

CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

Quarterly journal for Christian
day school educators

JOURNAL



PROFESSIONAL Policy — CHRISTIAN SCHOOL LIFE INSURANCE

Lorna Van Gilst

The man at the door was persistent. "No," I told him, "I don't have time to talk now. Come back in thirty years."

A rookie teacher at age 22, I had little interest in discussing life insurance. I was young and able. I had a stable job in a well-established Christian school. My life was secure.

Some years later I learned from two highly revered veteran teachers that each had survived the pain of being dismissed from a teaching job in a Christian school. In both cases a number of other teachers in the school were terminated at the same time, the result of serious tensions within the school community.

"Never say, 'It can't happen to me,'" the one teacher said quietly. "It did happen to me, after sixteen years of teaching in that school."

In reality, the teaching life cannot be absolutely insured:

* A school runs into financial straits, so the board decides to cut teachers or administrators, especially long-termers high on the salary scale, or those teaching the "non-essentials" like music and the arts. Such stories are etched with pain, and we wonder how they can occur in schools where we profess to serve God in every aspect of life.

* A colleague falls into the clutches of debilitating addiction or ill health.

We pray and we encourage and we stand helpless, wondering what we should have done earlier to help.

* The joy of teaching fades—or never starts to glow. Each day becomes a blot in the long string of interminable days of drudgery. Each day is merely an act one performs, hoping to get through. Class size, the burden of the schedule, pauper's pay, philosophical mismatch, lack of challenge—any of these may thrust us out of our classrooms and into new places we might not otherwise choose to go.

Moving into a new role is something like surgery—the chronic irritation finally goads us into the decision. If we thought of all the pain ahead, we might not go through with it.

Even desired change is rarely painless. Our security is shattered as we move into a new community with new patterns, new jargon, new limitations, new expectations. We notice comments and customs that make no sense to us, and we wonder if we'll ever belong—or if we want to belong. We're outsiders for a while, uprooted and displaced.

Of course no one would deliberately choose to be so miserable. But neither would many of us choose to move into new challenges or to learn the deeper lessons of life if left to our own sense of comfort. Often the frustrations we face are signals that alert us to a new calling.

We sometimes wish God would spell out directions more clearly. Few of us encounter a burning bush to turn

our heads; nevertheless, we have our own Pharaohs. We may have no Damascus Road commission, but we do have our own Barnabas encounters. Bitter as they are sometimes, we must not discount the Lord's use of them in redirecting lives.

We are naive to assume, as I did in my earlier years, that working in Christian service eliminates misunderstandings about work expectations. Sometimes the concept of Christian community prevents us from being entirely forthright with one another about contract expectations, but we need to define the expectations. Christian service organizations, including Christian schools, are often woefully lax in developing professional policies that enable us to avoid hasty and insensitive action when unforeseen differences occur.

Christian schools need to develop policy statements that clearly articulate terms regarding long-term disability, sick-leave, unfilled contracts, and any other condition that affects one's ability to teach effectively. Clear policies leave no question as to who will address whom, how, when, what recourse each party has, and what steps will be taken to nurture, redirect, or retrain someone who is judged incompetent for the role, whatever the reason.

Such policy offers not only legal protection, but also the evidence of a caring Christian community, one that insures the best interests of teachers and students. ☺

There Is Life Beyond the Schoolhouse Door

One Principal's Experience

Rosalie B. Icenhower

We've all heard the time-honored advice about one's pending retirement: It is never too early to begin planning for it; have definite goals for the future; maintain some sort of regular schedule after retirement; become involved in church and community volunteerism to ward off stagnation.

These are all good points to ponder. My husband and I actively prepared for and prayed about my retiring at age 62, and my final decision was to leave the principalship in 1991. This church-sponsored Christian school had begun with eighty students and six teachers in 1980 and had grown to 550 students and a staff of fifty by September 1990. I had been there from its inception, teaching there for five years before I was appointed principal.

In my six-year tenure as principal I had seen more than a hundred new programs and classes piloted and developed, the spiritual life of the school deepened, and curriculum and instruction strengthened. Since my school board was not a proactive one, it had become my responsibility to bring up policy and procedural matters to be enacted, present the annual budget, and generally keep abreast of local and state regulations. A high level of mutual trust existed.

In January 1991 the board asked me to make up an official policies and procedures manual for the new principal and vice principal before I left in June. I was granted the entire second semester to accomplish this and was allowed to

do it at home, where I would have a quiet workplace to use my word processor. I was given access to all the board records for the previous ten years to sift through, extract from, categorize, and organize!

My title was changed from principal to educational consultant, and I continued to receive my full salary. The new principal (my previous vice principal) was thus enabled to test his wings as my successor in an internship setting, having opportunity to consult me in problem situations.

Although I was no longer physically present in the office, I was in daily contact by phone through the end of the school year. When I presented copies of the giant notebook that had been compiled, my work was completed.

The farewell party given by the board, parents, and staff in June brought closure to the eleven years I had served the school. A silver coffee service, a diamond watch, and many gift certificates and cards brought me face-to-face with reality: I was officially retired.

The first few weeks seemed like an extended vacation. I slept in, went out for breakfast often, dressed in slacks and tennis shoes, and stayed up late at night. (Pure luxuries for a "Type A personality" who had been professionally clad and in her office by 7:00 a.m. for years!)

Then something totally unexpected happened to me: grief—a mourning for my office, the school, the children and teachers I'd left behind. Until then I had not realized my bonding had been so great. For at least a month I awoke with

a heavy heart, wondering if I'd survive. Tears welled in my eyes whenever I saw one of "my kids" in a store or walking down the street. I missed the collegial relationships I had enjoyed with the staff and with fellow principals in other Christian schools.

Gradually I was able to lay this grief at the feet of Jesus and found I could follow the Apostle Paul's example of "forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead." At last I could get on with life.

Because I'd had a career as a radio continuity writer and a newspaper reporter before I entered the field of education, I always knew what I'd do in retirement. Over the past year I have written two picture storybooks for children and two full-length books. Currently I'm working on a devotional book.

In 1991-92 I spent a few weeks as a professional consultant for a newly-organized Christian school some distance from where we live. Occasionally I make in-service presentations for teachers or give seminar sectionals for various Christian organizations on adolescent growth and development, stress management, or classroom discipline.

Blessed with nearly boundless energy all my life, I find myself working as hard as ever. Yes, there *is* life beyond the schoolhouse door! God is not through with this Type A personality just yet! ☺

Rosalie B. Icenhower spent twenty years in education and now does free-lance writing from her home in Bothell, Washington.

Burnt

by Carol M. Regts

I'm burned out this year and learning,
the hard way, learning that I'm just a good teacher.
My gauze-wrapped, festering pride cringes at admitting
and forever stumbling along
the shadowy line that's the irreconcilable difference
between "I am a good one" and "I am a perfect one," no
never perfect yet okay, even
a moment of greatness here and there.

My daily grind was not only
papersmeetingstudentspaperscurriculumpapers,
everlasting duty of soul and body,
but also a battleground for ideal against real:
My mind's eye, ever so clear and unperturbed, watches
lessons calmly making achingly beautiful connections
popping with firework understanding
in my students' brains.

But Fourth-of-July celebrations
come only once a year
in my real world, infrequent blinding flashes
behind my students' eyes.
I'd striven most recklessly trying
to light their fuses, capture the glow
magnify the brightness with my own
meager energy resources until
my sparkler, spindly as it was, burned too close to my fingers.

So close that I dropped the wand, the torch
of learning, to cry with the pain
burning deep into me, flickering coals
smoldering in the palms of my hands
searing into my heart.
Oh, God, where did I go wrong?
Was it punishable to labor for a dream,
for dreams which are now nightmares of students
slipping uncaressed through my scorched hands?
Was I so proud in my eager, pious humility
of purpose-hounded deeds that I
flared forest-fire dangerous and needed to be crushed so hard,
stamped out with furious finality?

Without answers, I sit scared and scarred,
absorbed in my pain of failure,
of hurt pride, or anguished desire
to touch a child's heart, not just mind, with love,
in my daring to take the apple and bite it juicily.
Sin or stumbling block of blame?
Perhaps it is only that I need to learn
to sit quietly, absorbed in being I am,
a pathway for the I AM,
simply be.

I'm learning to be not perfect
allowing a couple *if's*, a few *and's*, many *but's*
letting go of reins clung to for so long,
still afraid the horse will run amuck,
trying to live without *how-to's*, trying to live goodly
trying to believe God can once more make
me holy of purpose and body
in all my being.

A Painful Lesson of Failure

Maryann Cavender Hood

Who would have thought a graying grandmother could shed tears over a test grade? But failure, at any age, hurts.

All lights seemed to be green—I studied and felt confident, then enjoyed a good night's sleep and a satisfying breakfast. I'd asked God's blessings on the day.

What went wrong? When the professor announced "40 percent" *again* I felt devastated. The first "40 percent" had been a novelty, something I *never* had experienced before. I hadn't felt too upset that first time, since he would drop the lowest of the grades.

After we all received our scores and settled in to hear the lecture for the day, I struggled to hold back the tears. A few slipped under my glasses and slid down my cheeks. I didn't want to get out a handkerchief and make my crying obvious to the class. If anyone had offered a word of sympathy I probably would have burst into sobs.

I think the professor knew what was going on, because when he mentioned the hard lessons of life, he glanced my way. By the time the class was over, and I reached the car where I could cry without being seen, I'd held back the tears so long I couldn't cry. Finally, while I drove home, the weeping began, bringing relief from the pressure; but the sick feeling remained.

