

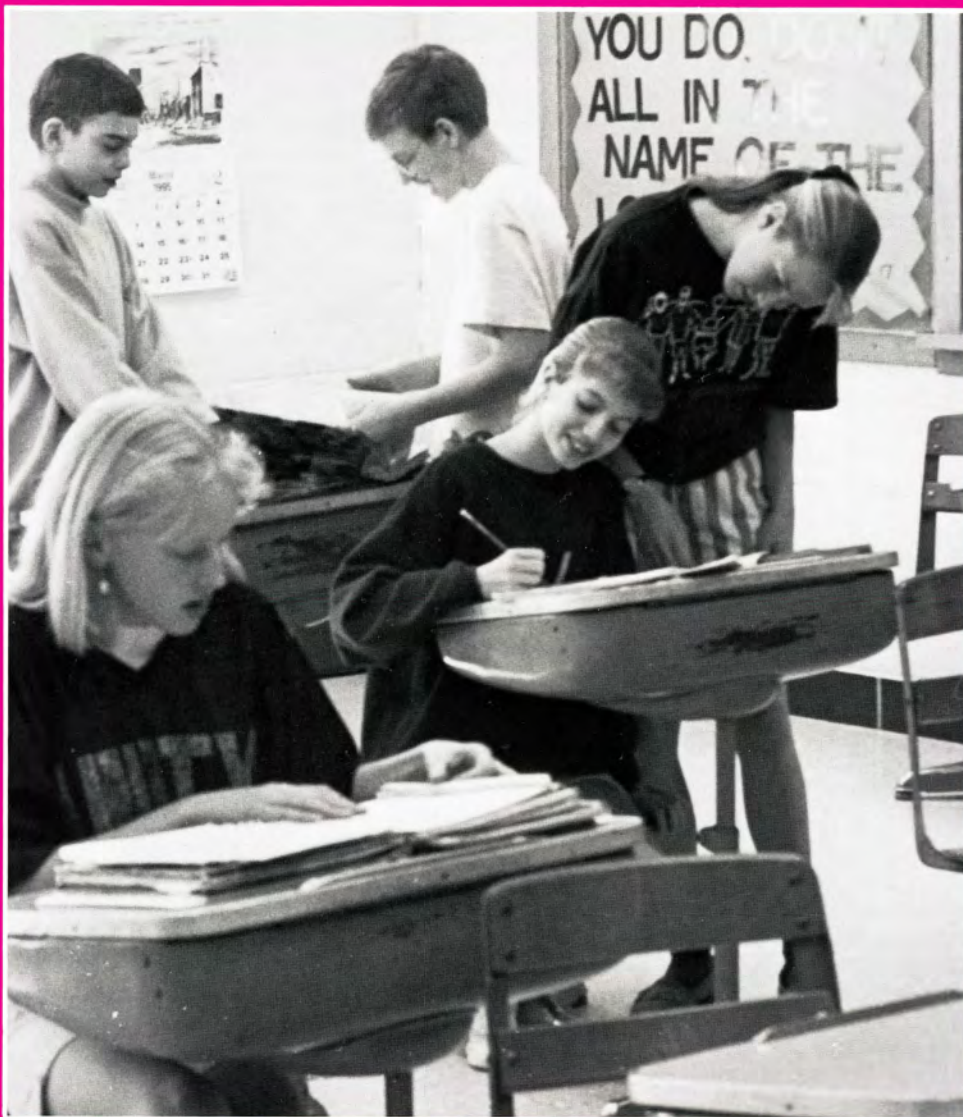
Vol 34. No. 4

April 1995

CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

Quarterly journal for Christian
day school educators

JOURNAL



MIDDLE SCHOOL



Lorna Van Gilst

Moving in the Middle

A row of pink-cheeked Russian matryoshka dolls stands in descending heights atop my roll-top desk. Their identical red-and-yellow-kerchiefed faces meet my gaze as I write. As usual, the second tallest has made a 45-degree rotation toward her big sister. I reach up and turn her face forward again, as I do every few days to keep her in line. "You must be the thirteen-year-old," I say aloud. Her feet will not stay planted. She has to move.

A few years ago, when I still thought I would teach junior high "forever," I participated in a workshop designed exclusively for junior high teachers—middle school was not yet much in vogue. One frazzled teacher asked the keynoter how she would teach were she to return to the junior high classroom. "We'd have dances all day," she quipped. "Those kids have to move!"

Perhaps it was that quality in young adolescents—their vibrancy, their action, their need to move—that kept me believing I could enjoy them forever. I know, of course, that sometimes they offered more action than I wanted. But overall, my years in junior high were years inspired by the fresh energy of youth. There was little of the false sophistication that sometimes plagues older teens.

As a teacher-education student, I had no intention of teaching junior high. People always pitied junior high teachers—thirteen-year-olds are supposedly monsters with overactive emotions, awkward, mercurial, changing, "the worst age." Almost by accident, or rather by providence, I came to realize that I enjoyed kids of that "quirky" age. They display a fresh authenticity. They say much of what they think, in the way

they think it, without pretense.

Why, then, do so many teachers resort to grades 7 and 8 only if they can't find a high school teaching job? Why are education programs geared to elementary or secondary levels, leaving middle school or junior high to the overlaps of the "bona fide" programs? Why do the junior highs get the old equipment discarded by the high schools? Why do they have higher student-teacher ratios and fewer teacher prep periods? Why does a high school job have more appeal than one in junior high or middle school?

The very creation of the middle school concept addresses some of those concerns. For one thing, the consideration of switching to middle school requires educators and parents to take the time to focus on young adolescents' particular needs and strengths. Rather than place these students wherever space allows, the community must provide a facility that allows for flexible scheduling, teamwork, and cross-discipline integration. Having their own facility gives middle school students the perception that they have equal importance in the system with elementary and secondary levels.

Many of the negative perceptions about students "in the middle" are overrated. Certainly, young teens do experience great physical change and emotional swings and social conflicts. I question, however, whether these changes make them more difficult than students in high school or even in college. In my experience, young teens had less to lose in playing out their emotions. They could say or do the "uncool" thing one day and bounce back the next. They could weep audibly at school when a classmate was killed, and the same day

they could giggle out loud with no disgrace. They could ask the class to pray for Aunt Carolyn far away in Minnesota, and their classmates would respond without hesitation. They could say they thought it unfair to have to visit old people in nursing homes, and yet they'd brag about whose elderly buddy was the smartest.

Middlers thrive on change. They rarely accuse a teacher of being disorganized for revising the plans. Nor do they require a six-month study committee before they make decisions.

Yet, in many ways, they're committed. Young adolescents have less need to explain their faith than to live it. And we who get the opportunity to live our faith in their presence ought to count our blessings.

What Is Happening in Christian Middle Schools?

Gloria Goris Stronks

Gloria Goris Stronks is professor of education at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

When I think back on my years of involvement with Christian schools I cannot remember a time when so much happened so rapidly as has occurred during the last few years in grades 6, 7, and 8. Whether one looks at middle schools of Bellflower, Vancouver, Grand Rapids, Miami, or Philadelphia the story is the same. While the process of change was different in each case and led to different models for schooling, in each case dramatic change has occurred!

More important than the fact that change has occurred is that the changes reflect research findings concerning learning and teaching for the middle years. So often in education there are temporary fads that guide the thinking and actions of teachers for a while, giving way only to be replaced by another fad. But this hasn't happened with the middle school concept. I am often asked whether there is research clearly indicating that the middle school concept is more effective than traditional schooling for these grades. That question is answered in a new book by Paul George and Kathy Shewey, *New Evidence for the Middle School* (National Middle School Association, 1994). I believe the change that has occurred in Christian middle schools will only be effective and long-term in schools where it was preceded by a period of careful study on the part of teachers, principals, students, and board members and was communicated carefully to parents and students who had not been directly involved in the study. The period of study found to be most effective usually occurs over at least one full year and involves many meetings.

Many schools that decided to move toward a middle school concept planned, as their first step, to examine the school mission statement to see how new insights concerning teaching and learning at the middle level would fit with the goals of the school. In some cases they discovered that the school

mission statement needed to be revised to reflect new understandings and beliefs concerning development and learning at every level in the K-12 system. This re-examination of the mission statement provided an opportunity for serious reflection on the purpose of Christian schooling at all levels, leading to a dialogue that was surprisingly profitable and important for schooling for the coming decade.

Once needed change was agreed on, a chronology or sequence of events was planned. Too many changes occurring at the same time can quickly lead to confusion on the part of students and loss of morale on the part of some of the most effective teachers. This kind of atmosphere often promotes a feeling of relief on the part of teachers who were most comfortable in their old ways and who did not support the proposed changes. A planned chronology of change allows those involved to assess their progress at many different stages as they work toward their goals. In many cases, as teacher teams met throughout the first year of the new plan, they became aware of areas needing additional study. By keeping track of those items they were able, at the end of the year, to help the principal plan for topics for inservice training needed for the following year.

I don't know of a single Christian middle school where the teachers and principals would say they have reached every goal and have arrived in their attempt to be a successful school. In every case they assure me that they are still learning how to be better at what they are doing and learning how to do more things. But that is one of the signs of a truly active, growing school.

Changes in Christian Middle Schools

1. What we have: A careful look at Christian middle schools will show that almost consistently they have introduced advisor-advisee groups and are finding those groups to be a very successful component of their program. The students in the advisee group have one adult (teacher, principal, resource room specialist, or guidance counselor) who

sees the students in that group at least once a day, or individually when necessary. The task of that adult is to be an advocate for the student, to monitor progress, and be the person who communicates with parents and student about the student's progress in school. Although in some schools the advisor also serves as the homeroom teacher, the role of the advisor encompasses more than the organization of the study period and giving announcements. The advisor is committed to making certain that each student in the group has a real "place" in the school and knows that one specific adult will take a special interest in her or him. Some teachers who serve as advisors are seeing an improved student attitude toward school along with increased self-esteem and higher levels of achievement.

What we need: In some schools the advisor-advisee groups really are functioning more as home-rooms than anything else and the concept of advisor-advisee has been lost. This has happened because each teacher is responsible for too large a group of students. Also, teachers have expressed a need for guidance concerning topics to be addressed in the advisor-advisee discussion groups. They would like to avoid use of secular, packaged programs for such discussion, but they recognize that they have had little training in providing this kind of support. Teachers have said that a handbook would be helpful to provide a way of thinking about advisor-advisee groups in keeping with a Christian school's mission, which includes guidelines for discussion, and suggested learning activities.

2. What we have: Many middle school teachers have together studied the characteristics, needs, and developmental profiles of their young adolescent population. In some instances, parents were involved in this study, and the entire middle school community came to understand why a new concept for instruction and learning was important for their students. However, as new teachers were added to the staff and as parents who had never had children in

that particular middle school became part of the middle school community, the principal at times has forgotten that the adults new to the school community have had little knowledge of what the concept is or why it is in place.

What we need: Schools need to plan ways to provide background concerning the profile of young adolescents and how that relates to schooling so that teachers and parents new to schooling at this level will understand what is behind the middle school design. Administrators often assume that recent college graduates will have appropriate background in learning and teaching at the middle school level. This often is not the case. Some colleges provide no courses specifically directed toward preparation for middle school teaching. In cases where they do, students who have prepared for teaching at the secondary or early elementary level may have chosen not to take the courses designed for middle school teachers. Principals who hire teachers without that information will have to make certain that the school provides the appropriate background for the new teachers.

