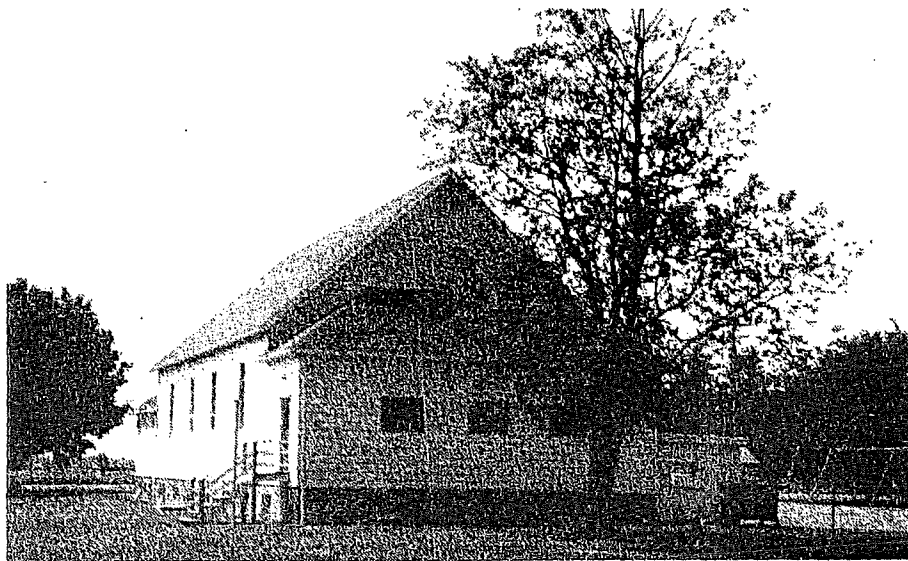
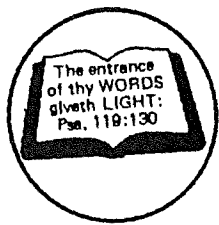


Perspectives

in Covenant Education



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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

Perspectives in Covenant Education is a journal regulated and published quarterly, in November, February, May, and August 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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SPECIAL FOCUS

Earlier this year Covenant Christian School (Lynden, Washington) celebrated its tenth anniversary. It is our pleasure to be able to make that celebration the "focus" of our attention in this rubric of Perspectives' summer issue. (The school building is pictured on the front cover.)

We thank several different writers for their respective parts in the article which follows. The first part of the "brief history" (after the two introductory paragraphs by Mr. Hilton) came some time ago from the pen of Mr. Henry Kuiper, who himself constituted half of the school's first teaching staff, and, as the school's first administrator, had much to do with Covenant Christian's solid beginning as a Protestant Reformed elementary school. Highlights of succeeding school years are provided by Mr. Robert Adams, who has been part of Lynden's staff for the past five years, during one of which he served as acting principal. The third part of the article, dealing with Covenant's reason for existence, was written by Mr. Harold Tolsma, secretary of the Board at the time of his writing of it. Finally, there is from Mr. John Hilton, the school's current administrator, a short tribute to Miss Genevieve Lubbers, the one teacher who has been with Covenant for its entire history. We understand that at the April 22 celebration Miss Lubbers received special recognition in the form of a bouquet of roses from Covenant's Ladies' Aid, and a painting from the school board. It's fitting therefore that she be recognized here too.

With one voice the above writers give due thanks to God for faithfulness to His covenant promises. May we be inspired, in the reading of it, to do the same.

Covenant Christian

(a Brief History)

It is good to have opportunities such as we have now to recount the events that have taken place during the formation and development of Covenant Christian School. Did these things or anything occur outside of God's counsel? No! Our Father has been with us all along. We are thankful for His provision for the

nurturing of our covenant seed in the area of its education.

The December 1, 1980 issue of *The Standard Bearer* was devoted to all of the Protestant Reformed schools. From that issue we reprint portions of the history of Covenant Christian School, and add some of the highlights of our history since then:

Approximately 120 miles north of Seattle, a mere three miles from the United States/Canada border, and only thirteen miles from Pacific waters, lies the peaceful little village of Lynden, Washington. Here, through the missionary labors of Rev. A. Cammenga in the late 1940's, God rekindled a love for the pure, historic Reformed faith. The result of those labors, under God's gracious blessing, was the establishment of the Lynden Protestant Reformed Church in 1951.

It was the members of this congregation, having the knowledge of the blessings and demands of God's eternal covenant, who established in August of 1977 the Society for Protestant Reformed Education in Lynden. And so, in a flurry of subsequent yet determined events, began our little school in order to provide instruction for the seed of these Reformed believers according to the truth of Holy Scripture.

In January of 1978 the society purchased the present school property, and on March 21 de-

cided to begin classes in the fall, if qualified teachers were available. After substantial remodeling of the building, the parents in awe were thankful to open our school that August 31 to begin the first year of operation of Covenant Christian School. What a mighty provision by God!

