

# PERSPECTIVES IN COVENANT EDUCATION

## ARTICLES

**Strategy for Survival Geographically  
for Protestant Reformed Christian Schools**

Beverly Hoekstra

**The Association for  
Christian Education in Ireland**

Thomas G. Reid

**Language and Brain Lateralization**

David M. Harbach

**Wordless Picture Books**

Marilyn Decker

**Vocabulary Growth**

Winifred Koole

**FALL  
1981**

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VOLUME VII

FALL, 1981

NUMBER 1

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Published tri-annually in the fall,  
winter, and spring by the Protestant  
Reformed Teachers' Institute.

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**Perspectives in Covenant Education** is a journal regulated and published tri-annually, in September, January, and May by the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute. The purpose of this magazine, in most general terms, is to advance the cause of distinctively Christian education as it is conceived in the Protestant Reformed community. More specifically, the magazine is intended to serve as an encouragement and an inducement toward individual scholarship, and a medium for the development of distinctive principles and methods of teaching. The journal is meant to be a vehicle of communication: a vehicle of communication, not only within the profession, but within the Protestant Reformed community and within the Christian community in general.

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Third Class Postage paid at  
Jenison, Michigan 49428

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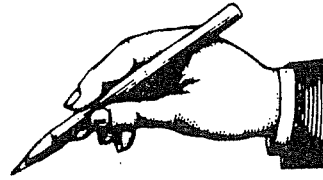
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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK. . .



by Agatha Lubbers

As volume VII comes into your homes, you will *notice* little in the form of change but certain changes have occurred. *Perspectives* is now a tri-annual publication. That means that the editorial staff will be responsible for publishing *Perspectives* in the months of September, January, and May — a fall, winter, and spring issue. The size of each magazine will be a bit smaller but we are hoping that by having the magazine published once more annually that it will contain as many or more articles annually and that it will be more attractive to our readers.

Another change is in the subscription price. Many of our subscribers have regularly given more than the necessary subscription price but as you all know the cost of printing (like everything else) has risen. Therefore, the Institute has decided to raise the price from \$3.00 to \$4.00.

While I am on the topic of finances I should take this opportunity to thank the organizations who graciously remembered *Perspectives* at the end of the society year. We appreciate these gifts because the cost of publishing *Perspectives* is not covered by the subscriptions which we collect. If your society meets in the fall to dispense monies from the treasury, we should much appreciate being placed on your list of organizations to whom you donate funds.

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In my work as editor of *Perspectives* I am enabled to receive correspondence from a broad segment of God's people in the world who are concerned with Reformed covenantal education.

Soon after the spring, 1981, *Perspectives* was mailed I received an interesting and informative letter from Thomas G. Reid, treasurer of the Association for Christian Education in Ireland, concerning the educational situation in Ireland. With his letter he included a short article that he intended to be published in the *Standard Bearer*. I take the liberty to publish the article in *Perspectives* because it is concerned with an area of education that interests the readers of *Perspectives*.

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In this issue of *Perspectives* is an article by Beverly Hoekstra concerning the survival of Christian education. This article is in the form of a Christian approach to demography (i.e., the study of social statistics and population movements) as this relates to the right and possibility for Christian schools to exist in this present evil world.

The article by David Harbach provides interesting and valuable insights into the mysteries of learning. With the Psalmist we say, "we are fearfully and wonderfully made."

Language development, one of the chief concerns of the Christian school teacher and the Christian parent, is the burden of the articles "Wordless Picture Books" and "Vocabulary Growth." These articles by two veteran primary grade teachers should provide helpful ideas for both teachers and parents. □

## STRATEGY FOR SURVIVAL GEOGRAPHICALLY FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

by Beverly Hoekstra

*Miss Beverly Hoekstra is an instructor in the primary grades of the Free Christian School of Edgerton, Minnesota.*

### INTRODUCTION

We are living near the end of the ages. We desire peace, but there is war. We desire serenity, but there is conflict. We desire order, but there is confusion. War, conflict, and confusion are the promise of God near the end of the ages. Because He has molded us to be His Own, by grace we receive war, conflict, and confusion with joy knowing that as we are active in war, conflict, and confusion, seemingly temporarily in despair, yet, through and in Christ we have the victory over them and will one day enjoy perfect peace, perfect serenity, and perfect order that this world has never known, forever.

## OUR CALLING

It pleased the eternal God to create the world and all basic content therein including every creature, chief among them, man. He created all things by calling into being the things that were not as though they were. All things responded to the Word of His mouth. There was nothing that could resist the Word of His mouth.

Then out of the human race God had made, He called again. He called a peculiar human race with an irresistible spiritual calling, again a calling that could not be avoided, changed, or manipulated by the called subjects, His peculiar people. They heard His Call. There was only one thing that the called of God could do: answer His Call. The Call was irresistible.

Through time God calls His people by His Word and Spirit. By His Word He makes Himself known to the called so that they know Him and His Will concerning the way they must live. By His Spirit He works in them to make them willing to keep His sayings by doing what He requires of them.

The called believe Scripture to be the revealed Word of God. Scripture is not a book which suggests a preferred pattern of life. It is a book which commands a certain pattern of life, with no alternatives. It is the voice of God saying, "Listen to Me!" The special people called with the irresistible calling can only say, "I listen." God says, "Do." The called say, "I will."

When a person is presented with a suggestion, he has a choice as to whether he will take the suggestion or leave it. When a person is presented with a suggestion that is preferred, he still has a choice to take it or to leave it. If he chooses to take it, he follows the preferred suggestion. His choice can then be called a preference. This means he likes his choice, maybe very much, but it is still understood that he chose his pattern of behavior.

When a person is presented with a command, he obeys or disobeys. He has no choices, no alternatives, no preferences.

When God calls His people, they have no choice. They come. The calling is irresistible. There is no choice. They believe His Word. They also become doers of His Word.

We believe we are the special people called by God to recognize His Word as our only basic authority. We not only respect that Word, but we have no choice but to keep His Word by obeying it. As the things created were called and could only appear, so we are called and can only obey. There is no alternative. What He says, we must do. The commands He gives, must be obeyed, nothing less, nothing else. There can be no reasoning of "maybe," "we will see once," "if the situation allows," or "it depends." We must obey. Because He makes us willing,

we will be abused or put to death instead of disobeying His commands. The Word of God stands. The calling is irresistible. Such persuasion is called a conviction.

One of the commands of God to His people is to bring up their covenant children in the best possible godly method and manner before God. Parents present infants or children before the Lord and His Church to promise that they will put forth their efforts and endeavors to instruct and to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord.

In one serious attempt to execute this calling and promise, Christian parents have established schools. At various times in history and in various places, the purpose of the establishment of such schools has somewhat varied. We are concerned now with our Protestant Reformed Christian schools; which have come into existence historically because of an apparent change from the sound convictions of others who once seemed to hold the Scriptures as the basic sole authority in their lives. Simply stated, the purpose of our schools is to teach the arts and sciences in a godly, disciplined method and manner. We believe that in these schools our calling to teach that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge is best accomplished. This to us is important since we also believe that there is no knowledge apart from Him and all knowledge is His.

We feel duty bound to continue to maintain these schools both spiritually and physically. Finally, in the face of opposition, we must pray for grace to exert ourselves to maintain our schools as well and as long as we can, not giving ourselves deliberately to spiritual and physical death by surrendering to the enemy when this is not necessary and the time is not ripe.