Principals and boards hiring teachers for the middle school sometimes discover that they really have no clear idea concerning what kinds of teacher characteristics to look for. Questions arise such as these: What personality characteristics and work habits are found in teachers who are the most effective classroom managers for middle school? What attitudes toward evaluation and views of disciplinary strategies should one look for? Attention should be given to questions like these so that those who interview have a clear picture of teacher characteristics that will be appropriate for the middle school.

3. What we have: Many schools have provided opportunities for team planning time so that the middle school teachers may plan curriculum together and address areas of concern about individual students. Because middle school teachers have not thought of themselves as an instructional team, in some schools these team planning times have been used primarily for discussing the needs of individual students. The teachers use the remaining time for individual course preparation. Both of those activities are important, but team planning time is primarily for the purpose of planning curriculum and instruction in ways that are

appropriate for the unique characteristics of these students.

What we need: Middle school team leaders need information concerning directing the team members' attention toward curriculum matters. While the middle school concept certainly needs compassionate, understanding teachers, teacher teams need help with thinking of ways to plan integral or correlated units in ways that are in keeping with the learning needs of students at this level.

Because the middle school concept calls for heterogeneous classes while still providing for the needs of individual students, teachers have found that such instruction calls for new teaching strategies. In addition, teachers are asking for strategies for teaching reasoning in ways that are appropriate for students at the middle school level and teaching for transfer, or learning something in one context and applying it in another.

Because the way middle school teachers assess learning is closely related to the way they view learning and also to the ethos of the school, staff development sessions are needed to come to consensus concerning alternative means of assessment. Whether or not teachers and principals like to admit it, the way assessment is planned to a great extent directs classroom instruction.

Far too many Christian middle schools are relying on workshop presentations at the fall Christian school conferences to help teachers with questions and planning for middle school. Staff development for this important area must not be left to chance. Teachers are now asking principals and middle school teachers in each Christian Schools International (CSI) district or geographical area to determine staff development needs. They want arrangements made for regular, appropriate, carefully planned inservice for middle school teachers.

4. What we have: Most middle schools have exploratory units firmly in place, providing a great number of worthwhile activities. In some schools, however, an exploratory unit is made available simply because the topic is interesting rather than because the study of that topic is important for middle school students. In schools where parents and community people teach those activities, the exploratory programs are working well. Unfortunately, in some schools teaching the exploratory units is com-

pletely the responsibility of teachers, and in those cases the exploratories are added to the teachers' already heavy schedule.

What we need: The entire content of the middle school curriculum needs examining. Middle school teachers and principals need help in thinking about a framework that will guide the selection of topics for the disciplinary courses, integral units, and exploratory courses. They also need help with finding new ways to involve parents and community people in the school's exploratory program.

In some of the Christian middle schools the study of foreign language/culture has been provided as one of the choices for exploratory units. Other schools, however, have concluded that study of another language and culture is more than exploratory and should not be left to chance. Canadian schools have always required a second language, but more and more Christian middle schools in the U.S. now have, or are considering, mandatory study of a second language as part of the curriculum for every student.

As middle school staffs plan integral units, they have included in their plans encounters with literature appropriate for that topic. However, there is additional literature that middle school students ought to come to know. In many schools that literature is being ignored. Guidelines are needed for literature that is important for a total Christian middle school curriculum.

Teachers and principals who provide Christian schooling for grades 6, 7, and 8 can fit into several categories. There are those teachers and administrators who are aware that changes are needed but are frightened of movement toward change, those who have made a careful study of the reasons why change is needed and who are well into the process of change, and those who refuse to discuss the possibility that change is needed at all in their traditional junior high or upper elementary school. In each circumstance teachers and principals need dialogue with those in other schools to inform, to persuade, and to encourage each other. Perhaps the international CSI conference planned for the summer of 1995 will include a block for conversations and planning for better Christian middle schools.

Developing a Middle School Concept

Dave Mulder

Dave Mulder is principal of Eastern Christian Middle School in Wyckoff, New Jersey.

Historical Perspective

The best minds in education have, for two decades, agreed that middle schoolers have unique needs and, at a pivotal time in their lives, need educational programs that are neither upper elementary school nor junior high school. James Garvin, president of the National Middle School Association, says that "for the good of our children, early adolescents, we need to build a school program that will take into account emotional, physical, psychological, social, intellectual, and spiritual changes in their lives. We need to commit ourselves to establishing and sustaining a first-rate, exemplary middle school program.

The Carnegie Corporation of New York appointed a Task Force on the Education of Young Adolescents to study a range of issues affecting middle school students. Carnegie President David Hamburg stated that junior high, heavily departmentalized, had failed to meet the unique critical needs of young people aged 10-14 (Carnegie).

Educational Leadership reported in 1986, "Data from 130 exemplary schools show that changing to middle school organization positively affects student achievement and personal development, learning climate, faculty morale, staff development, and parental and community involvement" (ASCD 1986).

The Middle School Concept

True middle schools are relatively few. However, there is consensus on the concept. It is agreed that a middle school program should have two foci:

1. Nurturing personal and spiritual growth through a caring transition from elementary school to high school
2. Preparing students for academic success in high school.

All middle schools include grades 6 and 7. The common groupings are grades 6-8 and 5-8. Middle schools have these features in common:

1. Their teachers and students are organized into interdisciplinary teams, rather than self-contained and departmentalized instruction.

2. They use flexible scheduling during the school day, often with some kind of block schedule.

3. They include a home base period and teacher-advisor for each student.

The middle school concept is implemented in distinctive curriculum and learning activities, instructional methods, grouping of students for instruction, social interaction, and extra-curricular activities.

Unique Educational Needs of Middle Schoolers

Middle grade students are unique. No other grade span covers such a wide range of intellectual, physical, emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual development. We need to be sensitive to these differences when planning an effective program.

Middle school personnel over the years have coined a term for the stage of development these children are going through. "Transescence" is the stage of development that begins prior to the onset of puberty and extends through the early stages of adolescence. The transescents of today are on the average more mature, taller, and healthier and they develop earlier than previous generations. They are often emotionally erratic, displaying inconsistent and unpredictable behavior and are highly dependent on peer group acceptance and praise.

Students in the middle grades are undergoing a period of more rapid physical change than at any other time in their lives. Quite often the physical changes are far ahead of their emotional and intellectual development, so often these students are unable to sense the importance of school work itself.

The following developmental changes of transescents used as guidelines for Eastern Christian Middle School in Wyckoff, New Jersey, were compiled by the California State Department of Education:

Physical - Accelerated physical development begins in transescence, marked by increases in weight, height, muscular strength. Boys and girls are growing at varying rates of speed. Girls tend to be taller for the first two years and tend to be more physically advanced. Bone growth is faster than muscle development and the uneven muscle/bone development results in lack of coordination and awkwardness. Bones may lack protection of covering muscles and supporting tendons.

In the pubescent stage for girls, secondary sex characteristics continue to develop, with breasts enlarging and menstruation beginning.

A wide range of individual differences among students begins to appear. Boys tend to lag a year or two behind girls. There are marked individual differences in physical development for boys and girls. The age of greatest variability in physiological development and physical size is about age 13.

Fluctuations in metabolism may cause students to be extremely restless at times and listless at others.

It is well known that transescents may have ravenous appetites and peculiar tastes, and may overtax their digestive systems with large quantities of improper foods.

Social - There may be conflict caused by splitting of allegiance between peer group and family.

These are "puppy love years" of extreme devotion to a particular boy or girl friend, but students may transfer allegiance to a new friend overnight.

Transescents often feel that the will of the group must prevail. They are sometimes almost cruel to those not in their group. They copy in clothes, speech, mannerisms, and handwriting; they are very susceptible to advertising.

At this age there is strong concern for what is "right" and for social justice, and there begins to be concern for less-fortunate others.

These students are still influenced by adults and begin to identify with adults other than parents.

Despite a trend toward heterosexual

interests, same-sex affiliation tends to dominate during transescence.

They desire direction and regulation but reserve the right to question or reject suggestions of adults.

Emotional - Students are easily offended and sensitive to criticism of personal shortcoming.

Students tend to exaggerate simple occurrences and believe their problems are unique.

They are moody and restless, they often feel self-conscious and alienated; they are introspective and may lack self-esteem.

They are searching for a sense of individual uniqueness—"Who am I?"

Intellectual - Emerging adolescents display a wide range of skills and abilities unique to their developmental patterns.

Students range in development from the concrete-manipulatory stage of development to the ability to deal with abstract concepts. The transcendent may be intensely curious and growing in mental ability.

Middle school learners prefer active over passive learning activities, and they prefer interaction with peers during learning activities.

Students in the middle school are usually very curious and exhibit a strong willingness to learn things they consider to be useful. Students enjoy using skills to solve "real life" problems.

Psychological - Middle grade students are often erratic and inconsistent in their behavior; anxiety and fear are contrasted with periods of bravado; their feelings shift between superiority and inferiority.

They may have chemical and hormonal imbalances that trigger emotions that are frightening and poorly understood; they may regress to more childish behavior patterns at this point.

They are psychologically at risk; at no other point in human development is an individual likely to encounter so much diversity in relation to oneself and others.

Spiritual - Emerging adolescents ask large, unanswerable questions about the meaning of life; they do not expect absolute answers but are turned off by trivial adult responses.

They begin to confront hard moral and ethical questions for which they are unprepared to cope.

They are at risk in the development of moral and ethical choices and behaviors. Primary dependency on the influences of home and church for moral and ethical development seriously compromises adolescents for whom these resources are absent. Adolescents want to explore the moral and ethical issues that confront them in the curriculum, in the media, and in the daily interactions they experience in their families and peer groups.

Students need to be challenged to make life-long commitments, and they have a strong need to see that God's promises are sure.

Middle School Curriculum

Young people going through the rapid growth and extensive maturation that occurs in early adolescence need an educational program distinctly different from either the elementary or high school model. Because self-concept, values, and behavior are being shaped in this period of life, this is an important stage of development. The Eastern Christian Middle School thus developed a program that would provide an educational response to the characteristics and the academic and developmental needs of 10-14-year-olds.

The features of our curriculum are outlined here:

1. A 5th-8th grade grouping in which grades 5 and 6 are taught in a team-teaching arrangement, similar to that in place for 5th and 6th grades at present, and grades 7 and 8 are departmentalized. This would give the two younger grades the benefit of a more personal environment with some benefits of teacher specialization. The two older grades would have the

benefits of departmentalization, e.g., math teachers teaching pre-algebra and language arts specialists teaching literature.

2. High standards of academic excellence in a core curriculum.

3. Learning activities that connect subject matter with the students' world of knowledge, experience, and interests.

4. Teaching methods that take into account middle grade students' levels of maturity, ability, and learning styles.

5. A sensitive, caring, supportive learning environment that helps students bridge the gap between the self-contained classroom of the elementary school and the departmental structure of the high school. This environment gives students increasing independence and responsibility under a carefully calibrated plan of supervision.

6. A balanced, comprehensive, success-oriented curriculum, including

- an academic program building knowledge and developing skills in science, social studies, language arts, math, writing, and Bible

- an emphasis on study skills

- opportunities to explore a range of personal interests by means of well-defined and structured clubs, activities, independent study and research, special interest courses, musical ensembles, and other intramural activities.

7. Opportunities for students to interact socially, to experience democratic living, and to develop and practice responsible behavior. Opportunities during the day to meet with faculty for counseling.

8. Empathetic faculty and support staff skilled at working with emerging adolescents. The faculty is organized in grade level teams to facilitate the program and closely monitor student progress.

9. Close and frequent communication with parents, to serve them well and keep them informed of student progress.

10. A master schedule that is flexible enough to allow creative use of time on a weekly basis.

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Disciplining Those in the Middle

Russ Gregg

Russ Gregg is Director of Development at Calvin Christian School in Edina, Minnesota.