What went wrong? I had to have an answer. What was the problem? Let's see, I thought—I'm fifty-eight years old. Was that it? Getting senile? Was my mental acuity disappearing? Was I a *has-been*? Would it be downhill from here on out? No, I really didn't think so, because I did have a ninety-eight average

in my other class. Creativity and productivity seemed to be no problem, and people said my writing looked promising. I understood the concepts in the course. Yet something had to be wrong somewhere.

I earned the same score as a girl who had been absent frequently and had not studied. Another student said she made 100% though she just guessed. Could it be the professor? No, definitely not! He broke the concepts down into bite-sized chunks that were not difficult to understand. My notes were complete, checked by tape recordings. The professor was thorough, pleasant, and caring. In class, his greatest desire seemed to be that his students learn the material. He was willing to give extra help if needed. If he wasn't the problem, what was?

Could it be that I'm right-brain dominated, and he is left-brain dominated? Obviously, we weren't on the same wave length. I've been told more than once that I read too deeply into questions and search for things not intended to surface. One classmate told me, "Maryann, don't study; just take the test!"

Why did I dig too deeply, searching for something more and overlooking the obvious? I read somewhere that creative people do not look for the answers; they look for alternatives. When I identified that, why couldn't I stop digging and just look for the obvious? I tended to miss the same questions over and over. Grandmother said I was long-headed. I guessed that meant I was like a donkey—just plain stubborn.

Maybe the reason was "None of the above." It might be time to learn a

painful lesson of life—the lesson of failure. When I experienced the first 40 percent, I thought I understood how my students felt, but the second failure crushed more than the first. I realized how my students felt when I placed papers with poor grades on their desks, and students nearby asked, "What did you get?" Did the pupils with poor grades want to crawl into a hole and disappear?

I had high grades and words of praise from the teacher in my other course—balm for my wounded ego. But many students never got that salve for their wounds. Many experienced *nothing* but failure and defeat. How many times must I have inflicted just such wounds, not realizing the hurt.

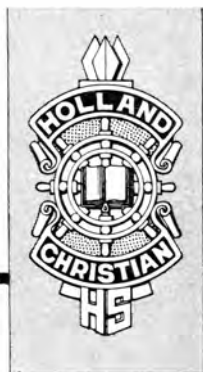
Never again would I hand a student a paper with a failing grade without thinking, "Honey, I'm sorry. How I would like to put my arms around you and ease the pain." I think of Jesus when he said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37 KJV).

I resolved right then to do my best to see that people around me would not experience the crushing blow of failure and wounded self-esteem that I felt. I thank God for teaching me a lesson. Sometimes we learn what others feel only by experiencing some of their hurt. ☹

Maryann Cavender Hood retired in 1991 after thirty years of teaching. She is a free-lance writer from Gadsden, Alabama.

The Morning after a Faculty Meeting

An Open Letter to the Faculty



HOLLAND CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

Daniel R. Vander Ark, Principal

950 OTTAWA AVENUE

HOLLAND, MICHIGAN 49423

I found yesterday's faculty meeting professionally and intellectually taxing; I've also thought about it too much since. We talked about school goals; among other good contenders for a prime goal, you chose this goal as the key learning goal for our school: that students will "view all of life (making choices, uses of God's creation, language, treatment of the world's people, and so on) through the 'glasses of Scripture.'"

That choice came as no surprise to me; our discussion of it was spirited and sensible. But then came this caveat: "But you can't *measure* for that. We could get a canned commitment from students on this goal, but it wouldn't necessarily mean they have accepted it." I started to argue for measurement of it anyway. My thoughts a day later go like this.

You remember that I claimed then that students will infer much of what we really value by the *tests* we give them. I think they quickly discern that we may talk about the "glasses of Scripture" occasionally but that what they had better know is the "stuff on the test." If one were to ask Teacher A's students a year later, "What do you think Mr. A most wanted you to learn?" I think most would answer the question by summing up their impressions of the tests Teacher A gave. For example, for good or for ill, most of my former students remember that I made them keep a journal and marked them mainly on how many entries they had: the more entries, the higher the mark. But I will surely grant that many former students remember some insight or practice of faith they saw in us that they now seek to emulate although we *never* tested them on it.

What else sticks in my brain from the past on this issue of teaching and testing for a biblical perspective is a study of Christian schooling nearly ten years ago, which concluded that Christian Schools International schools, by the average, had evolved more to an emphasis on academic excellence and away from teaching a specific biblical perspective in all subject areas. I sometimes fear the truth of that. Our parents seem to *prefer* academic excellence or career preparation; maybe they and we just *assume* that our children will learn a biblical perspective being in the company of Christians at home, at school, and at church.

In considering all of this after the meeting, I believe we need to design activities and tests to help students learn a biblical perspective throughout our curriculum; unless we do that, we need to avoid saying that we are teaching a biblical perspective. I realize that students will give us exactly what we expect in this regard. If we teach and then test for three biblical principles to guide people in stewarding our environment, and give A's to those who clearly explain and apply all three, I realize that the students may not have appropriated those principles into their heads or hearts at all; it might have been for them only an intellectual game. But that lack of true heart or head commitment should not stop us from achieving *at least* the intellectual knowledge. That lack does not intimidate us from giving A's to students who memorize and recall three reasons for the beginning of World War I that we have taught them. Their having recalled the reasons does not mean they have an appreciation for history, nor that they will remember them a year later, nor that they even agree with our conclusions about the reasons for the start of the war. This, too, can be "just a bunch of head knowledge" that they don't believe at all in practice.

It may be our desire for students to make head and heart commitments that lead to clear Christian choices that intimidate us from actually *teaching* a biblical perspective. We are too worried about students' faith being only "head knowledge" to the point of avoiding showing students biblically what the lordship of Christ means in every discipline we teach here. Maybe we are fearful because we ourselves find so many issues too vague to dare explain a Christian or biblical perspective.

Some of you have said that we only can see whether students have really adopted biblical values by talking to them some years after they graduate. The assumption behind that statement is that to test now what biblical perspectives students have at least intellectually gained would perhaps even damage an eventual heart commitment of those values. But we don't use the same argument for other goals we have for students. We immediately test to see whether students have gained a knowledge of literary interpretation tools, for example, and easily assume that students someday will value these in actually reading new literature after they have left school.

Let me suggest ways in which we might concretely teach biblical perspectives or principles. These are only examples; however, I get some of them from teachers here who already are using these means and giving credit to students who accomplish well the specific objective. The first is one that we used to require of all sophomores and now no longer do. After studying language (dialects, origins, varieties, meanings of words, slang, vulgarities, profanity, levels, social implications), teachers taught students various biblical instruction about this gift of language. Then students wrote their personal standards of language use, backing up their standards with biblical citations and principles. The papers that presented biblical bases for those standards, that presented specific examples, and that were well-written received A's. Did *all* of those students really believe what they wrote? No. Did *all* of them value their standards to the point of practicing them carefully? No. But to receive a passing grade, students needed to *know* biblical standards, to know a biblical perspective. Could an atheist have written the papers? In many cases, yes. I would still claim that most students learned a biblical perspective of language, if only for now a "head knowledge."

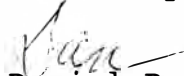
Recently one of your colleagues had his biology students wrestle with the question of origins of life by making them read carefully what the Word says about God's hand in nature and by teaching them what naturalistic evolutionists say about origins. He informed them carefully and had them read carefully. Then he asked them to discuss all they had learned with their parents. Then the students wrote their personal stance on this issue, quoting from the Word of God as part of their defense for their stance. I think that is concretely and consciously reaching our faculty's prime educational goal, and measuring for students' attainment of that goal (albeit still perhaps at an intellectual and academic level only), by designing an extensive activity to have students reach a biblical perspective. Of course, some students could have achieved A's while arriving at almost opposite conclusions. The same might be true when students bring the Bible to bear on the issue of women in ecclesiastical office.

Social studies teachers put Romans 13 into the middle of discussions of individual rights. Health teachers bring the Bible to bear on issues of wellness, including the troubling phrase that "bodily exercise profits us little." Art teachers bring in specifically biblical principles about the need for and the kind of art that praises God and—in a broad sense—edifies others. Business teachers need not look far to know that the Bible has plenty to say about our uses of money, including frustratingly plain talk about usury. Media teachers *must*, I think, provide students with biblical principles to help them not simply imbibe media. Genetic engineering is certainly a moral issue, but students need plain instruction on biblical principles to guide them through that morass of far-reaching pains.

Every course outline in my file, written by you teachers, has specific religious goals, many of them explicitly Christian. If we really mean them, if we really do expect students to articulate biblical principles (even though they may not have made them a "habit of the heart" yet), let's construct creative activities to teach them specifically and then to measure whether students have achieved this elementary understanding of them. If we award highest marks to those who have best understood them, the way we do now with other course objectives, all our students will soon learn that, indeed and *in deed*, our celebrated goal to teach students to see all of life through the "spectacles of Scripture" is prime.

Some of you have heard me refer before to James Schaap's autobiographical reference to his family's eating a perch dinner each Friday in the middle of a bar, with his father praying audibly in the hubbub of drinking and laughter. Schaap says that at the time he thought his father's practice nonsense. But Schaap admits that as he later prayed with his children, before they could catch a real heart commitment to prayer, he saw the sense of his father's "seemingly meaningless" practice. Sometimes we "go through the motions" and only value something later. But Christian school teachers need to educate for tendencies of the heart that are expressly biblical, fully realizing that the adoption of a full commitment will come much later. I really believe we need *that* act of faith in this school more often, more specifically, and more creatively.