This is our calling, our conviction.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### *Law:*

Amendment 1 of the *Constitution of the United States* reads as follows: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Amendment 14, Section 1 reads as follows: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any Law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

Amendment 14, Section 5 reads as follows: "The Congress shall have power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article."

Thus, then, we are said to have religious freedom and rights. Under Amendment 1 we have religious liberty or freedom. This liberty or freedom gives us the right to individual and collective freedom of religion. Implied therein is also the liberty or the freedom to have and to hold the principles involved in the convictions thereof, including the exercise of that freedom to educate our children according to the principles of our convictions.

Under Amendment 14 we have religious civil rights. These rights prohibit discrimination or individuals from denying citizens the right to exercise the practical implications of their convictions so long as they are carried out according to the laws of the land. No one may stop or hinder the active functioning of our schools according to our convictions, but we should lawfully be able to enjoy, in maintaining them, the privilege of all lawful protection equal with every other law-abiding citizen, such as equality of status under the law, equal treatment in the administration of justice, and equality of opportunity and access to employment, education, housing, public services and facilities, and public accommodations.

*Location:*

We, then, have and have had the freedom to locate where we believe God has placed us. We have exercised this freedom regarding and observing local laws as well. We did this in answer to our convictions. As a result we have one school in California, one in Colorado, one in Illinois, two in Iowa, three in Michigan, one in Minnesota, and one in Washington. Some of these schools have been maintained for many years. We thank God that He has supplied us with the spiritual, lawful, and monetary means to have these institutions.

**FORCES PROMOTING A CONFLICT**

The forces of the antithesis, the forces of the world against the Church of Christ and her manifestation in the Earth, even the anti-Christ, are always at work gnawing away at the edges of the Church and Her endeavors and Her manifestation in witness and conviction to attempt to bite at the heart to destroy Her. This is especially true today at about quarter to 12 on the Clock of God. According to Scripture, this is the time for perilous times to be upon Her. The days of our existence may be nearing an end. Forces representing and manifesting the spirit of our modern age are upon us both from within and from without to attempt to attack the quality and quantity of



our instruction and the existence of our schools. We must be aware and beware of them, remembering that we have the victory over them in Christ.

*Forces from Within*

First, there are those who question, seemingly, about every existing idea, behavior, method, style, institution, as well as other related phenomena. Why does this or that exist? Why is this thing this way or that way? We must examine why the persons do this questioning.

This questioning can portray the marks of a person irresistibly called of God. He has the command of God to try the spirits to see whether they be of God. Also in answer to His call to obedience, if he finds that he or a fellow saint holds an idea, behavior, method, style, or institution that is contrary or hindering to the keeping of the law of God and in love to Him, he will cleanse or sanctify his way and advise his fellow saints accordingly, and if the occasion should require a replacement of idea, behavior, habit, style, or institution, he will replace the broken one with one that is according to the Law of God and done in a manner that does show love to Him.

This questioning can also portray the marks of a person ruled by himself, influenced by fleshly friends, and perhaps at worst even influenced and ruled by the Devil himself. His questioning is often to sneer, to poke fun of, and to promote change merely for the sake of change. If this action becomes a practice, it will promote chaos and confusion. He is often making an attempt to destroy for the purpose of destroying, rebuilding, or promoting the establishment of a new order. A person doing this in this late age often does so to promote the cause of his own will though he will not tell his observers that he is doing this. He is like a wolf in the clothing of sheep. He will often present his suggestions of change to be in the interest of promoting human welfare. Those suggesting this change sometimes gain the sentiments of those in authority who in turn approve and promote fleshly human welfare.

Also in the cloak of promoting human welfare is the idea that it is bad to prohibit a person or group from thinking their own desired thoughts and from performing a certain desired act upon which one or more have previously contemplated, irrespective of what the ideas or act may be. Undesirable acts are said to be desirable. Unlawful acts are said to be lawful. The practice of permitting the undesirable and the unlawful can be termed permissivism, as we shall call it. Persons practicing this act upon many or seemingly almost every existing idea, behavior, method, style, or institution of society may be termed permissivists. Here again, a person promoting permissivism does not and

will not come before society as a permissivist. He would seldom, if ever, use the terms permissivist and permissivism himself. Yet, he will hope that his ideas spread like contagion.

It is not uncommon that overtones of modern philosophies and mannerisms play their off-beat tunes among the saints of God. They are heard in their churches and in their godly institutions of instruction and learning. These tones are easily received by the saint, especially in his weaker moments. And who is there that is not weak? We even teach little children humbly and truthfully to sing, "I am weak, but He is strong."

One of the common examples of permissivism is the allowing of unlawful behavior among students. In some cases it is denied or gotten by with after a so-called explanation in the cloak of innocent piety. In other cases it is excused because it is considered the thing to be doing and looked upon as a proper standard, when in fact, it is known that the act could not be considered proper conduct at all according to the Law of love to God. Thus the allowing of the worldly spirit of permissivism will and does reduce the quality of the disciplined atmosphere, thus also reducing the quality of our instruction.

Another force is the force of materialism. It may well have sprouted from the spirit of permissivism, in giving every individual his way to do and to have and to think as he wishes as though it is all right. In the world materialism is simply having any material object a person would like or want. Spiritual materialism is the setting of one's heart on the material that he has whether it be very much or maybe not so much or on the obtaining of future treasured possessions. It is the matter of the heart, not the matter of quantity and quality of goods.

Materialism is very common in state schools, but since we too are influenced by the spirit of the age in which we live, this force too will have struck its off-beat drone in our covenant schools in some form or manner. Many earthly things are thought to be wanted or needed both by schools and individuals. An unreasonable effort is sometimes made to attain to the having of them.

In some cases a school is erected to extravagance to contain numerous commodities said to be for teaching. Large numbers of teaching persons and gadgets are on hand. An excess of instructors or aids have to remain busy doing something, thereby robbing the student of his time in learning to think and to practice for his own benefit. When many gadgets are present, often most of them are little used, and many of them, not at all. Some of them will be proven to be a detriment, while the rest of them will teach very little. Elegance is much in evidence while in reality the educational standards are being lowered.

Materialism can be a threat through the individuals attending a

school. One example is when children have a great variety of clothing and other belongings causing school to become a fashion show promoting a heavy run on extravagant show-and-tell items which may or may not detract from the proper instructional and learning atmosphere, but certainly will not enhance it. Another example which we will name is when individuals shorten school instructional hours to buy desired items or if students are taken from the instructional atmosphere to be employed to earn the monetary means to obtain extraneous items. Thus we can see that materialism is a force that can lower the quality and quantity of the instruction of the covenant student.

#### *Force from Without*

The final force which we shall name that is promoting a conflict, is a force over which we have little or no control. It is the force of government pressure. The government, that is called by God to protect its citizens against the evil doer and to praise those who do well, has taken an interest in many things that are said to be for the welfare of the citizenry. Among them is education.

The government has a voluminous voice in the schools of the state even to the extent that the state school employees are at times uneasy because of it. The same force may be close at hand not only to take a nip from the exterior, but to take a vital bite at the very heart of the godly school to force her out of existence.