Psychologists gauge the amount of stress in our lives by looking at the magnitude of change going on. Change is difficult. Change is stressful. Change is a challenge to manage well. Is it any wonder then, that many of us point to our early adolescent years as one of the most difficult periods of our lives?

Middle school students are changing at an astounding rate. Intellectually, they are maturing in their thinking as they move from concrete to more abstract reasoning. Physically, they are overwhelmed by growth so explosive that it can make them appear awkward at times. Spiritually, they are beginning to make faith decisions for themselves and to relate their faith to real life issues. Socially and emotionally, they are developing an identity of their own, while also struggling with how to relate to peers.

Given these massive changes, the best education for students at this challenging transitional stage is one tailored to their unique developmental needs. They need a school that links faith and learning in a program adapted to their particular learning styles. A good middle school is not merely an extension of the elementary school, nor a

full blown departmentalized "junior" high school. It's a program designed especially for the student "in the middle."

The Critical Years

Appreciation of the significance of the middle school years is growing among parents and educators. More and more recognize the middle school years as the prime years for shaping one's value system and behavior code. As educator John Lounsbury notes, "When the adolescent leaves the middle level institution, his or her personality and personal values are largely set—for life."

Given the critical significance of the early adolescent years, what are some of the outstanding features and characteristics of good middle schools?

Authentic, Caring Teachers

Early adolescents are looking for teachers they can believe in. But middle school staff, more than others, must earn that respect. Respected teachers don't merely verbalize what they believe, they demonstrate those beliefs in their interactions with students and fellow teachers. Students take notice when their teachers not only "talk the talk, but also walk the walk."

The best middle school teachers really care about students both inside and outside

the academic arena. Their dedication, openness, and genuine concern for students earns them the respect that is so important at the middle school level.

Nurturing Responsibility

Good middle schools encourage students to become more independent learners. Teachers need to equip students at this stage with the organizational and study skills necessary to prepare them to gradually take more responsibility for their own education. Learning how to set goals, make a plan, and carry it through to completion is essential, having skills that will serve students well for the rest of their lives, regardless of career pursuit.

Exploring God's World

In addition to the core studies, a middle school curriculum should be broad and exploratory in nature to take advantage of an early adolescent's growing curiosity. Electives such as foreign language, band, communications, and choir should be offered at this level.

Over the years, Calvin Christian Middle School in Edina, Minnesota, has developed dozens of eight-week, exploratory mini-courses for its students. For ninety minutes each Monday afternoon, students explore a new area of interest in a very active and hands-on way. Mini-

courses have included such diverse subject areas as photography, architecture, woodworking, computer graphics, and the law.

Many schools are adding to the exploratory nature of their middle school program by offering extended off-campus learning experiences. Each year Calvin Christian School takes its sixth and seventh graders on a three-day trip to an environmental camp on a local river. And the eighth graders look forward all year to spending four days together exploring some of the educational treasures of Chicago. Nearly every middle school graduate refers to one of these trips as a significant highlight of their middle school experience.

Discipling for Servant Leadership

God has wired all of us for service. As a result, there is great benefit in helping students to joyfully respond as Jesus did to the needs of those who hurt. Middle school service projects should be designed to teach students about the needs of their community and to help them see how Christ can begin to meet those needs through them.

The results can be surprising. One middle school regularly takes students to a shelter for the homeless to serve families in a desperately poor urban area. Recently a teacher told how God

used this service project to give two students such a vision for ministry to the poor that they returned twice on their own initiative to help out again.

The middle school level is also a perfect time for nurturing basic leadership skills. Participation in curricular extras such as student government, intramurals, and chapel planning gives students the opportunity to develop primary leadership qualities under the guidance of experienced staff.

In All Things

Conrad Toepfer describes middle school students as having entered a "combustive period, full of tumultuous physical, social, and emotional change." Like an automobile engine, good middle schools channel that explosive energy into training disciples who are equipped to take their place as leaders in the service of God's kingdom. And that preparation is always best served when God is central and supreme in all things.

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DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Due to rapid growth and development, Covenant Day School is accepting applications for the position of Director of Development. Responsible for organizing and implementing all capital campaigns as approved by the Board of Directors, pursuing corporate and governmental grants and those from private foundations, making periodic reports to both the Headmaster and the Board of Directors, and serving as coordinator of development and fundraising activities of the Parents Association, the Booster Club, and the Development Committee, as well as with any other group raising funds on behalf of the school.

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Middle School; Been There; Done It:

An Interview with a Principal who Led His School's Transition

THINKING THIRTEEN
Jeff Fennema



Jeff Fennema teaches seventh grade language arts at Lansing Christian School in Lansing, Illinois.

Bill Lodewyk is a proponent of educational reform. Through his experiences with public, Catholic, and Christian schools in Africa, Canada, and the United States, Bill has developed a sense of what education is and what it can become.

He earned his bachelor's degree from Calvin College and his master's degree from Cal State-Fullerton. Timothy Christian School (K-12) in Elmhurst, Illinois, hired Bill as its junior high principal in 1992. He is now completing his third year there as principal, now in the high school. He has taken on the roles of administrator, historian, psychologist, and philosopher; and his views are as candid as his convictions are bold. Below are a few of his thoughts and ideas about middle school.

Q. Why change from junior high to middle school?

A. I think many people feel that schools are changing today just for the sake of change. From our perspective that certainly wasn't the case. Change obviously needs to take place within a context. The motivation here comes from trying to provide what is best for kids at that age.

Q. Is middle school a better option than junior high school?

A. Absolutely. In the early twentieth century junior high schools were set up simply to move kids through and put them into the factories. There was very little thought given about what was best for them at that particular point in their lives. Schools were never set up to address the unique needs of kids that age.

Only in the past ten to fifteen years have people begun to realize that kids at those middle level years, more than anybody else, need educational settings and programs that meet their unique

needs. If you objectively look at what the needs of adolescent kids are, and then you look at how traditional junior high and traditional middle school settings attempt to meet their needs, there is no comparison. Does that mean everything done in a traditional junior high setting is wrong? Clearly no. The foundational issues are the same in middle school as they are in a junior high school: you are trying to teach kids; you're trying to love kids. A middle school provides the framework within which to do a better job.

Q. Does the middle school philosophy allow for a more biblical view of the child?

A. The middle school concept can be a very biblically-based model because it addresses the basic needs of kids as God has created them. We don't just put them in boxes; we step into a sphere that attempts to identify their needs and then find specific ways to help meet those needs. For these reasons, I would say that fewer decisions are made based upon what is best for the students in a traditional junior high setting than in a middle school setting.

Q. Was the change made right away?

A. We developed a five-year plan for making a transition to a middle school. It was a process. Our first year involved much study and creating a sense of ownership among the community and faculty. In some ways this is the most difficult and most important phase. People weren't going to just naturally endorse this relatively new educational concept; we needed to develop support.

We created an academic task force made up of board members, teachers, administrators, and community people to study the middle school concept. Their mandate was to recommend to the board whether we should actively pursue this idea.

We observed middle schools, both public and private, in the Chicagoland area and in Michigan. We read books and articles. We made phone calls. We basi-

cally studied in considerable detail.

The faculty read Gloria Stronks' book *The Christian Middle School* during this time, and we reviewed that in depth. Along with reading they also visited a variety of middle schools.

We essentially researched the middle school concept on two levels: the community/board level and, I think what is *most* important, the faculty level. If the faculty is not on board, it won't work. Does that mean 100%? No, but it certainly means a majority.

And endorsement came as a result of the study and research, and the board approved it. We then established a middle school steering committee to help monitor and provide feedback during the transition.

Q. Did the community provide feedback?

A. We held an open forum for the community. I gave a presentation and answered any questions the constituency had. There were many misconceptions about the middle school idea, and this was an opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns or opinions. That was an important night for us.

Q. What were some major concerns expressed?

A. Our facility was not physically conducive to adding 6th grade to 7th and 8th. Some were worried about a forced physical indwelling of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, and they were opposed to that.

Others had to do with the relationship among middle school, the "me-first" generation, and New Age thinking. These seemed to be coming up all at the same time. When those thoughts are foremost on people's minds, there is a natural resistance to change because they're afraid middle school comes from that mode of thinking.

Quite honestly, middle school does not have its roots in Christian Schools International (CSI) circles. It is a secular educational concept. That is where it originated, but I believe it has Christian

principles written all over it.

Q. When the middle school transition was in motion, what happened next?

A. In our second year we said, "Okay, what are we going to do with it now?" We decided to make some changes in the schedule so we could move in this direction.

We put together a partial block schedule for that year. This combined certain classes and encouraged integration. We developed an advisor/advisee program called "Home Base" where a small group of students met with a teacher for an extended period of time. We decided to develop a spiritual emphasis with it. Most importantly we set up teaming sessions for teachers every other day. This gave them an opportunity to plan and discuss.

We purposely began with only a few changes. This allowed us to try it and improve as needed. You must remember this is a process, and it is easy to bite off more than you can chew.

Q. Where is Timothy right now in its five-year plan?

A. We are in our third year. We have identified ten essential characteristics of a middle school. We are developing goals and objectives for implementing these items into our program.

Selected faculty members make specific recommendations for implementation. The entire faculty votes and then gets the endorsement of the steering committee. Once that occurs, timetables are set up and implementation begins.

Q. What will happen next year?

A. Next year will be similar to this year. We will reevaluate our progress and add a few more objectives. As we move further along in the process, our goal is to have the steering committee meet less and less. The steering committee has been very involved during the first three years of transition, but now there is less need for that support organization as we move along. The long-range goal is that the committee phase itself out at the end of our five-year transition.

Q. What are some arguments you have heard from teachers regarding the middle school philosophy?

A. One is, "If I accept this new idea, then I have to admit that what I've been doing

in my classroom for the past ten to twenty years was wrong." I would say that is not true. Middle school provides more support for what the teacher does in the classroom. I would also say that there are probably some things that could be done better, and the middle school structure will help with that. It probably will not change what is taught, but it certainly might change how and when it is taught.

Another is the concern about this being a "touchy-feely" thing. For instance, "I will have to forget real discipline, and now I will have to become their friend." Some teachers are skeptical of relating to kids that age. They'd rather teach and have the kids listen, separated and isolated. "My job is to be the teacher; you sit there, be quiet, and take notes."

Q. Could it be that some teachers are just happier teaching the way they have before?

A. I find it very difficult to believe that there is a faculty member in this world who *wants* to teach 6th, 7th, and 8th grade who, once informed, doesn't think this is the best for students of this age. I believe if they can't buy into this, then they're really not happy teaching 6th, 7th, and 8th grade. There are a lot of junior high teachers who are high school teachers watered down. If you love and care for kids at the middle school age, if you are genuinely exposed to the middle school concept, I don't see *how* you could be against it. And if you are against it, then I really do think you are uninformed or you're just not happy teaching.

Q. How does the middle school deal with core courses?

A. It treats them as importantly as traditional junior high school. The classes are ideally taught within a context that makes sense. For example, math isn't taught in complete isolation from everything else. Social studies isn't taught in complete isolation from science. Kids can see the connection with the teachers' help. Obviously that takes time for planning and integration; that is why we give teachers common planning time.

Q. What about extracurricular activities?

A. Difficult questions arise. Let's look at athletics. We want to do what is best for the kids in middle school. Is making out what's best for kids between twelve and

fourteen years old who are still growing and developing physically? The answer is a complex one. These are very difficult questions. The same can be asked of band and choir: do we go with a few good musicians or allow anyone who wants to participate?