Sincerely,



Daniel R. Vander Ark



A Shelter in the Time of Storm

William F. Stevens, Jr.

Sheltering has always been a major part of parenting. We parents shelter our children from hunger by providing food. We provide clothes and a roof over their heads to protect them from the elements. We immunize them against diseases. We take them to churches which reflect our specific theological position. In wisdom, we warn them about associating with certain children in the neighborhood (" . . . bad company corrupts good character." I Corinthians 15:33 NIV). There is no question that parents shelter and protect their children. Amazingly, sheltering continues to be one of the chief reasons expressed as a negative to Christian school education. "The Christian school shelters students from the real world," they say. "The kids don't know how to cope with real life when they've been cloistered in a 'hot house' all their lives," others argue. "You can't shelter kids all through life, why do it now?" is the rationale. I truly believe that the argument of sheltering children in Christian schools has been dramatically overstated and may be a smoke-screen for other thinking. Nevertheless, sheltering is an important concept that merits our attention.

I can still recall the day we brought my oldest daughter home from the hospital. We stopped at a red light, and sitting alongside our car was a big tractor-trailer, with billows of black exhaust streaming from the pipes into the atmosphere. My wife and I quickly

rolled up the car windows in panic, not wanting our precious new baby to be "polluted" by the foul air outside! Of course, some will say that we have to breathe, and that eventually we have to breathe what's out there in the "real world." Yet, we do not consciously have our children puff on a cigar or inhale the fumes of a tail pipe so that they can know what it is like to breathe bad air!

There are two aspects of sheltering that need to be understood in thinking through our philosophy of education. The first involves the positive idea that we do, in fact, shelter and protect students in a Christian school. As a matter of record, we base much of our philosophy on this very premise, that no teacher teaches from a vacuum, and we desire our children to be educated from a spiritual "likemindedness" to what we, as parents, hold important. Luke, the physician, wrote " . . . Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). The other aspect of sheltering is that overprotection can be harmful when done in such a way that hinders a child's maturation, acceptance of responsibility, and ability to deal with the "real world."

In terms of the first view of sheltering, Fanny J. Crosby's great hymn of the faith says it this way:

The raging storms may round us beat,
We'll never leave our safe retreat,
Oh, Jesus is a rock in a weary land,
A shelter in the time of storm.

Of course the Christian school is a shelter. It is a shelter (not a protective bubble) from the forces of the evil one, where children can grow in a normal educational environment, with support and encouragement in the things of God. It is a training ground in the basics of the faith, nurturing young people in their walk with the Lord, so that when they are old, they will not turn from it (see Proverbs 22:6). It is the same sheltering concept used by the military, seminaries, hospitals—and even the church. When was the last time you heard from the pulpit in your church a Unitarian minister, or a New Age channelist, or an atheist philosopher speak so the congregation could broaden their perspective? Why do we feel that our children need to grow up with the "thorns" of false teaching in the hope that they will be better for it? Timothy Dwight, an early president of Yale University, wrote, "To commit our children to the care of the irreligious persons is to commit lambs to the superintendency of wolves." The famous nineteenth century British theologian C. H. Spurgeon said, "Withdraw from a child the only divine rule of life, and the result will be lamentable. An education purely secular is the handmaiden of godless skeptics." How amazing it is that some Christian parents in a church sanctuary on Sunday morning will sing along with their fellow believers, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" and "Safe in the Arms of Jesus" but Monday through Friday place their children under



the teaching of instructors whose day-to-day life-styles are often contrary to everything a Christian family stands for. We do not allow false teachers to train our children at home and at church. Why then should we allow false teachers to educate our children at school? I agree with Martin Luther who said, "I would advise no one to send his child where the Holy Scriptures are not supreme" (Plass). The Christian school is a shelter in the same way that the home and the church are shelters. Christian schooling is a shelter from all that is wrong with the world, yet teaching them the answer to those wrongs, grounding them in the principles of God's Word that will be with them for eternity. I want that shelter for my kids, don't you? It is a weary land out there. And we teach children and young people that "Jesus is a rock in a weary land."

All too many unknowing Christians have *bought into* the idea that the Christian school safeguards (shelters!)

the student from all sin and evil to the point that we will never be able to deal with it. Hence, the child is not in the "real" world. I often tell parents that a Christian school is not made of Teflon. Sin does, indeed, penetrate us. We have not filtered sin out and sealed the students in a worldly-free atmosphere. But it is in the Christian school that our youth are held accountable for their actions and decisions, and are allowed to mature in a normal, child training environment. Professor Jack Layman of Columbia Bible College states that "no wall can be built high enough to keep out ideas and attitudes from our kids." It is the discernment of a godly perspective to these ideas that causes the Christian school to be a true shelter.

A well-known oatmeal commercial

advertises that we should eat oatmeal because it is "the right thing to do." Sheltering young people in a godly environment which allows them to develop and exhibit their God-given talents, with support and love from godly teachers, wrapped up in instruction in God's principles for living, is simply "the right thing to do." ©

William F. Stevens, Jr., is principal of Schenectady Christian School in Scotia, New York.

Reprinted with permission from *Christian School Comment*, Vol. 23, No. 1, a newsletter published by the Association of Christian Schools International.

REFERENCES

- Plass, Edward, Ed. 1959. *What Luther Says, Vol. III*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.
- Wilson, Douglas. 1991. *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*. Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers.

Biographical Collage

Thinking ahead to the new school year . . .

Karen B. Orfitelli

Teaching seventh grade in a small Christian school presents unique challenges. Each year as a new group of adolescents trepidly steps through my door, as I try to create an environment in which students will discover for themselves that they are "fearfully and wonderfully made" by a God whose "works are wonderful" (Psalm 139). Thirteen-year-olds spend a great deal of time feeling "stupid" or "ugly." Their sense of worth is often based on faulty perceptions of themselves and how they think others perceive them. Seventh graders need to be affirmed that they are "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus . . ." (Ephesians 4:10).

An additional challenge I am presented with each year is that of conveying a sense of newness to students who have been

together since kindergarten. Old reputations, childish behavior, and elementary mindsets need to be left behind so junior high can be a brand new start.

Over the last five years I have successfully used an assignment that meets both objectives and has the added benefit of beginning the year in a positive way for students. I call the assignment "Biographical Collage."

Through this assignment the students learn new components of one another's lives, personalities, and talents. It also allows students who have developed new hobbies or skills over the summer an opportunity to share them in a socially acceptable way. New students especially benefit from this icebreaker because they are able to communicate their unique capabilities without waiting to be asked.

Each student's collage is

prominently displayed in our room or hallway with a banner headlining Romans 12:6 or another appropriate verse. The day the assignment is due, each seventh grader has the opportunity to tell the class about his or her collage. It is at this point that I conversationally integrate scriptural principles of uniqueness and individuality (Genesis 1:26, Acts 1:27, and Romans 12:4-6).

An added benefit is that this assignment also permits each student to kick off the year with a good grade. Few students have failed to excel on this assignment; most are eager to take the collages back home and hang them in their bedrooms.

This assignment has become a school-wide favorite with teachers and students alike. We all look forward to the results!



Instructions:

The collages are assigned no sooner than the first two weeks of school (when you sense the students are no longer overwhelmed with new schedules and teachers and no later than three to four weeks into the year.

I spend almost an entire class period explaining the assignment to the students and answering their questions. One aspect students find difficult to understand is that there is no "right" or "wrong" way to present the collage. The only requirements are that each collage must include the following information:

- 1. Favorite color (may be reflected in the background or with paints)
- 2. Favorite Bible verse

- 3. List of three (or more) favorite foods
- 4. Baby pictures (at least one)
- 5. Current picture(s) of themselves—family or friends may be included
- 6. One-paragraph recipe for "A Perfect Day"
- 7. One-paragraph description beginning "In twenty years I . . ."
- 8. A list of hobbies, or the entire collage may reflect a hobby
- 9. A list of ten nouns that describe oneself
- 10. A list of ten adjectives that describe oneself
- 11. Mementos may be attached (ticket stubs from concerts or ball games, brochures—nothing expensive)
- 12. Anything else the student wants to share about oneself

The collages must be done on posterboard and can be any size, shape, or color the student chooses. They are due 1 1/2 weeks after the assignment is given. Students have turned in collages shaped like slices of neon pizza (reflecting favorite colors and food), baseballs, soccerballs, fluffy pink hearts, horses, and musical instruments. The students' grades are based on fulfilling the requirements (numbers 1-10, ten points each).

Try it—it's a guaranteed success!

Karen B. Orfitelli teaches language arts and Old Testament history at Cornerstone Christian School at Rockville, Connecticut.

Unless We Turn the Paradox of Christian Education

Lorelie J. Farmer

Christian parents and educators today are anxious. They face a social phenomenon that has been called the disappearance of childhood. They know they have little time before their children must cope with a world of images of acquisitiveness, violence, seduction, addiction, and a range of permutations on the domestic arrangement that leaves the nuclear family struggling even for notice. Christian parents sense that their crucial issues are matters of protection on the one hand and preparation on the other. How much should they shield their children? How should they encourage tolerance and compassion?

These questions persist at the heart of Christian education in its struggle to provide an alternative to secular education that is not insular. I am concerned that, as parents and educators become seriously engaged in these questions, they are likely to be presented with a range of literature that is misleading.

"How to" guides to Christian parenting have proliferated in recent years and are mostly spun from the same cloth. They attempt to popularize the content of the academic work ongoing in faith development and religious education. This work also is the source of many of the ideas and practices made available to Christian educators. Unfortunately it is based on the foundational assumptions of developmental psychology that view childhood as the ignorant and inadequate beginning of a progressive time-line that culminates in the more knowledgeable and more perfect state of adulthood.

