure, with a "subtle deficit" persisting throughout life. Extensive and sophisticated testing has made it possible to distinguish autism from other forms of mental retardation. The common thread running through the evidence is "the inability to draw together information so as to derive coherent and meaningful ideas." General manifestations are these: severe social incompetence, inappropriate behavior, severe communication impairment—both verbal and nonverbal—and highly repetitive, rather than free or imaginative, behavior. The *sine qua non* of autism lies, then, in abnormal two-way relationships. ■

Children and Emotion: The Development of Psychological Understanding.

Paul L. Harris, Basil Blackwell, New York, 1989, 215 pp. plus references and indices.

A study of how well and at what age children are capable of entering imaginatively into the mind of another person. Such projection requires that they go beyond their own desires and their own probable responses in a given situation, living more or less completely into the other person's emotional experience. This capacity can occur earlier than we had formerly believed possible. ■

Impasses of Divorce: The Dynamics and Resolution of Family Conflict.

Janet R. Johnston and Linda E. G. Campbell, The Free Press (a division of Macmillan), New York, 1988, 255 pp. plus bibliography and index.

Divorces have baffled lawyers, sociologists, and psychologists over the years—so entangled are the emotions, the motives, the hates, and anxieties released in the disintegration of a marriage. The irrational behavior of the partners, which often ensues, not only is self-destructive and self-defeating, but works havoc on the children. This book, based on twenty years of research, describes some of the models and imaginative responses that have worked to enable the child to function, at least in the short run, in the crazy world the parents—both old and new—have fashioned for him or her. ■

Child Abuse: A Practical Guide for Those Who Help Others.

E. Clay Jorgenson, The Continuum Publishing Co., New York, 1990, 133 pp. plus list of related readings.

Helping an abused child is complicated by the fact that the child has already learned to distrust people, with all of their unpredictable, destructive, and malicious propensities. The child struggles for survival and control in a wide array of hostile and eccentric forms of behavior, a situation compounding the difficulty of intervention from any source—foster family, counselors, therapists. If this cycle is not broken, these children will perpetuate their behavior as adults, responding only to the attitudes and forms of behavior they are acquainted with. Therapy should provide experiences of safety and affirmation, through such strategies as catharsis and role-playing. **CEJ**