Q. What are exploratories?

A. Research shows that kids this age are searching; they have a lot of questions about life, about the world, and where they fit in. Exploratories are meant to be brief opportunities for them to explore areas that are of interest to them. They have an academic twist, but they don't fit into the category of core classes. Classes can be as extensive as a particular school wishes to make them (rocketry, industrial technology, home economics).

Q. Have there been any surprises during the transition?

A. One pleasant surprise has been an excitement, particularly on the part of the faculty. Now that we have a direction in which we are going, we have common issues to discuss and debate. There is a purpose, a direction to our interaction. Teaching appears to be more meaningful because it has a common context.

Q. Wasn't this an intended outcome?

A. Well, yes. But it's often surprising when what you expect actually happens.

Q. Bottom line—why would schools not use the middle school concept?

A. Fear that comes from a lack of knowledge; they're not informed. I think as Christian schools we need to take what is best for kids at that age and apply our Christian foundation and principles to it so that it accurately reflects what God wants it to reflect. I think too often we throw the baby out with the bath water because we assume it has no applicability since it comes from the secular environment. Middle school facilitates age-appropriate learning for adolescent kids. Christian schools shouldn't fear that—they should endorse it!

The Kids in the Middle: Winners or Losers? II

This is the second of two articles on the multifunctional classroom.

John Van Dyk

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Jeffrey is a typical sixth-grader. He is well-behaved, does his work when asked, occasionally volunteers to answer a question or two in class, and gets passing grades. While not a "bright" kid in the usual sense of the word, Jeffrey is not among the slowest either. His teacher sees him as one of the "kids in the middle," a group of average students who neither shine nor fail.

A farm boy, Jeffrey has talents of which his teacher is only faintly aware. For example, when his father recently decided to remodel the barn, Jeffrey came up with some creative ideas about maximizing floor space. And when it comes to horses, Jeffrey is clearly an expert. He has a remarkable knack for managing these big animals, and he probably knows more about them than anyone else in the entire school. But in class Jeffrey's special talents are hardly recognized. His gifts play little or no role in his learning.

There are many Jeffreys in every classroom: kids who plod their way through school while their hidden talents are scarcely noticed. These are the kids in the middle. The average kids. Kids whose grades are somewhere between B- and D+. No one expects them to shine; nor does anyone expect them to fail completely.

A quick review

In the previous article we asked: How can we do justice to the unique gifts of the kids in the middle? And how can we meet their special needs? For just as their gifts are not often celebrated, so their needs tend to go unrecognized. We saw that a variety of factors—class size, curriculum demands, time constraints—force many teachers to take an "egalitarian"

stance, leading them to treat the kids in the middle as if they were all alike. Egalitarianism prevents teachers from giving the special attention every one of their students deserves.

What can we do? One unlikely solution would be to reduce class size sharply. A more promising approach may be to establish and maintain a "multifunctional classroom." A multifunctional classroom provides an environment in which we can celebrate the gifts and meet the needs of *all* the kids (not just those of the high and low achievers). A multifunctional classroom is a secure, mutually supportive place in which gifts, needs, and learning styles are recognized, and in which the children have a variety of opportunities to learn. In a multifunctional classroom, in other words, *all* the kids—including those "in the middle"—can shine.

But how?

How can we establish a multifunctional classroom? How can we design an environment in which the children can individually learn and at the same time experience community? How can we make sure that every child's gifts are celebrated and every child's needs are met? How can we see to it that a Jeffrey is not overlooked? Let's explore some ways in which we could make this happen.

We begin by carefully considering at least four key areas: (1) inventory work, (2) classroom arrangement, (3) curriculum adjustment, and (4) teaching strategies. Of course, there are other factors as well. But these four will serve as a good beginning.

(1) Inventory work

From the first day of the term the teacher must make every effort to understand—as thoroughly as possible—the personality, gifts, and needs of every student in the class. You ask: What

specifically should we look for? Here are some suggestions: In addition to academic achievement, teachers need to know about some of the significant life experiences of the children, their hobbies and special interests, their hopes and fears, the way they relate to the Lord, their social background, their physical or other disabilities, and their dominant learning style. All these factors have a bearing on how the children will do in class.

To obtain all this information will take time and effort. So instead of immediately beginning the term with the prescribed curriculum, teachers should first plan ways of becoming acquainted with their students. This may require special questionnaires or time for conferences and conversations. The first week or so of classes ought to be devoted to engaging the students in a variety of activities designed to provide the teacher with the desired information. These activities could include asking the students to write essays, respond to certain types of literature, construct artwork and other hands-on products, play games, simulate situations, demonstrate skills, evaluate music, and the like. These activities could be worked into or, at least, be attuned to the standard curriculum. In addition, teachers should interact with students on playgrounds, at picnics, on field trips, and in other out-of-class situations in order to observe and interpret significant clues.

It is vitally important that teachers avoid pigeonholing or labeling the students. Gifts and needs should not be treated as static, unchanging, permanent constituents of human beings. Rather, we should see gifts and needs as dynamic enhancers and detractors within ongoing developmental processes. For this reason gifts and needs should not be identified in a scientifically abstract, detached way (as is often the case with certain instruments to identify learning

styles), but must flow from personal interaction with the children, keen observation, and an understanding of the background and context from which our students come.

(2) Classroom arrangement

The way we arrange our classrooms says much about our educational philosophy. Perennialists will probably insist on straight rows and little student activity other than taking notes and filling in worksheets. Progressivists may want to do away with the furniture. Social reconstructionists prefer to eliminate the classroom altogether and take the students into the heart of urban city life. To implement a multifunctional classroom, we will need flexibility and variety. This means that at some time straight rows are in order, while at other times changes should be made to meet needs and celebrate gifts. Here are some suggestions:

a. Use learning centers. Even though we see them mostly in elementary schools, they are appropriate at the high school level as well (high school libraries sometimes function as large learning centers). Too often learning centers are limited in scope, allowing only narrow skill development. We should aim at multifaceted centers that combine cooperative learning with individualized instruction, permit meaningful and responsible choice, encourage self-evaluation, and work with an integrated curriculum.

b. Arrange for diverse student areas. If space permits, create both an area where students can work quietly and independently and discussion areas for small group activity. In addition, some teachers designate a corner of the room as a "responsible student work area," an area for students with little need for close supervision.

(3) Curriculum

A major problem teachers face is the requirement of a prescribed curriculum. At the end of grade 1 all students should presumably be at a certain level, at the end of grade 2 they should be at another level, and so on. Such curricular prescription often ignores the reality of

individual needs and gifts and uniqueness. Parents know that not all six-year-olds are ready for first grade and not all seven-year-olds should be in the second grade. Unfortunately, for various reasons, an old model of herding same-age kids through a sequence of grade levels continues to control much of our schooling practice.

Obviously, attempting to redesign an entire school's curriculum is unrealistic. Nevertheless, in a multifunctional classroom, in which diversity of tasks and of opportunities to learn is stressed, some redesigning of the curriculum will be necessary. One way to do this might be to distinguish between (a) core material and (b) parallel tracks. Core material is part of the school's overall curriculum. All students in a given grade level need to master this material. But right along with the core curriculum there should be parallel tracks, learning opportunities that allow the students to master the core material at their own pace and in their own style, and that meet student needs and gifts as well. So the teacher would plan special projects, design options among various ways of learning, and provide supplementary activities.

There is no one best way to teach anyone anything. Teaching strategies need to alternate between personalized instruction, cooperative learning, and whole-group instruction. Particularly important will be to plan the teaching strategies and activities carefully. No doubt, mass teaching from the textbook or giving all the students identical worksheets is much easier, but doing so without regard for needs and gifts and individual uniqueness lands us in egalitarianism again. Goals and objectives will also have to be diversified: what may be a learning goal for Jeffrey may not be an appropriate goal for Kristen. And finally, evaluation procedures will also have to be reconsidered. The issues of goals, planning, and evaluation in a multifunctional classroom require thorough investigation, and probably innovative revision.

Does all of this sound like idealism? Can teachers actually establish and maintain multifunctional classrooms? Or

are we proposing a pipe dream? True, the obstacles appear formidable. Yet a nagging question looms in the background: Just how important are our children? What about a kid like Jeffrey and many like him? Can we just pass them off as "kids in the middle," without much opportunity to develop their special God-given gifts, and thereby in reality relegate them to a class of losers? Of course we can't.

Can it be done? It is encouraging to observe that numerous teachers already implement many of the principles of a multifunctional classroom. We need to encourage these teachers to exercise their creativity. Meanwhile, parents of students like Jeffrey must call schools to their task of educating not only the *whole* child but also *every* child. School boards and principals need to provide the kind of instructional leadership that will permit all the kids in the middle to be winners.

Can it be done? An old saying sums it up: Where there's a will, there's a way. We can take the easy road, or we can face the challenge.

CURRICULUM INTEGRATION: Teacher Resistance to Implementation (with reference to the work of David P. Ausubel)



Ken R. Badley

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This is the third in a series of three articles on educational integration.

When teachers first confront the requirement that they implement some new idea or method into their teaching, they can respond in any of several ways. If we view on a continuum the many possible responses to such a requirement, we will see on one end those teachers who flatly refuse to make any changes. They may rationalize that their pedagogy requires no change or that they already know better than curriculum designers and consultants what needs to occur in their own classrooms and even in classrooms in general. Jumping to the other extreme of our continuum, we find those teachers who chase down and study all the material they can find on the new method, who end up leading workshops on how to implement the new method, and whose sample classroom lessons or units eventually circulate in print so that others might see what successful implementation actually looks like. Of course, we recognize these extremes as extremes; these illustrations fail to represent the more moderate and more mixed reactions of the majority of teachers. Most teachers fall between my two characterizations. And most teachers likely experience feelings of willingness to implement the method and, simultaneously, frustration over exactly how to go about implementing curriculum changes that come their way (Doyle and Ponder 1978, Sieber 1972).

Our first temptation may be to dismiss those teachers on the end of the continuum I described first, not just those at the extreme but even those who tend toward that end. We have our ways to describe them. They are deadwood. They are incompetent. They are cruising to retirement. No doubt, these descriptions accurately describe some classroom teachers. The continuum I suggested may serve its illustrative purpose, but we need more thoroughgoing accounts than the simplistic criticism characterized above to explain the many sources and varieties of resistance that classroom teachers will experience and demonstrate.

Some of the resistance that integration has already faced and certainly will face in the future can be accounted for by a sociological analysis of what implementing integrative education implies for classroom practice. Running parallel to the sociological dimensions of resistance, several psychological dimensions warrant exploration. In what follows, I will briefly explore one of these, which ought to strike educators as particularly ironic.

To build this account of resistance requires that we review briefly the logical-psychological debate. This debate serves as a window through which we can ask about the business of the business: learning, or helping learners fit new ideas and facts into what they already know. The key question of the debate has been historically: What kind of considerations ought to be paramount in determining curriculum structure, the logical (structure of knowledge, nature of disciplines) or the psychological (cognitive structures, pedagogical concerns)? Most often, participants in this ongoing debate assume that one or the other must be

chief, although a minority of educators tries to attend to both concerns. Those attempting to bring the two sides of this debate together argue that anyone wishing to see a learner progress must consider both the logical structure of the material and the cognitive structures of the learner. On this account, neither condition is sufficient; both conditions are necessary.