During the first year, with a staff of two teachers (Mr. Henry Kuiper and Miss Genevieve Lubbers), we taught 30 students in grades 1-8. And in May, 1979, we rejoiced after the first year's labors, to witness the first graduation from the eighth grade. At the end of that year, the Society decided to add the kindergarten and high school that fall, if we were able to obtain an additional teacher on our staff to assist in the work. God granted that too. (Mr. David Zandstra)

Again during the second year, the Society decided to add also the sophomore year to our high school department the following year, if that should prove to be God's will by His sending us our fourth teacher. This, too, He gave. (Mr. Gary Lanning)



Year-by-year highlights since that article are as follows:

1981-1982

Mr. Robert Vermeer joined the school to teach math, science, and the business courses. The

eleventh grade was added. The stage of the gym was removed and an additional classroom was added.

1982-1983

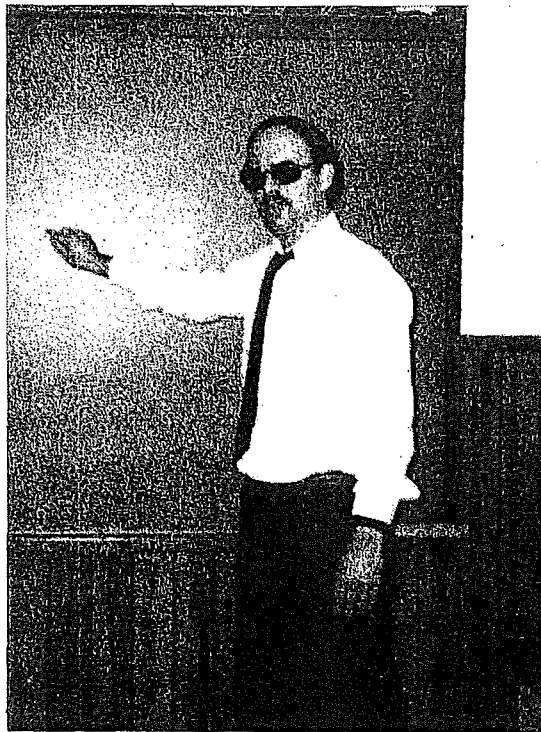
The high school was completed with the twelfth grade added. Covenant held its first high school graduation. Miss Lavonne DenBesten came to teach the 3rd-5th grades.

1983-1984

Mr. Robert Adams was added to the staff to teach in junior high. The school purchased its first computer.

1984-1985

Miss Judy Kuiper (soon to have become Mrs. Judy



Mr. Robert Adams

Buiter) was hired to teach "half" days in grades 3-5. A fence that borders the Haveman Road was built.

1985-1986

Mr. Ivan Bleyenbergh joined the staff as the 6th/7th grade teacher. Mrs. Buiter taught grades 3-5 full-time. A shortage of staff made it impossible for us to offer full-time instruction beyond the 10th grade. However, six 11th grade students came for the morning hours of high school instruction. Two more computers were purchased.

1986-1987

Mr. John Hilton became the new Administrator/Prin-



Mrs. Kuiper and kindergartners

cipal. Full-time instruction of the 11th and 12th grades was resumed. Miss Linda Feenstra came to teach the 3rd and 4th grades. The first annual Jr./Sr. banquet was held.

1987-1988

Mrs. Kuiper became the new Kindergarten teacher. Mr. Fred Hanco also joined us to be the new Junior High teacher. Miss Feenstra became Mrs. Smit. There were various proposals for building new classrooms and/or a gym. At the end of the year we celebrated our 10th year, by God's grace!

■□■□■□■

From that same issue of *The Standard Bearer* there was a statement regarding the motive for having Covenant Christian School. Here are excerpts from that article:

We, as Christian parents, have been instructed by the Scriptures (Deut. 6:1-9) to rear our children in the admonition of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are told to teach them diligently the fear of the Lord and joyful obedience to His commandments.

Our baptismal vows are in direct accordance with God's Words in Scripture. These vows confessed before God and His church require believing parents "to see these children, when come to the years of discretion,

instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power." This certainly means that we as believing parents must seek to establish our own Protestant Reformed Christian schools, so we can fulfill this beautiful vow to the utmost of our ability. We *must not* settle for less. Other Christian or public schools cannot satisfy our holy vow.

To be obedient to Deuteronomy 6, we seek, through our schools and in our family lives, to rear our children to become Christ-like adults. By this we mean children who are meek, pure in heart, peacemakers, merciful, humble, patient, diligent — men and women who will give God all praise and honor throughout their lives. A formidable task? Yes, truly it is, and impossible without the wisdom and guidance of our Lord. Our task is great, but Christ tells us to be faithful to it.

We can be confident that He will bless our efforts and some day will say to us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

■□■□■□■

The people of Lynden are thankful to God for the service of Miss Genevieve Lubbers during all the ten years of Covenant Christian School's existence. Her

excellent teaching in the lower grades has provided a strong basis for the future education of the children here, especially as it provided an enthusiasm for learning, a solid background in the Scriptures, and firm structure for social behavior and study habits. May God graciously give you many more years to serve Him in this important calling, Miss Lubbers.