There are many ways in which this vital bite can occur. There are numerous types of legislation that could cause this. It is perhaps appropriate to name a few examples patterned after current legislation. One possible example would be the passing of excessive legislation on how to implement activities in the classroom, perhaps time-wise or material or subject-wise, the latter with either faulty theories and philosophies or with superfluous courses. Another example would be to require us by law to take federal funds and tell us how to use them in the classroom. Still another example is the possibility of the government requiring so many costly stipulations in edifices, administration, or classroom management and equipment that the expense cannot be met. It is also possible that all minority schools be required to close. This brief list is not considered to be conclusive but does exemplify expansions of the current pattern of legislation and political discussions.

Should existence become very perilous for legislative or for other reasons, lawfully we are supposed to be able to appeal to the courts. One may even do this for conscience sake. After all, do we not live in a democracy? Do we not have the lawful liberties to have these schools according to the legitimate laws of the land as set forth in the *Constitution of the United States*? Is the government not by, of, and for us

as well as the rest of the citizenry? Are we not law abiding citizens with the right to justice? But it may not help us to maintain our schools. The might of majority rules in the courts. This means, practically, that you may have your freedom and rights so long as your religious ideas are not in conflict with the ideas of the majority of the people who are voted into governmental offices or positions. Thus the fact that we live in a democracy may itself impose a threat upon us.

The majority are not ruled by the Spirit of Christ. The fear of God is not in them. They are ruled by their own hearts. They at best control themselves, are influenced by their fleshly friends, and finally instigated by the Devil himself, their father, who is being let loose in this era of the latter days. They rule, persecute in rule, even in an upperclass self-esteeming way, but they do not regard their end. Expect the worst for the future of the existence of our covenant schools.

Thus we can see how the force from which we may expect legal physical protection may indeed become our physical and spiritual enemy. The majority rules in our law-making and law-interpreting governmental offices or positions.

## GOALS

Our basic goal is to continue to teach the arts and sciences in a godly, disciplined method and manner. This is why the ruling parents established these schools in answer to their calling, conviction, and promise. These schools are to be kept undefiled from the way of the world and maintained in existence as long as possible.

First, we will attempt to maintain our schools in spiritual purity. We will fight against the forces from within of permissivism and materialism, and any other evil that would afflict them. Our children must continue to receive instruction in the arts and sciences, knowing the Scriptures in all things, so that they know that they as well as all things created belong to God and that all things serve His eternal purpose. They must know the Scriptural perspective of authority. They must also know how to receive and to use every good and perfect gift to the honor of God and to His glory.

Second, we will strive to maintain our schools as long as possible. If forces from without would force us out of existence locally, we should try to know, if possible, whether there be a place where we can go to continue to exist for awhile before the very end of time is upon us when we know that we will no longer be able to exist. If we give in before hand, we lose the battle. If we fight to the end to exist, then the battle is won, not of our own power, but by the power of God that works within us to will and to do His Will.

## WAYS TO ATTAIN OUR GOALS

The task to attain our goals is insurmountable. We cannot approach it. The days are evil. There will be more intervention than cooperation. Yet our direction will be very positive in the way of prayer and supplication remembering we are weak but our God is strong. Our might is not our own. We have a calling, a conviction. Our God will supply us with all things needful.

Being deeply conscious of our calling to attain our goals, we will first, as diligent stewards, attempt to maintain the Scriptural perspective of authority and the thankful use of our earthly gifts ourselves, both as parents and as instructors. Also, we will not give in to government forces when this is not necessary, attempt to be aware of acceptable alternative locations for temporary existence if this is necessary and possible, and maintain our schools as long as we can even in the face of spiritual, political, or economic opposition.

The forces that afflict our schools from within are forces against which we have to fight a spiritual battle. As the stewards of God we have considerable control over them. Let us pray for the grace with which to fight and for the necessary portion of His Holy Spirit to sanctify our way that we may be unspotted from the way of the world and through the cross be presented spotless before the Judge of the Earth. This means that we will be found diligent to question every idea, method, behavior, style, or institution to see whether it be of God, to consciously promote the teaching and the practice of the Law of God.

We will continue to provide appropriate places for instruction and maintain them. They should be intelligently equipped with such commodities as good heating, light paint, sanitary equipment, and fire doors. School rooms should provide ample room, lighting, chalkboard, and perhaps, if possible, an overhead for large student bodies. In the classroom there should be an adequate supply of books, flash cards, and other related phenomena. Equipment such as projectors can prove to be useful but should not be mandatory. Their use is limited. The available materials take much time and peculiar space to review, more than books. Often the time required to screen them is not warranted when compared to the help and assistance they provide in the classroom. Many of these materials are corrupted with modern worldly attitudes and false teachings of the current age. To produce projector material by a current staff would reduce effective teaching because of the time it would involve. Besides, children usually develop better study habits by hunting material in books. Finally, personal teaching is more effective than gadget teaching.

Instructors knowing the arts and sciences, capable of opening the Holy Scriptures to the student bodies in the teaching of them, will

still be employed. These instructors must show themselves to be filled with the Holy Ghost in that they know intellectually and live practically according to the precepts of God as set forth by His Holy Scriptures. They must be busy trying the spirits of ideas, habits, customs, methods, styles, institutions, and other criteria to see whether they be of God and transfer this knowledge with the arts and sciences to their students.

In this way the Christian student will be taught to better know the spirit of this age and the related problems in this world which are reflected in modern arts and sciences. He is inexperienced. He must know what is, what to expect, and what to do about it. He has found, does find, and will find this out for himself also, but it is more effective that he also be taught them by more knowledgeable veterans in the area.

There is the ever growing problem of wicked or inappropriate language in printed materials of all kinds as well as in social and business contracts. He must know of the various possibilities and be trained to know how to think so that he can deal effectively with them, whether he be among the saints or apart from them.

The Christian student must know that the spirit of the anti-Christ, the power of the Devil, is strong, stronger than in any other time in history. The anti-Christ attempts to overthrow any power of law, decency, and order. Permissivism portrays a prime example. The student must know of the spiritual danger and evil of permissivism as well as of materialism and how they may and do attack him personally even unaware, as well as the school that he attends. He must know how to fight them in his personal life and also as part of the saints of God.

He must be aware that he is living near the end of time. Maybe it is like quarter to twelve on the Clock of God. He must know that persecution is in the world and that the time may come that he too may be involved. He must also know the position of his government toward him, his school, his church. What will become of him? What will become of his home, his school, his church? Must he flee? Where?

Among other academics a knowledge of geography is greatly enhancing as part of our strategy for spiritual and physical survival. It should appear near the top of the Christian student's priority list. This will help him to know where things are and, to some extent, (perhaps sufficiently so) why they are the way they are. It will help him to know better, and in the fear of God, to better know where to go in the case that he must in fact flee geographically, whether it be to maintain his spiritual identity individually or collectively with his Christian friends, or to maintain his physical existence.

A knowledge of geography will help the student to know the kinds of places to which he may have to flee. Perhaps there will be a temporary haven to which he and his fellow believers can go where they can

legally find a place, even to colonize, to effectively fight the spirit of the world and perhaps flee the enclosing pressures of the government, so that maybe, even for a fairly extended period of time, formal Christian instruction may be continued. His knowledge of geography will also help him to know how he and his fellow believers may have to make a living in their newly adopted environment.

The Christian student may have to flee to another state or country. He may have to sneak from area to area, from state to state, or even from country to country without proper credentials, landing at any coast, rather than in a proper port. He may even have to flee to a remote place, maybe to a cave or to a remote wilderness mountain area.