The logical-psychological debate goes at least as far back as John Dewey. He wrote in *Democracy and Education* as follows:

The chronological method which begins with the experience of the learner and develops from that the proper modes of scientific treatment is often called the psychological method in distinction from the logical method. . . . (257-8)

As McClellan notes, Dewey's intention in stating this in 1916 was to point out that the logical and the psychological must be brought into congruence (148). Dewey must be numbered in that small group who have recognized both these apparently competing claims on curriculum structure. One wants also to mention Herbart, Piaget, and Bruner as educators who have given attention to the relationships in question. Because Ausubel's work (which I refer to later) bears such similarity to that of Herbart, I will quote only Herbart (of Herbart, Piaget, and Bruner) here, with the explicit intention of providing background to Ausubel's ideas. As long ago as 1901, Herbart wrote

In the most favorable case . . . a foundation of elementary knowledge is

gradually laid sufficiently solid for later years to build upon; in other words, out of the elementary knowledge an apperceiving mass is created in the mind of the pupil which will aid . . . in his future studies. (70)

Herbart's idea is now commonplace. But I will question shortly why or how we ignore such commonplaces when we begin to implement curriculum changes such as integration.

Ausubel is perhaps the best-known representative of more recent efforts to underline the importance of fitting new learning into existent knowledge. While recognizing the undeniable distinction between the logical and the psychological, he pleads that both elements be recognized as important:

It should not be forgotten, however, that in addition to organized bodies of knowledge that represent the collective recorded wisdom of recognized scholars in particular fields of inquiry, there are corresponding psychological structures of knowledge as represented by the organization of internalized ideas and information in the minds of individual students of varying degrees of both cognitive maturity and subject-matter sophistication in these same disciplines. I am making a distinction, in other words, between the formal organization of the subject-matter content in a given discipline, as set forth in authoritative statements in generally accepted textbooks and monographs, on the one hand, and the organized, internalized representation of this knowledge in the memory structures of particular individuals, especially students, on the other (222).

Ausubel's point is correct: learners require structures within which to grasp the new ideas or facts coming their way. When we educators see the word *learners*, we think of the students in our schools. I suggest, for purposes of discussing implementing curriculum change, that we now expand the range of that term to include teachers. If Ausubel is correct in what he states in the passage just cited, we should admit our propensity in curriculum implementation to attend to the logical structure of our ideas, and, even when we attend to the

psychological structures within which students work, to ignore those who have to make the changes in their own thinking and classroom practices if they are to implement the changes in question. We would think it unusual and somehow shortsighted to simply hand students a course outline and tell them to go to it. Yet integration is sometimes handed to teachers in just that way.

Ausubel has said more that is useful to us here. His notion of advance organizers fits centrally within the concept of psychological structure. He distinguishes two kinds of advance organizers: *expository*, where new material is completely unfamiliar; and *comparative*, where the teacher and student could connect the new learning to some prior learning. The purpose of comparative organizers is to increase [the] discriminability between the new ideas and the previously learned ideas by pointing out *explicitly* the principal similarities and differences between them (1978, 253). According to Ausubel new learning takes place when

new material becomes incorporated into cognitive structure in so far as it is subsumable under relevant existing concepts. It follows, therefore, that the availability in cognitive structure of appropriate and stable subsumers should enhance the incorporability of such material. (1960, 267)

Additionally, the new concept must be recognizably connected to the concept to which it is to be anchored. Ausubel and Fitzgerald note that earlier learning becomes in effect the anchoring post or ideational scaffolding in cognitive structure for the learning of the later appearing material (1962, 244). Ausubel does not view lightly the place of cognitive structure. He writes

The most important factor influencing learning is the quantity, clarity, and organization of the learner's present knowledge. This present knowledge, which consists of the facts, concepts, propositions, theories, and raw perceptual data that the learner has available to him at any point in time, is referred to as his cognitive structure. (Ausubel and Robinson 1969, 50-51)

Later in the same work, they repeat that " . . . if new material is to be learned meaningfully there must exist ideas in cognitive structure to which this material can be related. . . ." (143).

So far, we have managed to review material from the earliest days of any teacher's educational studies. It is, in fact, a truism that part of our task as teachers is to enable students to see how the new learning they are doing at the present connects up with the learning they have already done up until this point. One of our standard meanings of *integration* relates to this central element in the concept of learning. Some even prescribe as much in their definitions of *education*.

At the very moment we identify as truism these elementary points from the first course in education, we are ready to discover the irony in which we have landed ourselves. Teachers encountering the demand to implement *integration* in their classrooms—whatever that word means—confront the demand to learn something new: a mindset, a language, and usually several specific practices. As education professionals, we recognize that when we require students to learn new things, we try to determine beforehand what cognitive structures they have in place. Recognizing the learner's need to fit new learning into existent structures, teachers try to assist in this *fitting* aspect of learning. Ironically, here, teachers are being asked to master a set of learnings. Despite all we know about learning, teachers are frequently asked to embrace some new concept or adopt some new practice, but to do so *without* the psychological hooks on which to hang this new mindset, this new vocabulary, and these new practices. What Ausubel calls "the organizers" are absent.

What must be done? We might start by noticing the irony in our own courses of action. In light of the above discussion, our job as professional educators wanting to assist teachers implementing integration in the curriculum, or in the classroom, is to find what concepts are most stable in those teachers' cognitive structure and try to tie integration to those concepts. For example, if integration is tied to the concept of *learning*, teachers might be more open to its curriculum and classroom implications than if it is tied to such concepts as *innovation*,

reformation, or *change*. Were we to tie integration to *learning*, we would do well to ensure beforehand that the concept to which the new material is to be connected is already stable in the learners'—in this case, the teachers'—cognitive structure. In this context, teachers already have learned about thinking, disciplines, and learning; we should be able to expect that these concepts are stable. (If they are not, we have other problems.) Thus, I did not use the concept *learning* here by accident. I think the comparative concept *learning* is the key to defusing the implementation of integrative curriculum or practices. As I already noted, when they first hear about integration, many teachers claim to have been doing it all along anyway. These reports should be a clue for those initiating the implementation. Maybe the generators of the new curriculum have adopted a slogan that will offend and confuse. If they can

tie their plans to what people already know, they will gain some credibility, by hitching onto the capital of a term like *learning*.

Adding to our irony, educators often talk about the student perspective or the impact on students of any curriculum restructuring intended to facilitate integration. But we seem to operate with the assumption that teachers will do all the new learning necessary and make all the right cognitive moves somehow automatically. My assertion is that we need to recognize that for a teacher to confront the concept of *integration* and start to teach in that way is implicitly to involve that teacher in a learning experience. All that applies to learners will apply to that teacher. Yet *integration* is often presented as if it is self-evident to teachers what should be their next step. What an irony that we have missed this important dimension of implementation!

We now ask whose task it is to provide to teachers those hooks for grasping the new ideas about integration in education. We could ask three separate sub-questions. Who is positioned to do it? Who is responsible to do it? Who will do it? Professors of education and those who work in ministries of education are positioned to help teachers understand the conceptual nuances of integration and how it connects to what they already know about teaching and learning. Those introducing new concepts and practices must shoulder the larger share of responsibility for locating those new concepts and practices in current thought and practice. As professionals, teachers also should carry a minor but real share in understanding the changes they face.

Time will show who ends up providing teachers with the cognitive hooks on which to hang the concepts and practices implicit in integration talk.

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A Deeper Answer

Sharon Mast

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The exam question read like this—

How does one integrate faith in teaching?

More specifically—How do I do that?

How do my public school students know of my Christian allegiance?

Had I been asked about showing one's faith back in, say, fifth grade (maybe all the way through 12th) I would have thoughtlessly responded with that well-worn slogan, "By doing everything to the glory of God!"

(Admit it—so would you!)

The seasoned adult does not negate that answer, but no longer gives glib reply either.

Integrating one's faith into the workplace—such as secondary public school classroom—calls for more than verbal rehearsals of mottos and significant phrases from the Apostles' Creed.

Being confronted with the question was good for me because although I was sure my faith was operative in my classroom, I could not specifically indicate where and how.

So, I began to observe myself.

Where was my faith? Or, perish the thought—the nagging question—Where wasn't it?

My findings

-though subjective

-lacking standardization

-and norming procedures

Reveal a faith at work in a couple of ways

An initial observation

of myself and my colleagues ruled out my first response to the question of integrating one's faith.

The response was to say:

Well, I try to treat students in a certain way, with respect and all that.

But—

So do those who verbally separate themselves from Christianity. Being "socially sensitive" is a

muddy, generic response yielding no sharp distinctions of the ways of faith.

Those with "trucker style" language and a cynical view of the deity treat kids with respect too. No, my faith was not integrated significantly there.

Continued observation accompanied by growing concern over my own performance yielded an answer—*my* answer to the question.

My faith and work are integrated every morning and afternoon (when I am able) that I continue teaching without a burned out cynicism—looking

-for the image of God
-not finding it
-and moving forward anyway

Going forward on the belief that in each student that Father's image still presides—

-hidden, crusted over with abuse and neglect
-damaged, camouflaged behind four-letter words and racial slurs

THAT TAKES FAITH!

An active, operative, integrated faith.

Finding the image of the father here is not for the easily offended, especially when

it's at God they curse and with whose name they punctuate sentences.

The struggle

to find creative responses

to the sensitive use of God's Name

is an ongoing one. . . .

But, if one is to integrate personal faith,
maintain a sense of calling,

Rummaging around in the adolescent classroom
looking for and promoting God's image is crucial.

Then, upon finding it, with an inward prayer,

treating it gently,
cleansing it with the antiseptic of hope
soothing the gashes with healing words.

Further, to integrate one's faith here one
must hang out and be comfortable with
The crowd who congregates under
sycamore trees.

For it was under the sycamore
That Jesus stood
and called down Zachaeus,
damaged image and all.

Today,
one never knows who
may come out of the sycamore tree
when called—

Drug dealers come down from sycamores.

Conversation reveals little more than a boy,
who speaks with a smile, remembering
watching Saturday morning cartoons with his
kid brother. Today his hand rests on the
beeper peeking from his pocket. (An error,
letting it show like that.)

He disappears to jail for three months
and then returns. One integrates faith
when one checks the "Oh, no! He's back"
thought, replacing it with:

O.K., another chance to reach out
and nudge him
toward a more narrow way
and a different leader.

Scarred children who witnessed one
parent kill the other come down from
the sycamore branches with hard questions.

"Why can't things be perfect?"
"My father gives me money
because of what he did, but
he can't make me forgive him—

because I never will."

And

"Why should I come to school
and fail
when I can stay home
and get numb
with my friend, Jack (Daniels)?

Hearing the pain—

explaining that the justice system
sometimes fails—
that a book says things were
perfect once—

all of this is a delicate integration
of faith and work.

Only those with a faith to integrate
can softly offer anything in the
presence of such pain!

Yes—the crowd under the sycamore tree
is large—each with their own story,
demanding responses to the painful
questions they live with among the branches.

Returning to my fifth grade answer

"Do all to the glory of God,"

I find it was an O.K. solution—just
enormously naive! But, it was right,

because

attempting to find,
help and heal
The marred image of God
in the adolescent classroom
is promoting God's glory

and

integrating one's faith
into the field
of teaching.

And, then one day,

one of them asks without ceremony

You believe that "God Stuff" don't you?

My answer—"Yes, I believe

that God Stuff."

MEDIA EYE

Stefan Ulstein



Most teachers are required to attend seminars to earn continuing education hours for their state certification. Some schools have their own requirements for continuing education. Here are two recent films, soon available on videotape, that could be very helpful to teachers. Instead of offering a steady diet of facilitator-at-the-podium, schools might show these films and engage in guided discussions of the issues they raise for Christian educators.

HE'S SEXIST! SHE'S IMAGINING IT!