Within this concept exists a theological error that ought to be apparent to the Christian. Yet, because this assumption is deeply embedded in the prevailing psychological view, it usually goes unnoticed. I find it disappointing that Christians labor to adapt this constructivistic psychology by attaching a scaffolding of biblical principles onto some system of prescriptive advice that is supposed to fall into place once learned and applied. These well-meaning prescriptions for living are destructive. They separate us from our true selves by dividing intellect from imagination, mind from spirit. They place authority squarely in our relationship with the world and not with God.

In contrast, Jesus speaks of childhood in a way that is radical, astounding, and full of mystery. He uses the child to teach about both the nature of heaven and his own identity. In the familiar scene in which the disciples ask him who is the greatest in heaven, Jesus literally stands a child before them (Matthew 18:1). One can imagine the little group standing in the dusty heat, puzzled and awkward, waiting for him to explain. And then comes the answer that demolishes the question:

Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3 RSV)

Commentaries that dismantle this scene into an illustration of the nature of humility seem clearly inadequate in the face of Jesus' continuation:

See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 18:10)

This description of the spiritual nature of young children speaks of a direct possession of the knowledge of God. It reveals childhood as an immediate participation in the divine, not yet turned around to the world's ways of perception, and in some sense, a true state of the soul we later lose. Of course this does not imply purity in the young personality, but it does mean that the soul of the young child is as yet an open door into the Eternal (to use a metaphor that C. S. Lewis was fond of). This is a truth that many of the great educators have grasped in different ways. Maria Montessori, for example, recognized in the quiet concentration of her slum children in Rome a natural inclination to worship, and she looked for ways to encourage and employ it as a foundation for learning. Her approach, like that of many other educators of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, could be summarized in Whitehead's idea that "all education is religious education."

Why is this breadth of vision and essential spirituality so lacking in the works our young parents and teachers are likely to read? Does our knowledge of child psychology not make us more able to respond in loving ways? Certainly it does, if we understand where the limitation has been permitted to occur. Through our secularization into the idea that the mind and personality are experiential constructs, in which the better the experience the better the result,

we have omitted the integration of Jesus' teaching that spiritual knowledge may be given without requirements, without meditation.

In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. (Luke 10:21)

If we, then, recognize that children are already participants in the truth, albeit imperfect and inarticulate, how does this affect our understanding of Christian education? Does it not begin to turn the problem around? As one who has long mused over the paradoxes of what it means to be a teacher, I delight in the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus. In what is surely the earthly brother of that other question the disciples asked—the "who's who in heaven" question—Nicodemus asks how he can be sure of getting into heaven. (I am tempted to compare "How do I raise a Christian child?") And Jesus' response is similar to that which he gave the disciples. There is again the refusal of the question, and again its turning around in gentle mockery: (to paraphrase)

What? You're a spiritual teacher and you know nothing of the ways of the spirit! You must become as surrendered to God as is the newborn, for there are no "steps" to heaven. The Holy Spirit cannot be summoned by your efforts. It blows, like the wind, where it pleases.

There is an echo of this same irony in the opening scene of Ibsen's "The Wild Duck." We see the longing child, the spiritually true but hungry child, asking her father to bring her some delicious morsel from the important dinner he is to attend. On his return she finds he has forgotten. Rather than apologize he blusters manfully by reading her the menu! She retreats to the attic, alone with her spiritual hope, the wild duck. Teachers, parents, writers of education manuals—how often are we all caught reading the menu because we have forgotten the real food!

A classic study in children's learning

of altruistic behavior affirms that young children respond to caring adult action, but will respond only minimally to exhortation (Grusec 1978). Similarly, my own research leads me to conclude that children will participate in the adult affirmation and invitation of the divine into their daily lives, if it is simple and real, but will be aware of insincerity (Farmer 1988). Young children are often aware of the difference between true prayer and the words-in-the-air variety. Disconnection of word and spirit can leave them confused; when accepted, it lays the foundation for their own loss of spiritual truth.

In the kind of surrender Jesus would have us make, we find ourselves on a pilgrimage in which children may become our accompanying friends and teachers. When our focus is moved from control to presence, children subtly shift from being concerns to gifts. The yoke becomes lighter; we become less goal-oriented and more observant, more playful—more childlike.

As a Christian educator, despite my considerable investment in developmental psychology, I have found my real compatriots in insight into the nature of childhood to be among the Christian mystics, poets, and artists, with those who can say, as did Thomas Traherne,

Those pure and virgin apprehensions I had from the womb, and that divine light wherewith I was born are the best unto this day, wherein I can see the Universe. By the Gift of God they attended me into the world, and by His special favor I remember them till now. Verily they seem the greatest gifts His wisdom could bestow, for without them all other gifts had been dead and vain. They are unattainable by book, and therefore

I will teach them by experience. (109)

or in this more subdued tone of Edwin Muir,

A child has also a picture of human existence peculiar to himself, which he probably never remembers after he has lost it: the original vision of the world. Certain dreams convince me that a child has this vision, in which there is a complete harmony of all things with each other than he will ever know again (33).

The true exercise of our imagination in faith exists in living continuity with that original vision. Its loss springs from the distortion and starvation of the imagination, the "eyes of the heart" that gaze on the divine. Here lies the true disappearance of childhood, and it afflicts adult and child alike. The tide of banal and destructive imagery to which both child and adult are subject cannot be kept out by any form of behavioral management, no matter how biblically founded, but by the nourishment of the imagination. Oswald Chambers claimed that "imagination is the greatest gift God has given us and it ought to be devoted entirely to Him" (68). In the affirmation and exploration of this gift, child and adult teach and parent each other, for without the other neither will be able to look for long on the mystery of what C. S. Lewis has called their "divine, magical, terrifying and ecstatic" existence.☪

Lorelie J. Farmer is assistant professor and chair of early and elementary education at Gordon College in Manchester, Massachusetts.

Adapted from *Stillpoint*, the magazine of Gordon College, Fall 1991.

REFERENCES

- Chambers, Oswald. 1935. *My Utmost for His Highest*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.
- Farmer, Lorelie. 1988. "Religious Experience in Childhood: A Study of Adult Perspectives on Early Spiritual Awareness." Unpublished dissertation. University of Massachusetts.
- Grusec, Joan E., Saas-Kortsak, Peter, and Simutis, Zita M. "The Role of Example and Moral Exhortation in the Training of Altruism." *Child Development*, 49, 920-923.
- Muir, Edwin. 1938. "Autobiography." London: Faber.
- Traherne, Thomas. 1986. "Centuries." Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow.
-

Think as a Child

Betty Klassen

I didn't think my challenge would be so obvious. But on the first day of school, there he is, out in the hall, backed into a corner, while the other children head for classrooms. I can't miss his red hooded sweatshirt, but the shades are drawn on the windows of his soul. Since fetal alcohol syndrome makes it hard for him to learn, and his Individual Educational Plan prescribes daily learning assistance, I need to connect.

People who worked with him last year try to coax him into the proper room, but he maintains his stance. I go to the class where he should be, but I hear little of the teacher's first-day tricks. My prime target is out in the hall. I try again.

Surprise. He's moved a few feet closer. He's sitting on a chair outside the office door. "Let's go to your class," I coax. "There's nothing to do here."

"I'm not going to that class," he maintains, breaking his silence for a moment. "I wanna go to *that* class." He points the opposite direction and folds his arms in defiance.

Back in the classroom, I breathe a prayer. "Lord, I'm not getting anywhere with him. Show me a way around his mental block." I recall what I read during the summer. "Try to think as a child thinks," the math expert advised. Does this apply to an impasse unrelated to mathematics?

"What is Moshe thinking?" I ask myself. If I had walked a mile in Moshe's moccasins, what would I be thinking? If

I had not known about the summer's fruit-basket-upset in classroom assignments and that the kindergarten had been moved into the portable, and if people had tried to coax me into the former kindergarten room, would I think they were trying to put me back into kindergarten? Would I tell them that I want to go where the Grade 2 class was last year?

If I could coax him into the room, he would see that it is a Grade 2 class now. I try again.

"Would you like to read a book? Aren't you getting tired of sitting here?"

"No. I don't like to read. The secretary is going to read to me."

"But the secretary is busy, and she doesn't have any books for you. We'll have to find a book in your room. Let's go."

He turns his head the other way. I fetch two books from the assortment in his class, go out into the hall, and offer him a choice. *Curious George* gets the nod. Words and pictures transport us into the amusing world of monkeys, red fire trucks, fire chiefs, men with yellow hats, and . . .

The bell clangs. Students pour out of

the classrooms. "Is it recess?" he asks anxiously.

"Yes, but we have to take the book back to your room before you can go out." He lags a step behind me, but he's coming.

Once over the threshold, the friendly male teacher lets him make a bookmark with a smelly felt pen (so we can finish the book later) and gives him a new pencil, an eraser, and even a ruler. A smile sneaks across Moshe's face.

Thank you, Lord, for your guidance on this first day. Alert me to other situations when a child may misunderstand a teacher's directions or instruction. Then help me to follow the child's train of thought and perceive how I might intervene unobtrusively to facilitate understanding. Grant me a wise, discerning heart like Solomon's (1 Kings 3:3-7, 12) and bring to mind things that may be helpful as I aid these special children of the heavenly Father. ☪

Betty Klassen is learning assistance aide at Abbotsford Christian School, Heritage campus, in Abbotsford, British Columbia.