The student should also be prepared for a situation where nothing is prepared, but may have to flee for life in a moment's notice. There is now no way to know how or where this may be. The times may change so fast and so much that one could not know, much less plan, such phenomena ahead though beforehand he should have studied records of political entities to see what the policies of emigration and immigration had been. After all, he should have been taught to be a law-abiding citizen.

This does not mean to say that the Christian student's formal instruction must prepare him for every possible emergency. This would be impossible. The basic demands of geography for this particular purpose can be limited to the physical, political, and economic aspects. He should know the physical aspects of the various areas of Earth, such as the lay of the land in regard to the seas and the interior terrain. A knowledge of climate may also prove to be useful. He should also be familiar with political entities and their customs on emigration and immigration and their basic economic, social, and religious ways of life. The complete curriculum of geography as we should carry it on from year to year should go beyond these basics, but these basics should be reinforced from year to year to refresh the memory of the student or to inform him of current changes or trends.

A child well prepared will usually grow into a well-prepared adult, and hopefully, a well-prepared parent to teach his children preparedness. This will be true not merely in the promotion of his geographic information, but especially in the ways of the Lord, as He works His purpose on Earth, particularly at the end of time, and beyond the ages.

In a typical speech or writing of a strategy it is usually considered proper at this point to relate how the attained goals should be implemented. In our unique situation, our work as formal instructor will end when the covenant school can no longer exist. There still may be occasion to instruct the youth, or perhaps even adults, in other ways for awhile. It is not as though we too have struck an off-beat drone of

failure. For the flesh the time may be difficult. Our faithful God will take care of His people then as always. In contrast it will be time to await and to hear the perfect joyfully clear note of the trumpet of God announcing the final coming of Jesus with the Victory Sceptre in His Hand.

## CONCLUSION

The time will come when our Protestant Reformed Christian Parental Schools can no longer exist. How this will take place, one cannot predict with reasonable surety. In the trying hour that intervenes, our faithful covenant God will supply us with the grace to remain faithful and will direct our prayers to Himself in the Name of the King of All Glory above. In obedience to the King and with His help may we persevere to the end in the maintaining of our covenantal schools and in the instruction of our children. Our hope and trust is in Him in Whose Cross we glory as it towers over the wrecks of time. God will give us the grace to continue steadfast in the way of the King, to be governed by Him alone, and through Him to look forward to the reward of everlasting joy and righteousness that He has earned on the Cross. We are weak to live in the way of so great a King. Our strength is in Him Whose ways are beyond our ways, Whose grace never fails, and Who will carry us in His everlasting arms to the realms of everlasting day where He will be the Light and we shall enjoy perfect peace, perfect serenity, perfect order, and perfect government, forever. ■ ■

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“...the nurture which is required of the Christian parent is not in the realm of what is desirable but is mandatory. God ‘commanded’ the fathers. Christian nurture is not an optional extra. We are required to see to it that what our children are taught accords with the Word of God. A vigorous perpetuation of what is true is commanded not merely generally or ecclesiastically but domestically. If we would not tolerate our children being exposed to erroneous doctrine from the pulpit nor should we be prepared to accept their exposure to atheistic and materialistic values, presented as being true, in the classroom. The same God Who has commanded purity of doctrine in the Church has commanded a nurture consistent with that doctrine in the home and by extension in the school.” (quoted from *Newsletter*, Christian Parent-Teacher League, December, 1980. Roy Mohon writes this in a 65-page booklet, “Train up a Child.”)



# THE ASSOCIATION FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN IRELAND

The Association for Christian Education in Ireland grew out of the concern of several members of the Reformed Presbyterian (Covenant) Church of Ireland for reformed, parent-controlled education for their covenant children. The *Testimony* of that Church commits the denomination to the idea of such schools, but none exist at the present time. At the request of some members, the 1978 Synod of the Church set up a Sub-Committee on Christian Education to investigate the matter. After discussions lasting one year, the Sub-Committee recommended that the Church itself not set up schools, but provide a framework in which such schools would become reality. After another year of work by a reconstituted Sub-Committee, the Association for Christian Education in Ireland was formed in Belfast in April, 1980, with eight charter members. It has since grown to 32 members, most of them found in the greater Belfast area, but others in northern County Antrim, Londonderry, and the Irish Republic.

The Association holds public meetings throughout the north of the island, and finds gradually increasing interest stretching across denominational divides but generally involving people of evangelical and reformed theology. Each applicant for membership is carefully investigated by the Committee (the Board) in order to maintain the confessionally reformed character of the organization. The Association is loosely affiliated with the Christian Parent-Teacher League in the British Isles, and one of the Committee members, Mr. Adam Mastris, is Irish representative of the League.

The major effort in publicity so far was a "Christian Schools Week" in April, 1981, featuring Dr. Michael Ruiter of Christian Schools International, and Mr. Stanley Koster of Holland Christian Schools. They provided much-needed expertise and stimulation to a group most of whose members have never seen a Christian school let alone studied in one! The wide publicity the visit afforded identified a number of potential supporters, so that the Association is moving out of a narrowly Reformed Presbyterian mold. As a result of this week, the Association is working toward the opening of the first school, Lord willing, in September, 1982.

The members of the Association have had to bear the reproach of many who believe they are fundamentalistic or impractical or

both. Yet their hope is not in men but in the Lord of the covenant, who has entrusted them with the precious children of that covenant to nurture and instruct. Can they do anything less than provide a school where the instruction of church and family will be reinforced, and indeed, developed?

Tom Reid  
(Treasurer, A.C.E.I.)  
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429 Cregagh Road, Belfast BT6 OLG Northern Ireland. ■ ■

## LANGUAGE AND BRAIN LATERALIZATION

by David M. Harbach

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Lateralization of the brain is an important aspect of our every day life and yet, we often are not aware that there is an important connection between lateralization of the brain and our ability to acquire language, to speak our language, to read our language, and to understand our language. In addition, there is a time in our life that is the most important for learning another language, which of course has a tremendous pedagogical impact for teachers and students. This report is divided into three major areas: the historical research of speech aphasias and epileptics, the critical age for language lateralization, and the pedagogical implications of lateralization of the brain. This report is to be open ended because new findings in brain lateralization will change our understanding of this important aspect of our daily life.

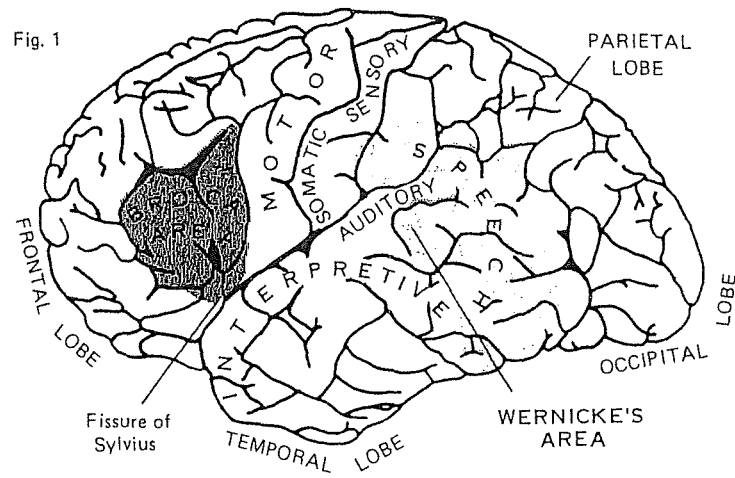
Let us begin with the first major area, the historical research. In order to help you to visualize the left hemisphere of the brain, I have provided two drawings, the first drawing (fig. 1, p. 18) is for the identification of the names of places in the brain that are most important for language acquisition, while the second drawing (fig. 2, p. 18) shows

two possible neural paths; one neural path is for speaking a written word and the other neural path is for speaking a heard word. I will be referring to these two drawings repeatedly throughout this report.