Oleanna

Written and directed by David Mamet
Starring William H. Macy and Debra Eisenstadt
The Samuel Goldwyn Company

John is a middle-aged professor on the verge of receiving tenure. He's just bought a new house, and he's feeling pretty sure of himself. Carol is an emotionally distraught student who is failing John's course. She has read John's book cover to cover, she takes copious notes in class, but she understands nothing. She feels stupid and inadequate, and now her dream of a university education is slipping away. She has to pass his course, so in a state of vulnerable desperation she visits John's office unannounced.

Carol is a literalist for whom metaphors are just confusing word tricks. The same goes for the nuances of an Ivy League vocabulary. She wants John to tell her how to fix what's wrong. She wants to pass his class.

But John exists in a self-created world of abstract ideas, and like many teachers, he can't give a simple answer to a simple question. He has to broaden the scope of the discussion, pulling in personal anecdotes, quoting great thinkers, and throwing in a bawdy story by way of example. In his desire to be a teacher, he simply confuses Carol and makes her feel less in control of her destiny than before she came in. He thinks he is provoking her to think. She leaves his office feeling bullied, belittled, and sexually harassed.

It's hard to know who to side with in this masterfully crafted, dialogue-driven parable. At times Carol seems like a thick-headed drudge who ought to drop out of college and find a job she can handle. But she can also seem incisive, clever, and brimming with justified moral outrage. Then you wonder if she's just a scheming opportunist.

Likewise, John seems at different turns to be the very model of an Ivy League scholar, a self-important minor talent, or even a manipulative, sexist boor. John can seem hopelessly out of touch, deliberately cruel, or shamefully wronged. It depends on your own politics and history.

Oleanna is about the quest for justice in a flawed world. The issues it addresses are too multi-faceted to be separated into either/or propositions. And that's where the modern concept of gender equality collides head-on with the vaunted traditions of the academe. The whole concept of the university is built on the notion of setting up propositions and debating them against all comers. It's not meant to be a nice, soft place. In Luther's day students would sometimes arm themselves with clubs before a debate. Name calling, intimidation, and slander were *de rigeur*. Physical violence was not unknown. It's helpful to remember that for nearly four centuries, universities were as male-oriented and testosterone-driven as the Marine Corps or the Navy. That didn't change at all until a generation ago, and the change is still under way.

Writer-director David Mamet says that he was shocked by the opening night audiences of the play version of *Oleanna*, where fistfights erupted in the lobby and arguing couples left in separate taxis. At the Seattle press screening the usually staid crowd was punctuated by hooting, derisive laughter, and curses.

Mamet has presented his characters and their perspectives forcefully, but without taking sides. He leaves interpretation and solution to the viewer.

DESCENDING INTO A DESTRUCTIVE FANTASY WORLD

Heavenly Creatures

Written and directed by Peter Jackson
Starring Melanie Lynskey and Kate Winslet

In the 1950s, Christchurch, New Zealand, was more English than England. It was a proper, tidy little city of lawn bowling, sensible shoes, and contained emotions. When two teenage schoolgirls committed a savage murder, the whole nation recoiled in horror.

At that time there were fewer than half a dozen murders per year in the whole country, says director Peter Jackson. The girls, Pauline and Juliet, were portrayed in the press as the embodiment of pure evil. Reporters traveled from England and America to cover the sensational trial.

"I remember the two-page newspaper stories," says Jackson, who was an adolescent at the time, "and especially the pictures of the two girls. Back then I couldn't fathom it, but when I examined the records as an adult, I got the impression that Juliet and Pauline would have fit in all right in the 1990s." Indeed, a former classmate of one of the girls told Jackson that, as a psychiatrist, she appreciated having known the girls for the insights she gained.

Both girls came from what would now be called dysfunctional families. Neither was subjected to extreme cruelty, but their emotional needs went unmet. Both had been sickly, and this

had kept them apart from other children. Where Pauline's mother seems to have erred on the side of overprotectiveness, Juliet's parents actually left the country on business while she was in the hospital.

Independently, each girl had withdrawn into a fantasy life of romance and protective vengeance. Together they created the fantasy world of Borovnia, which they peopled in a collaborative novel with warring knights and fair damsels. Their friendship became the center of the universe, their safe place. When Juliet's tuberculosis quarantine separated them for several months, they wrote long letters, embellishing their tales of Borovnia, blurring the line between fantasy and fact.

It is here that *Heavenly Creatures* becomes most fascinating. Through state-of-the-art special effects and computer graphics, the laced-up world of Christchurch transmogrifies into the brawling Dungeons and Dragons-like realm of Borovnia. Adults who have committed offenses against the girls are dispatched with a sword or ax. The girls' confused sexual feelings of desire and loathing are acted out.

Jackson allows us to see the world through the eyes of two very confused and frightened teenagers who have attached themselves to one another for emotional survival. Their bond is intellectual, spiritual, and in an oblique way, sexual. Juliet, bright, precocious, and vivacious, comes across as one who has spent too much time reading Walter Scott and the Lake Poets. Her life is one dramatic, epic gesture after another. Pauline, more sullen and awkward, is like

a latter-day Mary Shelly. It is not a match made in heaven.

Through Jackson's insightful direction we see just how alienated two reasonably normal young people can become. New Zealand was horrified not only by the brutality of their crime, but also by the otherness of their intimate friendship. There was simply no place for Pauline and Juliet in the New Zealand of the early 1950s.

The girls' lawyer told Jackson that he kept the girls off the witness stand because it would have been madness to allow them to testify. At that stage neither showed any signs of remorse. They joked about the murder and even pondered the state of the corpse's deterioration.

They were spared the gallows only by their age. In prison they became model prisoners, finished college, and turned to religion. After nearly a decade of confinement they showed no signs of anti-social behavior and were becoming rapidly institutionalized. In a surprisingly enlightened decision, the court freed them on the condition that they never see or speak to one another again.

In the present climate of youth violence and ever harsher prison sentences for youthful offenders, *Heavenly Creatures* offers a different perspective. Jackson's film presents a world not so much of conscious evil, but of brokenness. It is a fallen world, where tragedy reigns and confusion is king. Jackson reminds us that teenagers do not see life through the same lenses as adults.



Dealing with Sandpaper Pupils

SECOND GLANCE

Lynn N. Austin

Lynn N. Austin is a free lance writer from Orland Park, Illinois.

Have you ever had a student in your class you simply couldn't stand? A student whose personality conflicted with yours and seemed to rub you the wrong way? I call these my "sandpaper pupils." Some of these kids, like fine-grit sandpaper, are only mildly irritating. They wear my patience down gradually. Others, the coarse-grit variety, are so abrasive they leave me feeling raw and chafed.

Fresh out of college, I accepted a job in Bogota, Colombia, teaching an American fourth-grade curriculum to a class of thirty-eight boys. Although their native language was Spanish, I taught in English. With naive enthusiasm, I began my teaching career convinced that I loved all children. Then I met Rodrigo.

Sometime during the first day I asked a question and waited for a show of hands. Rodrigo bolted to his feet with a horrified gasp. I nearly leaped onto my desk in fright, certain that something slimy and South American had slithered into my classroom.

"Rodrigo! What's wrong?" I cried.

"Nothing, I know the answer."

I gradually grew used to Rodrigo's leaping, gasping enthusiasm. I no longer suffered cardiac arrest every time he knew the answer, but my nerves felt as if they'd been roughed up. I kept hoping he'd be absent.

During the next few weeks I used behavior modification techniques with Rodrigo. Now when he knew the answer he moaned, as if suffering indescribable pain, and waved his arms like a shipwreck survivor summoning a passing freighter.

By the second month, when he realized that I wasn't calling on him anymore, Rodrigo began to shout out the answers as soon as I asked another student. My daydreamers, who preferred the view of the Andes Mountains outside our window to arithmetic drills, considered Rodrigo their hero. I considered masking tape.

Ironically, Rodrigo usually knew the

correct answer. But being an inexperienced teacher, I became convinced that I was a failure because I couldn't stand him. I wondered if I should transfer him to another classroom.

Viola Onique, a retired Michigan teacher who coped with sandpaper pupils while I was still in diapers, thinks future teachers need to be forewarned about them during teacher training.

"You don't get along perfectly with every grownup you meet," she reasons. "Personality conflicts and misunderstanding occur among adults, so of course there will be students who rub us the wrong way, too."

She thinks beginning teachers are naive, as I was, to expect to love every student. But how should we deal with personality conflicts once they arise? Rodrigo taught me some necessary lessons.

LESSON ONE: Accept Them

After months of concentrated effort I realized that I couldn't change Rodrigo's personality into one I liked better. I could modify some of his behavior; indeed, I had changed it three times, from gasping to moaning to shouting out loud. But I couldn't change his eager-beaver personality. I was wrong to try. I had to accept Rodrigo the way he was and find alternative teaching methods that would allow him to demonstrate his knowledge without disrupting my class.

Shawn was another sandpaper student whose personality I would have liked to change. Although bright and well-behaved, Shawn worked at one speed: slow. When the others were finished, Shawn was starting the second question. He walked so slowly that our class flunked fire drills. Rewards and behavior modification techniques frustrated both of us.

Shawn grated on my nerves because his snail-like pace disrupted my routines and baffled my grading system. How do you grade a student who knows the answers but never completes anything? Only a miracle could change Shawn. I had to accept him the way he was, then

help him succeed in school. Rodrigo had taught me that.

LESSON TWO: Adjust to Them

During my second month of teaching in Colombia, Rodrigo's mother scheduled a conference. My college Spanish courses had prepared me to order *bifstek* and *ensalada* in *el restaurante*, not to discuss a student's behavior with his worried, Spanish-speaking mother. It was a grueling session for both of us. Nevertheless, she managed to convey to me that Rodrigo didn't think I liked him (ouch!) and that he had been the teacher's pet the year before. Obviously his personality wasn't different, only his teacher's reactions to it.

That's when I realized that I was the one who had to change if I wanted to be an effective teacher. Along with my attitude, I would have to revamp some of my methods. Maybe asking oral questions wasn't the best way to teach a class of thirty-eight boys. Maybe Rodrigo's enthusiasm irritated me because I enjoyed catching daydreamers, and he spoiled my fun.

Sandpaper students like Rodrigo and Shawn rub me the wrong way because they point out *my* weaknesses. It's always easier for a teacher to blame the student than it is to accept the responsibility for change.

LESSON THREE: Affirm Them

After deciding to reform my attitude and methods, I began to look for Rodrigo's strengths instead of focusing on what bugged me. Last year's teacher had found something to like; maybe I could too. Actually, Rodrigo had many strengths: he was a good student, he was a hard worker, his English was better than my Spanish, and he was popular. I decided to put him to work tutoring my daydreamers. His enthusiastic personality eventually lifted a few of them out of their stupor.

It hasn't always been easy to find my sandpaper pupils' strengths. Tanya's consistently negative attitude not only wore me down, it nearly wore me out. Her

.....

favorite expression was, "That sucks." The only things she seemed good at were combing her hair and checking her appearance in the mirror. But I discovered that her concern for neatness carried over into other areas: her desk, her locker, her notebooks, and her homework—when she did it, that is.

I decided to put her to work organizing my classroom and helping some of her classmates clean up their acts. Although I didn't transform Tanya into "Suzy Sunshine," her improved self-esteem made her easier to live with. And I gained a neater room.

LESSON FOUR: Understand Them

On the night of my first Open House in Colombia, Rodrigo taught me something else. I met his entire family, which included three older brothers and three younger brothers. As I watched him compete for his parents' attention, I began to understand why Rodrigo worked so hard to be noticed in my classroom. And understanding him helped me to be more patient with him.

Years later when I met Jason, I remembered this important lesson. Jason and I constantly struggled

over who was in control. Sometimes I lost. Then I discovered what had shaped his personality. Within six months, his parents divorced, his favorite grandfather suddenly died, and Jason suffered his first epileptic seizure. Feeling helpless, he reacted by fighting for control. Understanding Jason helped me respond to his behavior with patience and compassion.