REFERENCE

- Kaplan, Rochelle G., Yamamoto, Takashi, & Grinsberg, Herbert P. 1989. "Teaching Mathematics Concepts," in *Toward the Thinking Curriculum: Current Cognitive Research, 1989 Yearbook of the Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development*, 59-62. Ed. Lauren B. Resnick & Leopold E. Klopfer.

Do-It-Yourself Typing Class

Stefan Ulstein

I hated typing class. I was no good at it. The girl in front of me nearly melted the keys, she was so fast on the timed tests. The class moved too slowly for her. It moved far too quickly for me. I was always dazed and confused, like a beginning piano student trying to play "Flight of the Bumblebee." The teacher gave me a "D" as a gift because he knew that I was trying in my own klutzy way.

Sitting in that class going jjjjffggghhh nearly drove me crazy. I thought, "There must be a better way. When I'm not hopelessly lost, I'm bored by the repetition."

A quarter century later there is a much better way. Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing is just one of the many computer programs students can use to learn typing. It is basically a video game that starts the novice on the dreaded Home Row of the keyboard and progresses to advanced skills. It even teaches the numeric keypad. Students work at their own speed and get instant feedback and correction.

I knew that Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing was a gem when my son, Tor, taught himself to type the summer after sixth grade. He simply fooled around on his computer, and soon he was typing. To him it was painless, even fun, and now he does all his major writing assignments on the computer.

I decided to try out the Mavis method in the high school classroom the following school year. I offered to teach a class called Independent Keyboarding to students. I just had them come in, boot up the program, and start typing while I taught my regular English class. In a small school like ours it is

hard sometimes to schedule a particular class, but with a computer-interactive format, the student can take typing any period of the day.

The all-time champ was Christy Bare, who was typing 30 words per minute in three weeks. Since we weren't even at mid-term then, she finished out the semester using her new skills as an office aid. I've had several students take Independent Keyboarding in the past couple of years, and all of them have learned to type faster than their friends in the regular typing class.

The beauty of Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing is that it is fun. I even allow students to wear earphones and listen to radios if they want to. Most don't because they like the program so much. The format changes so that it doesn't get boring. The program gives the learner instant feedback, too, and will even print out a graph analysis of

the student's weak and strong areas.

I now have Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing installed on the hard drives of all my classroom computers. Some of my regular English students boot it up when they have free time, and other kids come in at lunch.

Now that the computer age is old news, there's no excuse for schools to have students who can't use a keyboard. Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing, at \$39.95, is the fastest, easiest, most enjoyable way to teach students the essential skill of keyboarding. Ⓜ

The Software Toolworks
60 Leveroni Court
Novata, CA 94949
415-883-3000

Stefan Ulstein teaches at Bellevue Christian Junior and Senior High in Bellevue, Washington.



Supervising Coaches

Robert F. Topp

We conclude this series with this article, slightly edited and reprinted from the March 1992 CSI Administrator.

Coaching has been called the highest level of teaching. Because coaches (and music directors) prepare students for public performance, their work is scrutinized closely by far more people than will ever see the results of English term papers, math tests, or physics experiments. Without disparaging the important work of classroom teachers, we must realize the higher intensity level required of these instructors who invite the public to see their class perform. The coach's skills and personality are open to public view and judgment. Therefore, supervising and supporting our coaches is an important administrative effort.

Finding a Good Fit

We search the malls for good shoes, hoping to know years of comfort and fit. We search for quality teachers with the same hope. However, when it comes to finding coaches, we either settle for a poor fit that might appear attractive or pull out from the "closet" an "old pair" that may or may not fit. Sometimes the process is little more than the principal saying, "Ken, the new math teacher, could take the team. He played when he was in school." In small schools we find ourselves saying, "Beggars can't be choosers." Although that reality exists, we ought not lose sight of the ideal situation.

The best prospective coach is one whose Christian testimony is dynamic, whose knowledge of the game is superior, whose teaching ability is excellent, whose philosophy of sports corresponds with the school's specific philosophy of sports, and who is on the faculty or is regularly available during practice and game times. These five points create a good outline for an interview with a coach.

An athletic director or principal can wind up interviewing a prospective coach for a job in a sport that he or she does not

know too well. That administrator needs to do a bit of research by talking with an experienced coach of the sport to ask about the kind of questions to ask and answers to seek. When that is not possible, try asking "What is your strategic philosophy of this sport?" This question exposes a candidate as unprepared or well-versed in the sport. If responses sound impressive but a bit foreign to the interviewer, then the coach is probably quite knowledgeable.

Although a candidate's Christian testimony and availability to attend all practices and games are the essential qualifications that we consider first, we cannot bypass a candidate's ability to teach. This involves three areas: ability to communicate clearly, ability to control and motivate students, and sensitivity to students' needs (which are often different from team needs). Interview questions should be composed to address these points. Examples include, "How would you handle a player who stubbornly refused to run laps you assigned or one who yelled or cursed at you in response to your coaching?" and "What is your view on substituting?"

You may interview an experienced coach, but the coach's philosophy of sports remains to be investigated. Schools and individual coaches can take vastly differing approaches. Such viewpoints could include the "all kids play every game" view, the "doing our best at our level" view, the "we're going big time" view, the "just win, baby" view and the "poor us" view, filled with excuses instead of dedication. The validity of any of these philosophies is not the issue for our current topic. Rather, the issue is that of finding a philosophical fit between the school and the applicant. Every school has a philosophy and a personality and so does every coach. Asking about an applicant's background experiences in his or her own youth can reveal areas that will or will not be a good fit.

Shaping Expectations

Job descriptions tend to be limiting and, at their worst, legalistic. So to suggest using the word *expectations* is

not a mere semantics game. God expects us to extend beyond the minimum effort in the use of our talents. Certain things need to be specified, but no list of duties is complete. Not even "Other duties as assigned," as seen on many job descriptions, can cover the things a coach should choose to do out of initiative, dedication, and love. Here are some appropriate points, which require addition or change to specific situations at specific schools:

1. Provide leadership and supervision for athletes during all team gatherings, including travel time and "waiting for my ride" time.

2. Provide thorough instruction and preparation in skills, strategy, sportsmanship, safety, physical fitness, and Christian testimony in athletics. Explain your philosophy of Christian school athletics sincerely to your team.

3. Maintain necessary records as requested by the athletic director.

4. Supervise the distribution and return of uniforms and the use and care of team equipment.

5. Handle injuries and discipline problems responsibly.

6. Report game results to local media.

7. Seek sources for professional development in coaching such as books, magazines, videotapes, and clinics.

8. Build positive relationships with athletes, their families, opponents, and officials.

A sheet listing your school's expectations for coaches should be shown at every coach's interview and be reviewed at annual coaches' meetings. This begins to ensure a proper fit between a coach's expectations and the school's.

Evaluations—Time for Accolades or Antacids?

Job descriptions could be used as measuring devices for evaluation of coaches. Did Coach VanDyke ever leave early or fail to call the newspaper or forget to bring the med kit to a game? Coach VanDyke may get good grades

on detail work such as this but may have failed to teach skillfully and relate positively to the athletes. Good old Coach VanDyke may be poor at detail work but be well-loved and well-prepared. Would anyone ever think ill of him, much less think to have him replaced?

We ought not dare to presume that on a list of eight or ten job expectations all are weighted equally. Every coach must be a skillful instructor, motivator, disciplinarian, role model, manager of people, and witness for Christ. These points create the heart of any evaluative yardstick.

The purpose of the yardstick is not simply to see whether one "measures up" to the standard of a coach who is retained. An evaluation on any employee is, in theory, to promote self-improvement, to help the employee to perform successfully. However, the process is met with fear and hesitation. Too much negativity and too little encouragement leave people nervous.

Evaluation can and should be done as informally and as positively as possible. Formal evaluation devices are intimidating and largely ineffective. Sitting on the bleachers or at a table over coffee merely to talk casually is sufficient. Avoid any written notes unless the coach is not being retained. Begin with positives and end with positives. Tactfully but truthfully the A.D. must point out the areas needing improvement, gathering input from the coach. Listening is just as important as tact. Also important is the decision of which points to bring out and which to ignore. If you major in the minors, you'll kill the evaluation process and wound a valuable servant of God. Remember to return to positive points to conclude your talk.

I know of one basketball coach in a Christian school who received from his athletic director a five-page evaluation filled with picky, negative things. Understandably, he resigned from his coaching position, and though he remained at the school to teach, he took an assistant coaching job at a local college. The undercutting of his loyalty and dedication resulted in a significant loss to the school.

A Poor Fit Hurts the "Feet"

We must begin with our basic presumptions; athletics is an educational

pursuit, not recreational, and the coaching must be done from a distinctly Christian perspective. God's love and God's truth must be held high by all teachers and coaches in a Christian school. When a coach severely compromises either, athletic directors and administrators must step in.

That statement of presumptions is the beginning of an athletic statement of philosophy. This philosophy needs to be articulated for the sake of the school as an institution and for the coaches, present and prospective. When a coach's performance shows a disagreement with the school's philosophy of athletics, it is time to address the disagreement. If it cannot be resolved, the coach cannot be retained. Poor philosophical fit occurs more often than poor teaching skills. The emphasis on this "fit" makes the candid articulation of the school's athletic philosophy crucial. Even if that philosophy is "Win or else" or "Ease up; it's just a game," it must be stated up front.

Even in professional sports, this concept is evident. The well-understood view up front for new coaches or managers is either "Win now" or "Develop our rookies so we can win big in a few years." Coaches or managers who are fired from pro posts are perceived often as too hard-nosed for a team personality that is very loose or too laissez-faire for a team personality that is very competitive. Knowledge of game or teaching ability are rarely the issues.