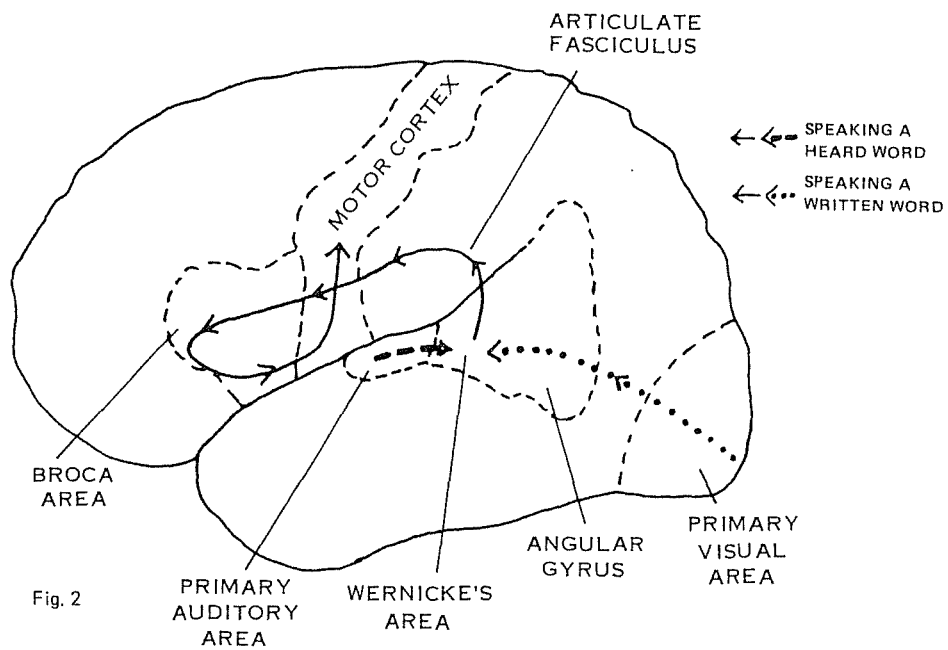
The left and right hemispheres of the brain make up the major part of the cerebral cortex. The cerebral cortex can be divided into four lobes (fig. 1) in each hemisphere: the frontal lobe, this lobe controls voluntary motor movements, eye movements, and the motor elements in speech; the parietal lobe, this lobe receives signals of somatic sensation from the skin, bones, joints, and muscles; the temporal lobe, this lobe receives auditory (hearing) stimuli, recognizes and understands meaningful sounds, and is concerned with memory; the occipital lobe, this lobe recognizes and integrates visual stimuli. If you desire a more clinical explanation of the cerebral cortex, consult *Clinical Anatomy* by Harold Ellis, 1971, p. 335-. The left hemisphere, the most important area of the brain for language acquisition, we will study more closely later in this report, along with how we speak a language. Now that we are familiar with the brain, let us consider brain damage.

"In man brain damage is often caused by cerebral thrombosis or stroke: occlusion of arteries in the brain, which results in the death of the tissues the blocked arteries supply. This led to the fact that there were several functional areas of the brain, including language areas" (Geschwind, *Scientific American*, 1971, p. 180). Paul Broca, a French surgeon during the 1860s, discovered that "damage to specific areas of the left half (hemisphere) led to disorder of spoken language. . .while damage to the right side left language abilities intact. Out of 100 people with language disorder 97 will have left brain damage. However, these people can sing melodies without difficulty" (Geschwind, *Scientific American*, 1972, p. 76). The Broca area, as it is now called, refers to an area in the left hemisphere, that when damaged, gives rise to aphasia or speech disorder. The characteristics of a Broca type aphasia would be slow speech with poor articulation, the loss of verb inflections and pronouns, the inability to form a complete syntactic sentence, the ability to understand spoken and written language, and the presence of paralysis to the right side of the body. Although these characteristics seem difficult to explain and understand, Broca was able to point out that damage to a particular area in the left hemisphere of the brain caused similar characteristics in each patient.

Carl Wernicke, a German professor at the University of Breslau, in the 1870s found that a lesion (damage) in the temporal lobe of the left hemisphere between the primary auditory area and the angular gyrus (fig. 2) causes a person to have difficulty in the semantic area of language output: the person is able to speak fluently, the spoken sentences are syntactically correct, but the spoken sentences lack meaning.



## LEFT CEREBRAL HEMISPHERE



“The Wernicke’s aphasic. . . shows a profound failure to understand both spoken and written language, although he suffers from no elementary impairment of hearing or sight” (Geschwind, *Science*, 1970, p. 941). The area in the temporal lobe that lies between the primary auditory area and the angular gyrus is called Wernicke’s area. Wernicke also “pointed out that Broca’s area was located just in front of the cortical region in which lay the motor representation for the face, tongue, lips, palate, and vocal cords — that is, the organs of speech. It seemed reasonable to assume that Broca’s area contained the rules by which heard language could be coded into articulatory form. . . . By contrast, Wernicke’s area lies next to the cortical representation of hearing, and it was reasonable to assume that this area was somehow involved in the recognition of the patterns of spoken language” (Geschwind, 1970, p. 941).

We know now that there is a connection between Broca’s area and Wernicke’s area by means of the articulate fasciculus (fig. 2). This means that information is transferred from Wernicke’s area to Broca’s area, and this is confirmed by the characteristics we see in the described above aphasias.

We can produce a basic model of language from the preceding information. Geschwind has not disappointed us in this desire. Geschwind proposes that “when a word is heard, the output from the primary auditory area of the cortex is received by the Wernicke area. If the word is to be spoken, it is transferred from the Wernicke area to the Broca area where the articulatory form is aroused and passed on to the motor area that controls movement of the muscles of speech” (1972, p. 76-). Similarly, Leonard Small proposes this model for how a visually perceived object is named: the visual cortex is stimulated producing a stimulation of the visual association cortex which transfers the impulse to the angular gyrus that arouses the name in the Wernicke area; the name is transferred by means of the articulate fasciculus to the motor association area of Broca, where the motor pattern associated with the sound form is aroused in the motor cortex thereby producing speech, (1973), (see fig. 2). These two models of language give us the main pathways of language in the left hemisphere. The brain is far more complex in organization and function than we can realize, even when we focus on a model of language which is only one area of brain function, and which is also a clear testimony of God’s handiwork in the creation of man, separating him from the rest of creation, but we must examine the other half or part of man’s brain to have a more complete picture of our being fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wayne Sage says that Roger W. Sperry, a neurobiologist, “was intrigued by the fact that each of the hemispheres of the cerebrum has

always seemed oblivious to each other's existence. . .each side of the brain learned independently and had a separate memory" (1976, p. 24). Drs. Phillip J. Vogle and J.E. Bogen sought a way to control epileptic seizures. They reasoned that if electrical discharges which caused the epileptic seizure were confined to either side of the brain, the other hemisphere not affected by the seizure could serve to provide normal body control. The only way this could be accomplished would be by disconnecting most of the neural connections between both hemispheres, thereby preventing any seizure from transferring over to the other side. In sixteen intractable epileptics, they cut the corpus callosum, the nerve system that exists between both halves of the brain and which serves to carry neural information between hemispheres, enabling the unaffected side to control the body during seizures. The operations worked and Sperry began his study by performing several experiments using photographs, objects, and word displays.