Eventually I've become thankful for my sandpaper pupils and the lessons they've taught me. When I graduated from college I was an unpolished teacher with a lot of rough edges. If sandpaper pupils like Rodrigo hadn't gone against my grain, maybe those rough edges would still be there. But every time one of them rubbed me the wrong way, they forced me to change. In time, I learned to accept my students the way they came, to be flexible in my teaching methods and routines, to look for my students' strengths instead of dwelling on their weaknesses, to endeavor to sympathize with them.

So thanks, Rodrigo and all you other sandpaper pupils. You helped shape me into a better teacher.



DEALING WITH SANDPAPER PUPILS

Sandpaper pupils grate because of their personality conflicts rather than their behavior disorders. A step-by-step approach to help them needs to start with the teacher.

1. ASK YOURSELF:

* What is it about this student that bugs me? Attitude? Behavior? Language and mannerisms?

TAKE ACTION:

* Separate the student's personality characteristics from his or her behavior. You can modify behavior; you can't change personality traits.

* Determine to change your attitude toward your student instead of expecting the student to change.

2. ASK YOURSELF:

* Why does this student's personality bother me? Are we too much alike? Are we opposites? Does he or she remind me of someone else?

TAKE ACTION:

* Seek to understand what shaped the student's personality. Talk to the family and previous teachers. Check the student's cumulative file.

* Search for positive characteristics. Affirm the student in what he or she does well. Remind yourself of those strengths frequently.

3. ASK YOURSELF:

* Am I upset for the student's sake (wasted potential), the classroom's sake (disruptions), or my own sake (I feel out of control)?

TAKE ACTION:

* Accept responsibility for the necessary changes to help this student succeed, to enable your class to function smoothly, or to regain control.

* Adapt your routines and methods to minimize conflict.

Marlene Dorhout



The following questions, although they come from various schools in quite different parts of the country, seem to share a common concern regarding teacher preparation, evaluation, and on-the-job training. Communication within and between Christian institutions is a key to improving this area of Christian education.

This is the second Christian school I have taught in. I find it amazing that the same problem exists here. Again I am teaching with a colleague who is incompetent. Both this teacher and the incompetent one in my previous school had good recommendations, one from a previous principal, and the other from a good Christian college. Parent complaints and frustrated students because of ill-prepared lessons and lack of discipline are the norm. The teacher seems unaware of his problem. Should I mention this to the principal or continue to ignore it?

Probably in every work place across America, incompetent employees exist; and, sadly, Christian classrooms are no exceptions. Perhaps because the schools are small and faculties close, the awkwardness seems greater; confrontation, more difficult. Or, maybe weaknesses are just more blatant.

If parent complaints and classroom management is common knowledge, then I would imagine, or hope, that the teacher and principal are privately working on the problem. The nonchalant attitude may be a cover-up for embarrassment. However, if such a situation is left unresolved, correction becomes much more difficult; and the teacher who has invested four or more years in preparation loses, but so do the students. And, to some degree, Christian education fails. You can blame this situation on the previous institution or the principal or even yourself if you continue to ignore this damaging information. Out of genuine love for the profession and all those involved, express your concern and offer your support.

Regarding the recommendations, I know that such practices do occur and do not reflect well on our Christian institutions or administration when that happens. I hope they are rare occasions, but from your perspective, it doesn't seem so. Forgiving mistakes and giving second chances are part of Christian charity, but accountability and open, honest communication could sometimes prevent the necessity and preserve the integrity of the profession. I have actually seen teachers declared to be "poor" or "good" without any or very little observation or supervision. I believe a new teacher,

struggling or not, deserves better, and so do our Christian schools.

Recently another teacher where I work came to me and told me that the parents were complaining about my teaching to her and other people in the church. I felt terrible and went to the principal, and he admitted that he had received some phone calls but didn't want to discourage me by them. I feel betrayed. How can I defend or improve myself if I am not aware of the problem? I may be young and rather inexperienced, but I am not a kid and would prefer to be treated as an adult.

The Bible tells us to go to the person that we have a problem with first, but obviously the parents and even the principal did not. Perhaps they meant to spare you from the criticism, but you are right. You can't improve if you don't know. And even if lack of experience and youth were assumed to be part of the problem, veteran teachers and/or the principal should be able and willing to help with the solutions. Criticism comes easily, but concrete methods to improve are seldom offered. Maybe we teachers who have taught for years don't reflect enough on those beginning experiences. Even if at the time we thought we knew so much and were doing such a great job, later we realized how little we really knew about teaching and the kids and that important process of melting self into the profession.

You, too, need to let your principal

know how you feel and ask for specific ways to improve. Invite him into your classroom more often and show him your lesson plans and assignments if he's not already looking at them. Demonstrate a desire to work this out and to deal with the parents as well. Your principal should be pleased to have an educator with such a self-improvement plan.

I think I am the senior member of a faculty referred to in your October query. I appreciated your answer suggesting I had something to offer, but I always find it difficult to know how much to help new teachers. I try because no one helped me when I was new, and I really didn't know how to ask for help or what to ask for. I assume other new teachers experience that feeling too. I certainly don't mean to be annoying. Should a teacher ask to help or wait to be asked?

Different personalities respond to advice or help in different ways. Perhaps just an overture of caring and willingness to help would be an appropriate beginning. Your assistance may seem less threatening to the beginner than the administrative evaluator's.

Many Christian schools, because of size and tight schedules, can't work out mentorship programs to utilize the knowledge and skills of the experienced teachers. Principals are assumed to have the time and expertise to suggest alternative strategies or necessary interventions to work on classroom difficulties. I am certain most administrators would

welcome a volunteer and hopefully suggest a comfortable plan to benefit all concerned. Otherwise, unasked for or unwanted assistance, even if well-meaning, could cause strained relationships.

Sometimes, though, new teachers don't see their weaknesses as quickly as does a veteran; or in their eyes, the assumed flaw is not a problem area. Allow them some time to learn from their mistakes or to demonstrate that another approach is possible.

A teacher isn't born a natural or made in the image of another teacher or administrator, but is developed by the inner gifts and outside resources combined, plus lots of hard work and answers to prayer.

Even though you didn't ask, I will tell you your assumption is incorrect; the October query originated in a different school and state. You probably weren't the only teacher to think the question referred to you, but I thank you for writing and expressing your concern for other teachers.

TEACHING POSITION AVAILABLE

Due to rapid growth and the opening of a second campus, Covenant Day School is accepting applications for the 1995/96 school year. Positions are available at the elementary and the middle school levels.

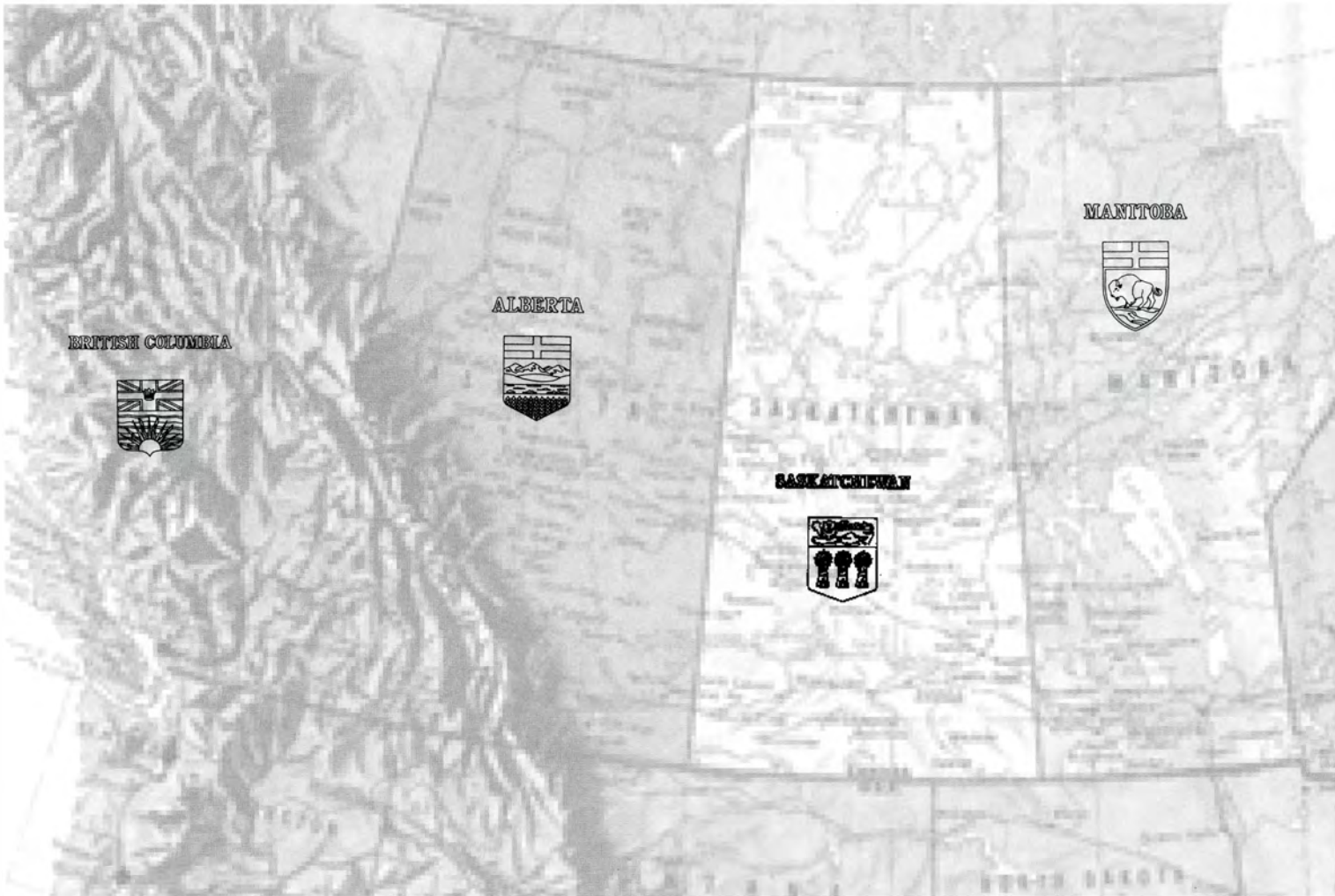
Applications must have a minimum of a B.A. in Education, have a clear philosophy of Christian education, and be willing to work with faculty and administration in the continuous assessment and improvement of student progress, curriculum, and teaching practices. Applicants should also have a good academic background in content areas, including English grammar and mathematics.

Excellent salary, full medical and dental benefits, and reimbursement for continuing education. Supplemental salary for those with advanced degrees. Call Barrett L. Mosbacker at (704) 847-2385 or send your resume to Covenant Day School, 800 Fullwood Ln., Matthews, NC 28105

Read Across Canada



IDEA BANK
Eleanor Mills



Eleanor Mills is learning resource coordinator in Abbotsford Christian Schools in Abbotsford, British Columbia.

Can literature increase children's awareness of the unique, vast, and beautiful country in which they live? Can it help them appreciate authors and the people they write about?

During Book Week at Abbotsford Christian School's Heritage Campus, librarians Anne O'Leary and Vernetta Salomons launched a "Read Across Canada" challenge. Students were encouraged to read a book from each province and territory. To qualify as representative of a province, the setting had to be in the province, or the Canadian author had to live or have lived there.