A coach who is being told that he or she does not fit into the program needs to be counseled sensitively. We need to help the individual see God's sovereignty, love, and comfort so the individual can better tune into God's will for further coaching pursuits, if any.

It is important that athletic directors and administrators, rather than parents or athletes, determine the school's philosophy and the quality of the coach-school fit. A wise administrator will recognize the difference between a coach who relates poorly to athletes and their families and a coach who is being crucified by whining constituents. The program is strengthened when we support a skilled but persecuted coach just as much as when we remove an ineffective coach.

Contracts for Coaches

If your school currently uses

contracts for coaches, you will find the policy solidifies the agreement between two parties, the coach and the school.

If your school does not use contracts, please seek wise counsel from an experienced administrator or Christian lawyer. Starting to use contracts could send a message such as, "Watch yourself. Do only what you must. Don't risk not being offered another contract."

Assistant Coaches—Manna from Heaven?

Having an assistant coach in a Christian school is somewhat of a luxury. The ideal situation is one in which the assistant coach understands, agrees with, and coaches with the head coach's philosophy. Ideally, the assistant is also in tune with the head coach on a personal level.

However, more typically, an enthusiastic alumnus or athlete's parent offers to serve as an assistant coach, usually as an unpaid volunteer. The price being right and the help at practice appreciated, the head coach agrees to accept the volunteer. Sometimes this works out, but sometimes a hasty decision leads to regret.

Within a day or two of a volunteer's offer, the head coach should arrange a meeting to explain his interpersonal, spiritual, and strategic philosophy of coaching and to ask questions similar to questions asked of a head coach in an interview. Finally, the head coach needs to get a sense of whether the assistant is willing to submit to and support the head coach as the ultimate decision maker on crucial items like starting lineup, substituting, practice drills, and discipline.

The more clearly the coaching staff is committed to serve for Christ's sake, the more they will model a spirit of unity. Formulas vary for the right "fit," and some blisters may appear. Yet, administrators who seek and apply God's guidance in supervising their coaching staff should gain confidence in seeing the school's athletes reflect their Christianity as they perform. ☺

Robert F. Topp teaches physical education and English at Annapolis, Maryland, Area Christian School. He also serves as athletic director.

Cooperative Learning in a Cross-Age Setting

Michelle Klooster

As a teacher of a kindergarten-through-third-grade classroom, I have often, out of necessity, dabbled in cooperative learning. My students read books in pairs and write essays together, but these assignments are always short-term. This year, out of a desire to have my students work together in a way that utilizes the abilities of each one, I took on the personal challenge of attempting a full-fledged cooperative learning project as part of our study of the state of Washington.

I went to the public library and gathered all the juvenile books I could find on Washington state. I selected specific topics about our state based on the topics covered by the available books: recreational attractions, Native Americans, and natural resources/products. From these topics I created the Vacation Club, the Indian Club, and the Made-in-Washington Club. My idea was that each group would produce a

map so that our class would be provided with a recreational map, a historical map, and a products map. I chose these projects because I wanted a less traditional, "right-brained" way of representing what was learned. There are many students who have God-given talents in these areas who never get to use them in an academic project, so I attempted to bring out their gifts. There was only one problem that kept staring me in the face: logistics.

I struggled with how to divide up the students. I wanted them to be motivated by being able to choose a topic of study (within my parameters). Yet I felt that there might not be a sufficient mix of abilities and ages if students were allowed to design the groups. A mix is imperative to develop the concept that we all have unique gifts and need to use them for the building up of the body of Christ. My administrator suggested that I ask the students for a first and second choice of clubs. Then I could arrange the groups within those

choices. This approach allowed me to make sure that there was at least one competent reader in each group and a balance of older and younger students.

My next challenge was structuring the learning. My administrator and I decided which jobs I could give to the group members. Each group had a runner, a reader, a reporter, and an organizer. The runner took charge of getting resources, asking for teacher assistance, and other tasks that needed to be accomplished away from the group's central work station. The organizer (intentionally not called the leader lest the person feel "in charge" of the group and miss out on the blessings that come with being a servant head) told the group which tasks needed to be accomplished each day (as per teacher's instructions) and then delegated the tasks. The reporter told the entire class what the group discovered each day. I used a role-play exercise to familiarize students with these roles.

At the beginning of each forty-five

minute session, I met with the organizers to assign each day's tasks. Often the task was to put a symbol on their map about a subtopic of their theme (i.e. the Indian group might put symbols on their map concerning the coastal Indians' diet). The organizers reported to their groups, and the runners went to a resource table for materials (a secondary student or a parent assisted the runners in selecting materials). The groups looked through the materials until they found something helpful. The readers read aloud the information. Then the group drew an icon on their map to represent what they had learned. At the end of the session, the groups met in our "circle area" and the reporter from each group shared what had been learned and accomplished that day.

I discovered that every student was able to contribute. The older students felt important because they were the ones who read the information to the

others, yet the younger students were just as important even though they could not read. They found pictures, drew symbols, and reported to the class.

Having been so personally involved and having experienced ownership of what was learned, the students felt enthusiasm and excitement over what their club was doing. It showed me that giving students the chance to be personally involved in what they are learning affects not only how they learn but also how much they learn.

Because of my students' pride in what they had learned, I decided that it was imperative that the students share what they had learned. Each group discussed and decided on a way to share their learning. Two of the groups decided to make skits, and one decided to make posters. Teachers' aides coached each group, helping students to come up with lists of needed materials. They also helped them to come up with ideas.

Making the posters and practicing the skits became valuable as a chance for meaningful practice of the information that was learned, not to mention the skills learned in working together, and the chance for kids to build a community together.

We invited the intermediate grades to our classroom so that we could share our information. My students received quiet attention and affirming applause. I asked the audience to share what they liked about each presentation, which elicited a long, fruitful discussion. I also learned a great deal from my first experience with cooperative learning, and the insight helped me to start another project as part of our study of animals. ©

Michelle Klooster is the elementary teacher at Covenant Christian School in Seattle, Washington.



Michelle Klooster guides her students in a cooperative learning project.

The Eight and Two Crew

Charles Muether

When I came on staff at Pella Christian Grade School, Rita De Berg asked me if I wanted my eighth grade literature class to join her second graders for twenty minutes of reading and writing. The weekly tutorial time was called Big Buddies-Little Buddies, and for the first nine weeks of the semester both grades were enjoying the time together—or so I thought. What I eventually realized through the students' journals was that going down to the second grade room was becoming a "major drag." Since I was new to the school and already burdened with trying to stay ahead of the system, I was not going to make too many creative changes. I told my class how much the second graders benefitted from our tutelage. I left it at that.

The following summer, Rita and I talked about the lack of student interest in what we thought was a potentially valuable program. As we read through the student responses, we saw the missing component. It was not that reading or writing was boring, but that the eighth graders felt the program was too one-sided—focused too much on second grade progress. The eighth graders were not experiencing the reaping of their sowing despite my continual assurances that they were helping the younger children. Sometimes I too felt that reading for a quick twenty minutes or helping them cut out pieces of construction paper was a waste of our class time. Rita and I decided to drop the tutorial time unless we found a way to make the shared time more equally beneficial.

During that year's Spiritual Emphasis Week our speaker challenged the junior high class to act like parents

to the smaller children in the school. I felt that concept was too deep for the eighth grade—after all, are not eighth graders still children? Yet, what the speaker said had some merit. What if we had a program in which eighth graders could lead smaller children into a variety of activities and play an active role in the development of these children's creativity?

Instead of tutorial time we initiated Eight and Two Crew—a name the eighth grade class chose from a second grade brainstorming session. We began the year defining the Eight and Two Crew objectives. Eighth graders had a role in the defining and the decision-making process.

Our first activity was to introduce ourselves. Each class filled out a survey sheet about themselves. On the basis of the survey, Rita and I paired one second grader with one or two eighth graders. No relatives (unless it was a distant relation) or neighbors were matched up. We were even careful about matching those who rode the same bus. Once the students were grouped, they wrote introductions of themselves and their families. Each second and eighth grade pair took the details and shaped them into rhyming couplets. Adding a little rhythm, each pair came out with their own Eight and Two Crew rap, which they would later perform in front of the class. Second graders received a workout in personal writing, rhyme, and rhythm. Eighth graders received the same with the addition of the excitement of seeing someone learn under their direction.

Later both grades donned racing gear as they revved their engines in the Great American Reading Race. Each pair earned miles through reading and writing activities. A mural-sized map kept the coast-to-coast race in plain

view. After the checkered flag waved the ending of the four-week race, the Eight and Two Crew found themselves exploring computer basics, learning cursive penmanship with shaving cream on desks, following directions through recipe cooking, writing outlandish tall tales about themselves, directing book commercials, and acting with home-made puppets.

Below I have listed three integral components of the Eight and Two Crew. Each area is important to the success of a solid program.

Unit Support and Outcome Expectations

Often the Eight and Two Crew served as an enrichment activity for a unit in progress. Especially for the second graders we found that tying an Eight and Two Crew activity into a previously taught lesson reaffirmed their learning in an exciting way. While Rita was teaching currency in math, the eighth graders began working on a carnival that would test their little buddies' addition, subtraction and stewardship of money. One week, second graders earned Eight and Two Crew money in their activities. Then they were invited to the eighth grade literature room to spend it. The children's stewardship and budding sense of economy were tested by arcades, balloons, and goodies. Their resistance proved that Rita had taught them well—most eighth graders had to cut their prices in half before the customers would show interest in buying. The eighth graders learned about advertising and marketing that day.