There is not enough space in this report to allow a detailed study of the setup of Sperry's experiments, but it will suffice to say that he sought to present different visual and tactile stimuli to each side of the brain, so that the left side would receive a different stimuli than the right side was receiving, or he would present visual or tactile stimuli to just one side. Adams Smith quotes Sperry: "what is experienced in the right hemisphere seems to be entirely outside the realm of awareness in the left hemisphere" (1975, p. 63). What then were each of the hemispheres responsible for controlling? Sage reports that the left hemisphere is our rationality lobe, processing information bit by bit in a logical fashion, carrying on verbal and mathematical reasoning, and communicating with the outside world by the use of verbal language (1976). These facts suggest that the brain is somewhat specialized, depending on the particular process involved, so that each hemisphere does not carry on duplicate functions, but rather separate functions, that are at times integrated with both hemispheres. We know that the eyes and ears have neural connections that are contralateral (opposite side) and ipsilateral (same side). This led investigators to be more specific about auditory and speech perception.

Studdert-Kennedy and Shankweiler focused their investigation on lower-level speech sounds. They used a dichotic listening device which presents a different sound stimuli in each ear at the same time. Studdert-Kennedy and Shankweiler decided to test the components of a speech signal in order to determine which components of a speech signal are lateralized in the brain (1970). They found a right ear phonemic advantage for stop consonants and vowels. They concluded that "convergence of the two signals in the dominant hemisphere occurs before the extraction of linguistic features, and that it is for this

process of feature extraction that the dominant hemisphere is specialized" (1970, p. 590). In other words, the left hemisphere is truly the linguistic perceiver, separating the auditory stimuli into phonological features, while the right hemisphere perceives more general non-linguistic auditory sounds, such as environmental sounds.

Knox and Kimura have found through dichotic presentations that "verbal stimuli such as digits, nonsense syllables, or words, were more correctly identified from the right ear than from the left ear. Conversely, nonverbal stimuli such as melodic patterns or environmental sounds were identified more in the left ear than in the right ear" (1970, p. 227). We conclude that there is lateralization in the brain, so that the left hemisphere is the center of our linguistic perception and control, while the right hemisphere is specific for musical and environmental perception and control. However, lateralization is not fixed at birth. We now turn our attention to the critical age of brain lateralization.

Lenneburg fixes lateralization of speech function at puberty, whereas Krashen and Harshman fix lateralization of speech function by age five. Let us examine these two viewpoints.

Lenneburg states that "during the first two years of life, cerebral domination is not yet well established. . ." during "the age of language acquisition left sided cerebral dominance is manifest" (1967, p. 151). However, "if a child had a lesion in infancy, regardless of side, speech function was eventually confined to the healthy hemisphere, so that when the diseased hemisphere had to be removed later in life, it caused no aphasia" (1967, p. 152). This means that the right hemisphere is capable of and has the potential for assuming linguistic perception and function during childhood. This ability "for speech — specific physiological adjustment ceases to function at puberty" (1967, p. 150), which can be verified by the severe loss of speech of those past puberty who have their left hemisphere removed due to brain damage. Obrador seems to agree with Lenneburg when he says "transference of speech from one hemisphere to the other appears to be the rule rather than the exception up to about the age of fifteen" (1964, p. 141).

Krashen and Harshman used the dichotic listening device with children between five and ten years of age. They found no difference in lateralization in those children. They also found the "aphasia in children resulting from localized lesions revealed that right sided lesions do not cause more cases of speech disturbance after five than in adults, indicating that the involvement of the right hemisphere in the language function in children older than five is the same as in adults" (1972, p. 174). This means that we would expect to see a greater speech loss in children before puberty, than in adults after puberty, due to right hemisphere damage. Since there is no difference, lateralization must

already be complete in the left hemisphere by the age of five years. Krashen and Harshman conclude "the completion of lateralization by five implies that lateralization reflects the maturation of some essential component of the language faculty, rather than the termination of organizational plasticity" (1972, p. 174). Even though linguistic speech function cannot be established in the right hemisphere after puberty, maturation of the speech function occurs in the left hemisphere by the age of five years. Sage agrees with Krashen and Harshman when he states that "two hemispheres develop at an equal rate albeit along separate paths and are equipotential in all functions until around age five, when the hemispheres lose their ability to act interchangeably, each moving into its own specialty. . ." (1976, p. 28).

Lateralization in the brain is an awesome fact of life. We cannot suggest to someone that if he is going to have brain damage to the left hemisphere he should have it before puberty, or if he does have brain damage after puberty, then only the right hemisphere should be damaged. However, whether or not our brain is damaged, the kind of instruction we receive in our education may determine the extent to which we use our brain capability. The rest of this report will be my own pedagogical suggestions in the light of lateralization in the brain.

The area of educational instruction that has the most impact on a child's life would be in the reading process. When the child has reached school age and begins his schooling, the first area of great concern is that the child be able to read and write in a relatively short period of time. Experience has proven that, for many children, learning the reading process is a formidable task and may even lead to a turned-off attitude towards reading many books. I believe that as educators we must be acutely aware of the fact that lateralization in the brain does not occur for some children until they are older. These particular children will have a lot of difficulty in learning to read because neither hemisphere is assuming dominance in the reading process: in fact, each hemisphere will interfere with the other hemisphere while the child is trying to read. This does not mean that the child is retarded, or backward, or stupid, but it does mean that for that particular child the brain has not lateralized the control of the reading process into one side. The teacher will have to exercise patient understanding with a child with dyslexia (i.e., an impairment of the ability to read due to a brain defect), allowing the child the opportunity to read as often as possible with verbal representations of the words, with picture representations of the meaning. Many opportunities must be given the child so he can convey the meaning of what he has read. Our purpose as educators is not to force the brain to lateralize the control of the reading process but to encourage a positive reading atmosphere so that lateralization



can take place without undue harm to the child's attitude towards reading.

The question you may have in the back of your mind may be, "Is the human brain so created that the language process is lateralized to a specific side of the brain?" I bring this question up now because you may have the erroneous impression that the language process is an either-or situation in regards to the left or right hemisphere function. The preceding research is to point out the fact that one of the hemispheres, the left, assumes the major function of controlling the language process, but we must keep in mind that the other hemisphere, the right, is active in the language process, only with less control function, not because its role as a language processor is unimportant, but because it is working along with the left hemisphere in processing language, the left hemisphere being the linguistic organizer, the right hemisphere being a supplier of linguistic information. This means our brain is working as a whole organized unit, integrating the numerous functions it performs each second of our life, each half sending and receiving information from the other half along intricate neural pathways that connect both hemispheres of the brain. Language acquisition and the language process are two of the major functions of the brain as a whole, organized, interconnected unit; the reading process is inseparably connected to these other two functions of the brain and, therefore, we conclude that in learning to read, a rich variety of activities at every level of primary and secondary education must be presented to the reader, so that all of the associated functions of the brain in regards to the language process and reading process are repeatedly stimulated into coordinated and concordant activity.