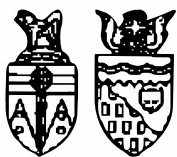
Each classroom received a large map of Canada to hang in a

prominent place, usually the hallway. After reading a book for a particular province, the student received a card with an appropriate provincial symbol to attach to the map. The student wrote on the card the title and author of the book read. A map of Canada was also posted in the library to show the colors of the symbols on the cards. Students could refer to this if they wanted to color the cards. Mini-biographies and photos of authors were taped on the map to show authors' home province. The library's map was an inspiring collage.

A school-wide reading theme, such as "Read Across Canada," will be successful with the following guidelines:

-Librarians allow a sufficient time frame for the sharing of books when resources are limited and for intermediate stu-

YUKON AND NORTHWEST TERRITORIES



Name: _____

Title: _____

Author: _____



dents to read chapter books. Librarians establish a time frame that is short enough to sustain interest.

-Librarians shelve books separately from the main collection and identify them according to province by a tag in the pocket.

-School librarians notify public librarians of the project so they can assist student patrons with book choices.

-Librarians supply teachers with a list of books that are available in the school library.

-Teachers are involved in choosing the theme. They will then feel committed to the project. Students read both fiction and non-fiction. Students read outside their reading level: intermediate students explore non-fiction in picture-book formats; primary students read difficult material with support.

The project included special events, such as a daily school-wide Drop Everything And Read time. Books above the student's reading level were shared by the teacher or a buddy reader. The grand finale was a red and white day, a variation on the popular "dress up as a book character."

About twenty-five percent of the students succeeded in reading across Canada. All students participated in the project. Each participant received a book mark. Students who completed all ten provinces and the territories received a Canada pin. Through "Read Across Canada," students gained an increased awareness of the geography of Canada, an appreciation for the diversity of Canada's people, and a sense of national pride. They also began to understand the importance of cultural influences in literature.

Last Day of School.....

Fred Wind

I.

with shouts of exuberance
bordering on chaotic
they escape for the summer—
VACATION is here!!

i sit amidst the remnants
of the LAST DAY PARTY—
streamers dangling
popped balloons
melting ice cream dripping
chocolate on the floor
(where stanley sat of course)
spilled punch
M&Ms plain and peanut

i'm tired

and even as i close my eyes
i see
discarded papers
piles of books
crayon stubs
and
broken pencils

thank God it's over

II.

the SILENCE grabs me
gut grabs me
soulshakes me
and
turns me upside down
in soundless pantomime
and leaves me
suddenly
empty

the bodies are gone
the small neat bodies of 8:30 A.M.
the sweaty bodies of after-noonhour
the plain faces
freckled faces
the smiling faces
frowning faces

happyhomelife faces
fatherleftusfaces

silence

III.

they are all gone

gone
is the whining voice
of jessica wondering
why we have to have
homework

gone
is the smile of catherine
who shyly offered flowers
cut from her mom's garden

gone
is charlene
messy disorganized
the girl of the lost papers

gone
is nathan
the tough guy
who never played team games
but slouched about the playground
followed everywhere
by john and trevor and justin

gone
is madeline
who always told stories
during sharing time
but who could never get to the point

gone
is shawna
whose father died

gone
is jared
the prompter of our christmas chapel play
who lost his place
and fed the head shepherd
joseph's line

gone
is june
who always had to talk to me
about a friendship problem

gone
is jeannie
who loved animals
and who cried bitterly
when the boys
kicked a stray gopher
about the playground

gone
is kristy
new to our school this year
who had a hard time making friends
and who preferred cleaning blackboards
during recess

gone
is gene
who always had to go to the bathroom
during classtime
and who
when it started to cost him five minutes of recess
time
had a miraculous
healing of the bladder

gone
is sammy
who broke both wrists
when he jumped off the swing

gone
is warren
the perfect student
who ripped up his spelling paper in anger
when he made
his first mistake of the year

gone
is john
who knew he could always count on
his parents to blame the school
for his problems

gone
is janice
whose mom
was such a great room mother

gone is erika
the lover of roald dahl books

gone
is ryan
who was the very definition

of anti-academic attitude

gone
is matt
the science experiment expert

gone
is allison
who could outrun
all the boys

gone
is joyce
who wrote so neatly

all

all gone

IV.

as i turn to go
suddenly
there is
shawna
in the doorway

did you forget something shawna?

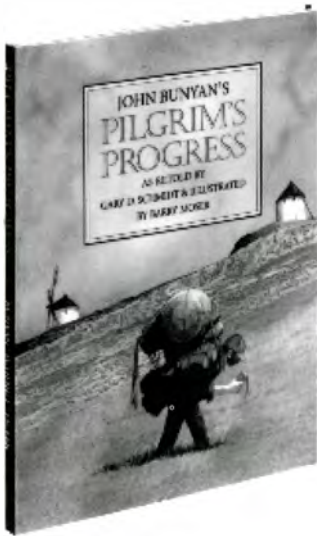
no
i just came back
to say thank you
for everything
for the year and everything
and for helping me when
well you know

she gives me a hug

V.

the silence is gone
the emptiness is filled

the california sun shines
and i welcome vacation



BOOK REVIEWS

Steve J. Van Der Weele



John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress

Retold by Gary D. Schmidt and illustrated by Barry Moser.

Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994, 76 pages.

Reviewed by Steve J. Van Der Weele, Calvin College.

Allegory at one time—particularly during the Middle Ages—had a powerful grip on the imagination and minds of readers and hearers. An age such as ours that cries for realism shunts such writing—and art—off to the periphery of our attention. Powerful writers can give this mode of art a new lease on life as did Edmund Spenser with his *Faerie Queene* (the 1590s) and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1675). But even these masterworks need rejuvenation or they pass into oblivion.

Gary D. Schmidt, Professor of English, Calvin College, has done as much as perhaps can be done to return Bunyan's classic to the attention of the reading public. He was ably assisted in this venture by Barry Moser, renowned illustrator; this collaboration has reminded us of the effectiveness of allegory as a strategy for dramatizing the burden and the glory of

the Christian life.

Just what has Gary Schmidt accomplished? He has basically retold the story to make it accessible to modern readers, especially children. He has simplified the language somewhat, has eliminated the extended theological discussion, and has in the process abbreviated the work considerably. But he has retained much: the characters, the places, the spiritual realities with original style—the monosyllabic words of our language—the Anglo-Saxon base of English, “the vernacular unadorned.” He adds a few embellishments, sharpening descriptions of place with details of places he remembers personally. And he weaves in phrases and styles from other times and places: Dante, Sir Thomas Browne, Julian of Norwich, E. M. Forster, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. He also uses several times an image of the mouth of hell. These all add

to the enchantment of this vigorous and perennially useful allegory.

Moser's watercolor illustrations show the artist at his best. He exhibits characters and personalities from different times and uses assorted types: the seventeenth-century cavalier, a Hogarth-cartoon, a knight in armor, and—Christian himself—short, bearded, and wearing a baseball cap.

Readers in every age have acknowledged the narrative power, the fidelity to human experience, the rich archetypal images, the author's skill and art in making the abstract concrete in this work. And with this re-telling the enchantment of this work will be prolonged, as it must. After all, what distinguished Bunyan from scores of other itinerant preachers was his genius.

Elmer John Thiessen. 1993. *Teaching for Commitment: Liberal Education, Indoctrination and Christian Nurture*.

Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. 332 pages, paperback. \$21.50 CDN. ISBN 0 85244 248 3.

Reviewed by Lee Hollaar, Education Coordinator, Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia.

The culprit Dr. Elmer Thiessen brings to court for trial is that (allegedly) intolerant, illiberal, growth-stunting, un-Canadian even, practice called *indoctrination*. Some members of the dominant elite call it an “abusive and immoral activity.” The plaintiffs in the case—advocates of public education—deprecate and try to eradicate the independent Christian schools that purportedly engage in this nefarious practice.

Courageously and deftly, with rhetorical skills honed in the analytic philosophical tradition, Thiessen, a Mennonite well-informed as to both Christian and public education, takes on the allegations of his opponents. Their four most common criteria, the evidence that indicates the presence of indoctrination, are the following: content, methods, intention, and consequences. The *content* criterion alleges that religious education, by definition, has

to do with doctrines; ergo, religious education is inherently indoctrinative. The *methods* criterion alleges that “the indoctrination manipulates the subject matter and/or . . . his subjects” (91); hence, Christianity is incompatible with liberal education's notion of rationality. *Intention* depreciates if not ignores the ideal of individual autonomy. Citing Sartre (128) that “man is a self-defining and self-determining nothingness,” these educa-

tors contend that indoctrination perpetrates such mischief as obedience, communitarianism, submission, and the like. All these are deemed to be incompatible with liberal definitions of autonomy. The last criterion, *consequences*, discerns that students are encouraged to believe something—specifically, the tenets of the Christian faith.

Thiessen's strategy—working from within the discipline of analytic philosophy, rather than, say, constructing an alternative world view, vantage point, or soapbox to critique that discipline for the purposes of this book—proves effective because of its integrity. Indeed, during the course of his analysis he inductively defines another Christian world view, an alternate paradigm, a structure capable of standing the test of academic scrutiny. He traces the roots of the contemporary reigning paradigm of liberal education to the theological disarray of a post-Reformation, war-torn Europe and the adoption of such values as freedom, individualism, equality, toleration, critical rationality, and scientific method as means to move “beyond the present and particular” (Bailey's term). Then he proceeds, after identifying common ground, to expose the internal inconsistencies of the anti-religious and indoctrination charges. He cites other philosophical authorities and makes creative use of their critiques and affirmations of liberal education.

Only a few details of his responses to

the allegations can be given here. “Content cannot indoctrinate on its own” (86). In other words, if there is merit to the *content* for indoctrination, then public schools undoubtedly indoctrinate as well. As for the *methods* criterion, Thiessen contends, “Much of the charge of indoctrination is unfairly applied against Christian nurture in that it focuses on the initiation phase of education, which of necessity must be non-rational. All liberal education, while it aims at the development of rationality, must begin with non-rational teaching methods” (115). Again, whatever validity can be maintained that methods can promote indoctrination applies to the public schools as well. When he comes to examine the *intention* criterion charge, Thiessen challenges the modern preoccupation with and the assumptions of the ideal of individual autonomy: Children are not born autonomous, but need to be educated towards autonomy” (141). And he denies the charge that parents who seek to establish “a stable and coherent Christian primary culture” for their children are interfering with the development of autonomy—at least that form of autonomy which is consistent with a Christian anthropology.

In his discussion of the last criterion, *consequence*, Thiessen meets the charge that independent schools do not encourage critical openness. Again, he advocates a normal critical openness that involves a rejection of blind faith in tradition or

authority, while at the same time remaining sensitive to the important function that tradition and authority play in each person's life” (164). At this point he adds a fifth criterion, the criterion of the *institution* itself. Do not overarching *a priori* belief systems operative in the school itself constitute a form of indoctrination? Indeed they do, and in such notions as socialization and secularization, public schools cannot escape the charge that they foster the social, economic, and cultural ethos of the community.

Professor Thiessen, in an appendix, addresses a Christian readership, challenging it to examine its practices to discern whether there may be, in fact, some basis to the charges of pedagogical coercion. In my judgment, he could have pursued this challenge more aggressively. I have some problems as well with his epistemology; that is, it appears that he has bought into an *a priori*, acritical foundation, premised on notions of scientific rationalism. Again, with the criterion of content, he appears to me to be over-emphasizing the relation, the pedagogy, at the expense of content. Nevertheless, the work is enormously impressive. The careful scholarship, the logical incisiveness, and the disciplined expression make this book an important contribution to the educational discourse of our day. It will make it more difficult for some educators to get by with indiscriminate charges against independent schools.