Of course, not every activity met all of our outcome expectations. One day on a nature hunt a few eighth graders lost sight of the objective, leaving the second graders to fend for themselves.



Jana Deor, an eighth grader, puts make-up on second grader Joy De Haan before an Eight and Two Crew play.



A lesson on direction-following in Home Economics.



The Eight and Two Crew Carnival.

When our principal discussed this error with the students, he stressed the importance of responsibility and example—two key elements of the Eight and Two Crew program. For any activity, written-out student outcome objectives keep a solid base of direction, especially when two classes are involved.

Teacher Planning

Obviously the Eight and Two Crew activities take more than the twenty minutes of our previous little buddy tutorial program, but the time is well spent. Working with a teacher of a different grade is an exciting factor. However, Eight and Two Crew is not a team-teaching venture. The students do the interacting, teaching, and learning while the teachers guide and do some of the initiating. Teacher planning involves laying down the objectives and assessing the achievement. The amount of planning and time spent in class has met one of our school-wide language arts outcome goals wonderfully: the student will develop language usage skills that honor God and others of varying age, race, ability, gender, and culture.

Parental Support

Parental support has been tremendous for the program, thanks in part to the Eight and Two Crew bulletin, which notifies parents of upcoming activities. Parents love to see their children perform. They are even more delighted when they see students of all ages interacting together. One such activity we are considering is an after-dinner theater program filled with pantomime, music, and a delicious menu prepared by the Eight and Two Crew kitchen. Naturally, we will use Eight and Two Crew invitations.

Our Lord said we should love one another and build each other up. I have seen much of this in the Eight and Two Crew, and even more delightful, they enjoy doing so. ☺

Charles Muether teaches seventh and eighth grade language arts at Pella Christian Grade School in Pella, Iowa.

What Makes Christian Education Christian?

Traveling the Dusty Road

Tara Selby Smith

Teach [these words of mine] to your children talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

—Deuteronomy 11:19

A humble carpenter travels the dusty road, his weary bones buoyed by the heart of God. The sweaty grit stings his eyes, but he sees beyond and walks steadily, peacefully, solidly. His fellow travelers ask to stop, rest, turn around. He listens compassionately, gives them a vision for the journey. They travel on. Along the way he stops only to answer the cries of hurting hearts. In the homes of sinners, in his Father's holy house, on the road, a mountain, a lake, he models what he teaches. He is what he proclaims. He promises and he provides. In the world but not of it, he heeds a lonely call to be with his Father. His loving, healing touch is born of eons of listening. He knows where the hurt is, and he feels the

nature of the pain, big or small. He pours living water into parched souls. He nourishes his followers with solid truth. He takes the time to be a friend, to fellowship and laugh and eat and drink with the least of them. And they want to know.

“What is the answer?”

“Think. I'll tell you a story. The truth is found in many things you already know.”

“What do you mean?”

“Open your heart and mind to God.”

“What should I do?”

“Love.”

“Where can I go?”

“Follow me.”

“Who is my hope?”

“I Am.”

“I have no words.”

“The Spirit shall teach you, remind you, fill you.”

He stands and speaks, the Word incarnate, with authority. He gives of himself and they take. And they take.

And their questions brim with bitter hatred.

“Who are you? What do you do?”

“I have come to give you eternal life. I am the Son of God and Man. Who do you say that I am?”

“You are mad, a blasphemer, the devil's own power. You are trash.”

He travels and he dies in truth and love. So must we.

“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”—Matthew 10:39

Tara Selby Smith, from South Hamilton, Massachusetts, is a graduate student concentrating in Christian Education studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Teachers seem to think cooperative learning is so beneficial to all students, but I doubt the value for the high-achievers. In fact, I wonder, could it be detrimental to our gifted kids?

Actually, research supports both views. The work of David W. Johnson, professor of educational psychology, and Roger T. Johnson, professor of curriculum and instruction at the Cooperative Learning Center of the University of Minnesota, concludes that mastery and retention of assigned material by high-ability students have been higher in cooperative than in competitive or individual learning situations. Their studies also show that students used higher level reasoning or critical thinking skills in the cooperative groups.

Interestingly though, Marian Matthews, an assistant professor at Eastern New Mexico University's School of Education, interviewed fifteen of the gifted students who were in the program of Johnson and Johnson, and the results indicate that none of them felt they understood the material better after explaining it to others. They also resented the time taken away from their own learning and the uncooperative effort of some group members. Matthews concludes that these students see no benefit for themselves and experience much boredom. And thus, she asserts that cooperative learning promotes a utilitarian view of gifted kids.

As Christians we recognize the value of working in groups. We accomplish much in church, in school, and in families by cooperating with one another. In all of these situations we are asked to work with people of varying abilities; however, admittedly, the results are not always as successful as we'd like. Adults, even those who expect students to perform cooperatively in a group, do not necessarily function skillfully in that manner themselves. Perhaps we as teachers need to demonstrate the required leadership, communication, decision-making, and

conflict-resolution skills that ensure success in and out of the classroom. The role of the educator in structuring and facilitating groups and roles of the group members combine to create a complex learning strategy. All the individuals involved need to and can benefit.

Concern for the gifted is valid though. Even Johnson and Johnson agreed that the high-ability students should not always work in heterogeneous groups. I would question if any student should. Any one type of teaching method used too frequently risks the exclusion of a particular type of learner and risks the onset of boredom. The minds of our students can't be neglected. We must constantly be searching for ways to challenge all of them. God's gifts and talents must be developed, but also shared.

The whole popularity issue seems to be stronger at a younger age. The cruelty of exclusion and verbal attacks has increased in the last few years and greatly affects my fourth graders' school life. They act more like adolescents. How can I as a teacher prevent this or deal with it?

How wonderful to hear a willingness of the teacher to deal with this problem! Prevention is probably impossible, but expectation and recognition of the situation allow the teacher to get a head start the following year. Meanwhile, ignoring it will just cause it to escalate.

Drs. Patti and Peter Adler, sociology professors at the University of Colorado and the University of Denver, respectively, conducted a study entitled "Popularity Correct in the 90s" which confirms the fact that socialization ideas are happening at a much earlier age and that adolescent traits are often found in eight-year-olds already. Young children, however, are found to be more fickle in their relationships, and it is very difficult for them to understand why they're being accepted and why not. This confusion and hurt affect their school performance.

During class they often plot or plan their social strategies for the next recess.

Many elementary teachers find themselves unprepared to deal with these issues; years ago they only happened in junior high. Therefore, denial or reprimands prevail but do not offer solutions for the kids or the educators.

I teach middle school students, and I do hear them recall vivid, and sometimes vicious, memories of elementary school social situations. I fear I may have discounted their feelings as an unwillingness to forgive trite incidents instead of having recognized the possible severity of unresolved hurt.

The need for training and materials is evident; a concerned teacher willing to talk with and listen to the kids can discover their fears and hurts. The Adlers contend that the only solution is to try to strengthen self-esteem and reinforce values. Misconceptions about the friendships of elementary students can prevent educators from delving into the area of identity and relationships.

How idyllic was the day when all the children just wanted to play! Maybe some kids still need to learn how to swing from the monkey bars and race down the slide and play and enjoy this wonderful time of life. ☺

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. CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED.

Address questions to:

**Marlene Dorhout
CEJ Query Editor
2135 S. Pearl
Denver, CO 80210**

Professional Educators Day

Alvin Vanden Bosch

We invite others to submit highlights of retreats, conferences, or in-service plans that could be adapted for use in other Christian school communities.

District Three of Christian Schools International held its first district-wide Professional Educators Day in February a year ago. Since the 350 teachers in District Three also attend the Christian Educators Association (CEA) two-day conference in Michigan each fall, this one-day session had a different intent. The main goals were to help teachers in the district get to know each other better professionally, to exchange ideas with each other, and to receive professional stimulation from each other and from speakers.

During the first part of the forenoon, teachers of grades Pre-K, K, 1, and 2 attended a session on "Successful Teaching Strategies" led by Dr. Peter De Boer from Calvin College, while teachers of grades 3, 4, and 5 attended a session on "Successful Bible Teaching" led by Dr. Yvonne Van Ee from Calvin College. After the one-hour session, the two speakers exchanged audiences and repeated their presentations.

Also during the forenoon, junior

high/senior high teachers had a choice of attending either a series of sessions on "Cooperative Learning" led by Dr. John Van Dyk from Dorndt College or a series of sessions on "Instituting and Practicing Christian Service in the School and Community Setting" led by Brother William Laverly from Marist High School.

During the afternoon teachers of each elementary grade and of each junior high/senior high teaching discipline met in groups to exchange teaching ideas. (All first grade teachers met in one room, all fifth grade teachers in another; all junior high/senior high math teachers met together, etc.)

Two weeks before the conference, each teacher was asked to describe or illustrate in an outline sheet two teaching ideas he or she found to be effective. Schools were asked to send to the district twenty-five copies of each of these outline sheets on three-hole punched paper. These were collated and placed in three-ring binders. When teachers came to the conference, a binder containing teaching ideas from their peers was given to each of them to peruse and keep. During the afternoon session teachers were given time to comment on and answer questions about the teaching ideas they had submitted.

Those notebooks proved to be

valuable resources when teachers returned to their classrooms, although some teachers had wondered before the conference whether their effort in assembling the ideas would be worth the time.

"Our teachers came away feeling very good about the conference," says Ivan Van Essen, principal of De Motte Christian School in Indiana. "That time of the year the teachers needed a day away from the classroom. The professional day enabled them to interact in a communal way not possible at the large fall conference." Van Essen credits much of the success of the day to the carefully-structured plans.