In the reading process, many activities take place in the brain, such as the auditory perception of a written or spoken word or part of a word; the visual identification of letters, words, and groups of words; the coordination of this information into an understandable form; and the combination of this form with previous knowledge obtained in the reading experience, so that meaning, the main purpose of the reading process, is obtained. The brain integrates perceived stimuli received from many of our sense organs during the reading process for the purpose of getting meaning from the printed or spoken word. A child can have educational experiences that may emphasize the understanding of stimuli received from one of the sense organs, such as the phonics approach, the sight word identification approach and a linguistic approach; but the burden of education, in regards to the reading process, is *not* an emphasis on a particular part of the reading process but must be to teach covenant children so that they are able to get meaning from what they read and to understand that the main purpose

of reading is to understand what they read and to bring meaning to what they read. This makes sense from what we have learned about language and brain lateralization. God has created man so that he is capable of learning how to get meaning from what he reads, that is, God has created the brain of man so that, above all other creatures, man alone is capable of learning how to get meaning from printed words. This has even a greater importance to the teacher of covenant children, when we understand that reading is a means by which the covenant child gains a deeper understanding of God and of his purpose here on earth.

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## WORDLESS PICTURE BOOKS

by Marilyn Decker

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Wordless picture books are one of the major trends in children's literature today. The story in these books is told exclusively by means of pictures. These wordless books can fulfill a very important purpose in the classroom and the home. Perhaps the most important is using the wordless books to stimulate language development in our children. Through the wordless books children take an active part in the storytelling. It is the teacher's responsibility to provide many varied experiences to foster the development of oral language in each of her children.

Wordless books are an excellent means to fulfill that purpose. The children tell in their own words what is happening in each picture. In this way they are learning to follow the story line, to interpret pictures and attach meaning to the pictures. Nancy Larrick says about wordless picture books, "Oral language pours forth easily and naturally."<sup>1</sup> Even the shy child forgets his shyness in the telling of the story. Wordless books help the child who has a limited experiential background by providing him with pictures and a story that he too can tell. Wordless books provide an opportunity for all children to express themselves verbally. The teacher must guide the children by means of questions and comments to help them notice more, think more and expand more on their ideas. Wordless picture books give teachers and parents insight into their children's language abilities.

In the small wordless book by Mercer Mayer, *One Frog Too Many*, the teacher could introduce the book to a small group of children rather than the whole class. Then all children in the small group could see the pictures and the story. Then this small group could "read" the story to another small group and a chain reaction sets in. In this method there is more student participation. The easy-to-follow plot in *One Frog Too Many* would make it an excellent book for storytelling in small groups. The story line is clearly seen throughout the series of comical drawings showing the family of the frog, a boy, a dog, and a turtle being invaded by a small frog.

In Tana Hoban's book *Look Again!* children's observation is sharpened and conversation stimulated. The format of this book is unique. On the first page a window is cut out and you see only black and white stripes but as you turn the page, you look again and see that the black and white stripes were just a small part of a zebra's head. On the next page the whole zebra is shown. This pattern of proceeding from the part to the whole is repeated throughout the book in a succession of beautiful black and white photographs. Children's curiosity is aroused by the small pictures leading to the larger pictures. This format makes this book an excellent conversation starter. A follow-up activity providing more oral language experience may have the children making their own surprise books similar to *Look Again!* Then they can surprise their own classmates with their pictures. In Tana Hoban's first book of color photographs *Is It Red? Is It Yellow? Is It Blue?* the concepts of color, size, shape, and relationships are introduced in a delightful manner without words. Each full-page color photograph is an excellent conversation starter as well as a new learning experience.

Wordless books also encourage the imagination. Children and teachers are not limited by words on the page but can create their own words, invent their own details to tell the story. Each book can be an

adventure in imagination. Linda Heller in *Lily at the Table* has created a wordless fantasy book about Lily who could not finish her food at the table and lets her imagination run away into fantasyland. The chicken leg becomes a violin, the fried potatoes become spectacles, a bean becomes a cigarette. She even fishes in a bowl of cheerios. Children can readily identify with Lily and let their own imaginations run away into fantasy world. This new book by Linda Heller is an excellent wordless book to stimulate children's imagination. Children can easily use this book as a take-off to their own food fantasies.

Wordless books help children understand the sequential nature of plots. They see the plot developing in the sequence of the pictures. As they tell the story from the pictures, they become aware of the sequence of events. Sequence is a basic skill in storytelling but also in creative writing. *Frog Goes to Dinner* by Mercer Mayer is an effective tool in teaching sequence. This book tells the amusing story of a frog who went to dinner at a fancy restaurant by slipping into his boy's suit pocket. In the restaurant he creates havoc by jumping on tables and even into the orchestra. The pictures in the book easily show the sequence of action. It is the teacher's responsibility to see that the pictures in the wordless books she uses show the action and sequence clearly so that the children are not confused in their tellings. Simple, easy to follow action is best suited for young children.

Wordless books can be used to expand children's vocabulary.

There can be little doubt that wide experience with books increases a child's vocabulary. Those who plan kindergarten and primary programs advise teachers to use many books and to read and tell many stories to help children learn new words and acquire new meanings for words they already know.<sup>2</sup>

In working with wordless books a child learns new words, new concepts, and ideas and has the opportunity to use these words as he relates the words and the pictures. Children need to be exposed to many varied kinds of literature daily in order to increase their vocabulary. Giving children exposure to wordless books helps build their vocabularies.

Using wordless books in the classroom teaches the young child how to handle books correctly by moving from the front to the back of the book and from the left to the right. Especially the wordless books by Mercer Mayer and John S. Goodall are good for small hands to handle.

One of the most important uses of wordless books in the early elementary grades is as a reading readiness material. Books without words can be used to develop skills and attitudes that will be important in beginning reading. As the children see the pictures and respond to the story line, they need to comprehend pictures. They may read for the literal message in the book or be encouraged to make inferences.

In this way they are bringing their own self to the book. They may be encouraged to evaluate a character's action or to empathize with some aspect of the story. In this way we are developing the critical thinking abilities they must use later when they read.

How can wordless books be used as an aid to reading readiness? First the story should be read and enjoyed by teacher and students. We must never forget that the primary goal of reading is to create a growing desire to read. We must fill the child with a zest and joy for reading. The beginning of a positive attitude toward books must be cultivated. In wordless books young children are not frustrated by not being able to read the words on the page. Thus their first attempts at reading are successful. They are no-fail encounters. Dr. Pat Cianciolo of Michigan State University "sees wordless books as an aid to reading instruction especially in a language experience approach."<sup>3</sup> Wordless books should first be read and enjoyed as a class. The teacher should guide the children and relate it to their own experience. Then the children tell the story of the book as the teacher writes their words on an experience chart. These children-dictated-stories are putting words in wordless books and become the children's own reading instruction. Important reading skills emerge from this group writing experience. Concepts such as word, sentence, capital and small letter, punctuation are naturally taught in this language experience approach using a wordless book as the base. Children first see the story presented in pictures only and then in written form that they can read. Connie Bridges shows us the importance of the language experience approach. "The easiest and most predictable type of reading material are those dictated by the children themselves. When reading materials originate from the children's own experiences and when the language of these materials match the children's personal language they are better able to predict what the materials are going to say."<sup>4</sup> Mercer Mayer's *Frog On His Own* tells the story of a frog having an adventure on his own. The plot is simple and the action moves fast. This book would make an excellent experience chart for beginning readers. Eric Carle's *Do You Want to Be My Friend?* is good material for an experience chart. Children enjoy the fun of guessing what animal comes next in this book.

There are many excellent wordless books available today. These books can help stimulate language development and can be used as an aid to reading readiness. Every teacher must select the best in wordless books for her class. These books must be selected on the basis of the needs and interests of her class.

An update on wordless picture books written by Richard Abrahamson in the January, 1981 *Reading Teacher* says, "Three artists dominate the field in numbers of books (wordless) published and in earning

excellent reviews. Mercer Mayer, Fernando Krahn, and John S. Goodall set the standard."<sup>5</sup> This bibliography followed:

Mercer Mayer *Frog Goes to Dinner*, 1975; *Frog On His Own*, 1973; *The Great Cat Chase*, 1975; *One Frog Too Many*, 1975.

John S. Goodall *Creepy Castle*, 1975; *An Edwardian Summer*, 1979; *Jacko*, 1972; *Naughty Nancy*, 1975; *Paddy's Evening Out*, 1973.

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### FOOTNOTES

1 Nancy Larrick, "Wordless Picture Books and the Teaching of Reading," *Reading Teacher*, 29 (May, 1976), 743.

2 Walter T. Petty and others, *Experiences in Language*, 3rd Ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1981), p. 362.

3 Richard Abrahamson, "An Update on Wordless Picture Books," *Reading Teacher*, 34 (January, 1981), p. 417.

4 Connie Bridge, "Predictable Materials for Beginning Readers," *Language Arts*, 56 (May, 1979), p. 503.

5 Richard Abrahamson, "An Update on Wordless Picture Books," *Reading Teacher*, 34 (January, 1981), p. 503.

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# VOCABULARY GROWTH

By Winifred Koole

*Miss Winifred Koole is a veteran teacher of the fourth grade in the Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School. The following article appeared originally in A Writing Program for the Covenant Child. (See inside of back cover.)*

Our language is made up of symbols called words — spoken words, written words. They are the building blocks by which we formulate our ideas into language patterns. In the beginning everything was a word of God. The Bible speaks often about the importance of words. Two examples are:

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.  
Proverbs 25:11

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.  
Psalm 19:14

A word can make all the difference. To illustrate its importance Nila Banton Smith presents this paraphrased poem:

For want of a word,  
the phrase is lost.  
For want of the phrase,  
the sentence is lost.  
For want of the sentence,  
the paragraph is lost.  
For want of the paragraph,  
the selection is lost.  
All meaning is lost for  
want of a word.

Understanding and misunderstanding alike stem from the words we speak or write as we try to express ourselves, and there are times when an entire selection can be misinterpreted because a wrong meaning is given to one or two words.

Words are an integral part of any subject taught. Therefore it is essential in teaching listening, speaking, reading, and writing to children



to help them enlarge their vocabulary. Before a child comes to school, he has had wide and varied language experiences. His listening, and speaking vocabulary is considerable; he knows the power of words; and usually he has a keen interest in words. Very early a child realizes that words represent an idea, and his developing maturity will be measured by the increasing skill with which he uses words to communicate more and more complex ideas. Factual and accurate communication demands words that are exact and precise. The reading and writing vocabularies of a child are as important as his speaking and listening ones but are much harder to acquire at first. Later the reading vocabulary will outdistance the speaking and writing vocabularies. Effort should be made to transfer a child's speaking and reading vocabularies to his writing vocabulary. A teacher, who has found words to be fascinating, who enjoys learning and using new and intriguing words, will be more effective in stimulating the pupil to do the same.

A dictionary will prove to be the most helpful tool for vocabulary growth. Children should learn early to use the dictionary, and such training should continue throughout the school years. Word mastery is a lifetime task, but for the student in school it is crucial. A student who reads widely and thoughtfully has found the greatest single source of words to add to his own vocabulary, and will also gain an understanding of allusions — those words that have their roots in literary, historical, or Biblical references. Other factors that determine the character and size of a child's vocabulary are his environment, his capacity to learn, his interests, and the instruction and guidance he receives in home and in school in the use of words. An important method for promoting growth in a child's vocabulary is the enrichment of experience, both actual and vicarious. Because incidental teaching of new words is not as effective as direct teaching, an alert teacher finds and uses many helpful activities to insure vocabulary growth.

Nina W. Walter in *Let Them Write Poetry* says that "our first task with respect to vocabulary building is to explore the everyday vocabulary of our students, asking ourselves such questions as these:

1. Are they making use of as many words as they should for their age and grade?
2. What sort of words are they adding to their lists?
3. Are they exposed to good writing in their textbooks?
4. Are they encouraged to read books that use picturesque, imaginative, significant language?
5. Are they making consistent attempts to increase their vocabularies?
6. Have we awakened their interest in words?"

Dawson and Zollinger suggest the following ways in which a teacher can direct attention to new words:

1. Take time to discuss unfamiliar words.
2. Phrase questions in such a way that new words are called for in the child's answer.
3. List key vocabulary on the chalkboard in summarizing main ideas in a situation.
4. Display pictures that will clarify and enrich the meaning of critical terms.
5. Provide activities that will require the use of new words as children plan, carry through, report on, and evaluate them.
6. Generally impress upon pupils the meaning and usefulness of new terms.

In a child's present working vocabulary (as well as in that of adults) are many words and terms of which he has a faulty or partial understanding. Edgar Dale believes that we could probably increase our vocabulary ten percent by bringing into sharp focus those words we only partially understand. He suggests this as one of the five ways to increase vocabulary in the teacher's edition of *My Weekly Reader*. These five ways he sums up as follows:

First, we must realize that words are the names we attach to experience; we therefore provide the children with experiences.

A second way is to differentiate further those words we already know, to make more precise distinctions. This involves using synonyms and antonyms, and perhaps homonyms.

A third way to improve vocabulary is to discriminate the parts of words and learn to put them together in new combinations; to master the use of roots, prefixes, and suffixes.

Fourth, school programs should concentrate on shifting the almost-known words into the well-known group.

The fifth and chief method for increasing vocabulary will be through reading and writing, speaking and listening, visualizing and observing. A person must become word-conscious.

Another valuable aspect of word study is the origin or history of words. This can be a life-time interest for a person who is intrigued by words. Many books have been written on the subject, and students, teachers, or any amateur philologist, whose love for words includes their etymology, will find them enjoyable and rewarding.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The following is a list of the manuals for teachers that have been produced by teachers at summer workshops and through personal study. These educational helps have been funded in part or totally by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. Copies of these are available.

*Biblical Perspectives in the Social Sciences* (1971)

*A Writing Program for the Covenant Child* (1972)

*Suffer Little Children* (Bible manuals 1, 2, & 3), at cost

Workbooks for *Suffer Little Children*, at cost

*History Units on Medieval World History* (1979)

on the following topics:

Unit I. The Barbarian Migrations

Unit II. The Eastern or Byzantine Empire

Unit III. The Rise and Spread of Islam

Unit IV. England and the Middle Ages

Unit V. France in the Middle Ages

Unit VI. The Crusades

Unit VII. Feudalism and the Manor

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