Feedback about the 1992 session was so positive that District Three plans to hold another Professional Educators Day early in 1994.

Copies of more detailed plans of Professional Educators Day are available by contacting the CEJ editor.

Alvin Vanden Bosch is Christian Schools International District 3 coordinator located in Lansing, Illinois, serving CSI schools in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio.

Our Children—His Kids

Jenny de Jong

Nestled at the foot of majestic Hudson Bay Mountain in the beautiful Bulkley Valley of Northern British Columbia lies the small town of Smithers, home to Ron and Janna Van Driel and their four children. Ron is at the helm of the physical education department of both the elementary and secondary campuses of Bulkley Valley Christian School, which has an enrollment of 320 students in K-12. Ron's thirteen years of teaching P.E. and academic courses and his active involvement in campus, church, and community life have profoundly affected this small town.

The story begins much earlier, however. As a very young boy Ron displayed a natural aptitude for athletics: "My older brother Jack and I spent many fun-filled hours playing street hockey and backyard soccer together," says Ron. Then, very early in life, Ron learned of heartache and loneliness. Jack

developed leukemia, and the Lord called him home at the age of eight. Ron, only a year younger, was deeply hurt by the loss of his companion. Within a couple of years, though, he began to compete in cross country, track and field, and hockey.

In Fraser Valley Christian High, P.E. instructor Luke Van Harmelen encouraged Ron to build on his God-given abilities, athletics, and leadership quality. "By grade 11 I clearly sensed the Lord preparing me for the teaching field," says Ron.

Finances dictated a delay in plans, however. "I worked for a year after high school," says Ron, "but the desire of my heart was still the same—to teach P.E." He entered Dordt College in Iowa, and after graduating in 1980, he sent his credentials to a metropolitan Toronto school and to Bulkley Valley Christian School. The Toronto school officials called to inquire as to the whereabouts of his resume, which he had mailed weeks earlier—they received it one day after finalizing their staff roster. At that point Ron definitely felt God's leading

him to work in Smithers.

Ron loves children—his own children, your children, my children—and has a tender heart toward the underdog, the child who hasn't found a niche. "When I was young my stature and build resulted in many cutting nicknames that left a memory," says Ron, "a memory that helps me to be more sensitive to the hurts of kids I teach."

The first years of teaching were years of learning when to trust his own gut feeling about students and situations and when to seek out and follow the advice of more experienced co-workers. "I also needed to work in two teaching modes, academics in the classroom and P.E. in the gym," he says. "I strove for a long fuse, a short memory, and fair dealings in all areas."

"I believe negativism has no place in or out of the classroom," he adds. Herein lies one of Ron's secrets: mutual respect and friendship with his students, but never at the expense of his authority as a teacher.

Sports paints a vivid portrait of Ron's skills and personality. As a player his intensity is framed by sportsmanship and fair play. As a coach, he challenges his students to focus in with that same level of intensity within their own range of ability. Ron's strategy can be summed up in the words of Abraham Lincoln: "He has the right to criticize who has the heart to help." Ron sees beyond what students feel they are capable of doing. Players readily admit that he gives "loud" instruction from the coaches' bench, but are quick to add that they don't feel intimidated. "Even when he loses his cool he remains fair and isn't afraid to apologize when he's wrong," they say.

Winning the 1990 Christian Schools Junior volleyball tournament in Surrey, B.C., was a highlight for Ron. Before leaving for the tournament, team members had their individual numbers shaved into their haircuts and teased



Ron and son at zone finals.

Coach Van Driel to follow suit. "If you make it to the finals, I will," he joked. Ron felt quite safe—they were competing against much larger schools. Five days later, with first place under their belts, he and his boys returned home. Ron promptly had a C1 shaved in the side of his head; the bond of respect deepened.

Students know they are more than just a name Mr. Van Driel reports on three times a year. "He cared for me personally and was interested in what I was going to do with my life after grade 12," says Ted Veenstra. "At college I soon realized just how many physical, mental, and spiritual building blocks I had taken with me from Bulkley Valley Christian and especially from Mr. Van Driel."

"We trust Ron completely with our children," say grateful parents. "He encourages in our kids the zest to tackle life wholeheartedly."

Joe Toner, a fellow coach in the community's Kids Camp basketball program, says, "Ron is an excellent role model, and I see his students as a reflection of himself—his morals, values, and attitudes become an intricate part of their lives."

Outside of teaching, Ron is a man of few words. "Socializing is not his forte, but he actively participates on both campuses in whatever capacity needed," comments Principal Glenn Ewald.

All the in-school and extracurricular activity come with a price, often exacted at the expense of family life. No one is more keenly aware of this than Ron's wife, Janna. "After thirteen years of juggling Ron's teaching schedule, tournaments, community sporting events, Credo counseling, and all the rest with family time, flexibility has become my middle name," she says. "But I've always known the degree of intensity with which Ron takes on all of life, and our kids are secure."

What is Ron's long-term goal? "I

want my students to build on the same foundation I have, the Lord Jesus Christ," he says. "That's why I enjoy Christian School tournaments so much. The kids experience interaction with other Christian kids in an arena of life they love, and they begin to identify with the body of Christ on a larger scale.

Integrity is the quality that gives Ron strength to pay the cost of commitment—to home, to school, to

church, to the community. "My desire is to go on touching the lives of as many kids as I can," he says. "They're your children, but they're my kids and I love them, too." ©

Jenny de Jong and her husband live in Smithers, British Columbia. They are parents of four teenage sons, all currently students of Ron Van Driel.



Ron leads some of his kids in a spirit-raising cheer.

Mustard Seed Hosts Noted Guests

Mustard Seed School in Hoboken, New Jersey, hosted two distinguished guests, author Madeleine L'Engle and then-Presidential candidate Bill Clinton.

L'Engle read "The Ascension" from her book *The Glorious Impossible, a Life of Christ* and responded to a stream of questions about her writing technique, characterization, and sources of inspiration. One of the fascinating things about writing, she said, is that characters keep changing. Prior to the author's visit, students read daily from her new book and noted the illustrations by Giotto.

The Clinton visit came almost by surprise. During the presidential campaign Headmaster Larry Litman was surprised one day to find secret service personnel checking the Rue Building, a former public school building which Mustard Seed shares now with four other schools. The next day Mustard Seed students visited for half an hour with Clinton. "Tell me what you like best about your school," he said.

"It's a Christian school. I like that we can worship every day together. I like the teachers," Nathan Johnson replied.

"I like this school because everyone works together," said Yolanda Glaster. "It's like a family."

"That's really a smart thing to say," said Clinton. "If everybody in our country worked together, we'd be better off, too."

Jonathan Cummins asked Clinton a question: "If you were president of the United States, how would you help us?"

Clinton replied, "If I were President of the United States, I would like to take empty buildings just like this school building was empty, and fix them up for the homeless. That's where I would begin."

Students Compose Book of Hours

Mustard Seed's junior high classroom was transformed temporarily into a medieval scriptorium as students

created an illuminated Book of Hours.

Inspired by a fourteenth-century monastic prayer book from the New York Public Library's rare book collection they had viewed on a field trip, students selected scripture and hymns, wrote prayers and creeds, and penned illustrations for borders and initial letters. Under the direction of Karen Kalteissen and Linda Hamill, the book culminated a Medieval Studies unit that integrated literature, history, Bible, art, and writing.

Students were delighted to share the book with all who asked to see it, but anyone wishing to touch it was asked to wear white gloves.

Reprinted with permission from A Joyful Noise, Mustard Seed School, Fall 1992.

Group Forms Evangelical Environment Network

"Humans are called to a special task of caring for the creation in a shepherdly manner, since they reflect God's image in a unique way." This was the conclusion of a worldwide Forum on Evangelical Christianity and the Environment, held at Au Sable Institute near Mancelone, Michigan. Attended by sixty people from eight countries and five continents, the five-day meeting addressed biblical and Christian responses to environmental issues.

A major outcome of the meeting was the formation of an International Evangelical Environmental Network, for which Wayan Mastra of Ball, Indonesia, was appointed chairperson. The network was formed for the purpose of disseminating information among evangelical Christians. People and organizations wishing to participate in this network should contact Calvin De Witt, IEEN Secretariat, Au Sable Institute, 731 State Street, Madison, WI 53703 (FAX 608-255-0950).

CES Takes On New Research Project

The "multifunctional classroom" will be the next target of research for the Dordt College Center for Educational Services. In a multifunctional classroom a variety of learning activities take place simultaneously. A multifunctional classroom provides a diversified learning environment in order to meet a diversity of learning needs.

Building on earlier work in "teaching Christianly," the Center will explore questions such as the following: How can teachers gain a better understanding of the learning needs of their students? How can teachers expand the range of learning opportunities to meet these needs? How can teachers more effectively construct learning environments in which *all* students can celebrate their gifts and capitalize on their learning styles? How should such classrooms be structured? What management problems would such classrooms present?

Meanwhile, the Dordt College administration has approved the continuation of the B. J. Haan Educational Conference Series. This Series is co-sponsored by the Center for Educational Services and the college's education department and reflects the ongoing research and development taking place in the Center. In March the first ten-year series concluded with a conference on the topic "Building Community in School and Classroom." In the spring of 1994 a new series will begin.

Since Center projects are conducted in close collaboration with practicing teachers, the Center would like to hear from anyone who has developed or is interested in "multifunctional" classrooms. Contact Dr. John Van Dyk, Director, Center for Educational Services, Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa 51250. Phone: 712-722-6354.