Miss Genevieve Lubbers

FEATURE

When one reads the word "basics," in the context of "education," of what is he likely to think? Of studying phonics, perhaps? . . . and of conjugating verbs; . . . and of memorizing multiplication tables? That's what "the basics" are all about, aren't they? Readin', 'ritin', and 'rithmetic — the basics. . . as in "Basics, Back to the. . ." For just a moment there, when I saw the title "Remembering the Basics," I imagined that I knew what would be the thrust of Rev. Kuiper's article. That was until I read his first paragraph. Then I saw, and had to admit shamefacedly, how wrong I had been. For there are indeed "basics" which are more basic than the "how-to's" of formal education. Covenant children, parental schools, instruction permeated by the infallible Scriptures. . . . Ah yes, these are the basics. True it is that our schools must remain strong academically. If students leave our schools less than highly literate, we have failed them. If our students do not in our schools receive a good foundation in science, geography, history, literature. . . we have failed them. But, above all else, we may never let time dim our perception of

of the underlying principles on which our schools were established. We do well therefore to heed the admonition of Rev. Kuiper that we "remember the basics."

Remembering the Basics

by Rev. Dale Kuiper

Time does many things. Time bears all its sons away. Time heals. Time works nostalgia, so that many yearn for earlier times, often forgetting the hardships of those times. Time brings change. But time also tends to dull the perceptions and lull to sleep in respect to the issues of life and the principles that ought to be vivid in our minds and hearts.

Many of our schools have commemorated various milestones or anniversaries recently. God has been faithful in allowing us to have our own schools for many years. Are our schools standing for, and upon, the same principles as they once did? Does our membership know and love the principles upon which our fathers established these schools? Are we of a mind to sacrifice, if need be, to maintain those principles? Allow me to spell out five basics of Reformed education that the passage of time must not take from us.

I. Our Children Are Covenant Children

The educational basic that our children are covenant children cannot be repeated too often or emphasized too much. The God Who calls us to train up our children, and Who blesses us in this task, is the covenant God. He has revealed Himself to Old Testament Israel and to the New Testament church as the living God Who lives within Himself a perfect life of fellowship. The covenant did not begin with Abraham, or even with Adam and Eve, but it stretches back into the endless reaches of eternity and belongs to the very essence of God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live in unity of friendship and love from eternity. That Triune God reveals His covenant by graciously calling into His friendship a people in Christ; this we know as the covenant of grace, the heart of which is the bond of friendship that all the elect have with God. There belongs to this revelation the truth that God saves His people in the line

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church in Lacombe, British Columbia.

of believers and their seed, and here we come squarely to our children! As friends of God and believers in the Messenger of the Covenant, Jesus Christ, we have the promise of God that He takes His children from our children. And this means that as parents and as church we look at our children, organically and as a whole, as covenant children. Therefore the command to instruct in the ways of the covenant and in the fear of the Lord comes to us in respect to all of our children.

Because we deal here with the important matter of the covenant, we ought to be very clear as to the *purpose* of our schools. And if we would know what this purpose is, we simply have to answer the question, What is the purpose of the God of salvation with us? As I attempt to answer this question, please do not turn me off for a few minutes and say, "How trite and hackneyed!" For the purpose is the glory of God in Jesus Christ; another purpose there is not. We can use the verbs glorify, praise, magnify, extol, laud, etc., as long as we make the direct object of those verbs God Himself! This point rests upon the fact that our covenant God is always a self-glorifying God — in creation, in salvation, in history, and therefore in our schools. The life we live in fellowship with God does not center in us and our children but it centers in God and His good pleasure. And His good pleasure is that those whom He brings into His covenant live unto the glory of His grace.

Our schools must assist in a very real way in the fulfilling of that purpose. Not that we train citizens for the state; though, as our children are instructed in the wisdom, power, and authority of God, they will by His grace be good citizens in the state. Not that we have vocational schools that turn out skilled workmen of various types; though, as our children are instructed in stewardship and calling, they will develop their abilities in this direction. The single statement that covers it all, the ensign that could well be engraved above the doors of our school buildings, but first engraved upon our hearts and the hearts of our children, is simply this: *To God Alone Be the Glory!* If that purpose seems too high, . . . or too low, . . . or seems not to be stating the purpose at all, then surely we have slipped from the primary concern of Reformed education.

II. Our Schools Are Parental Schools

It is not our purpose with this second basic to warn against parochial or public schools. Clearly there is no basis in Scripture for either the state or the church to assume the day-to-day instruction of children by setting up and operating schools. In many ways the Word of God lays this task upon the heart of parents, and especially the fathers. But

this is not the contrast we have in mind. There is a pretentiously-named group in Toronto called the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship (A.A.C.S.). The men at this would-be university have spoken on a wide range of subjects from the point of view of sphere sovereignty and the Kingdom of God; naturally much has been said concerning the Christian school.

Let us see what the A.A.C.S. stands for as far as Christian education is concerned, and then notice what this can possibly have to do with Protestant Reformed Christian schools. Toronto ridicules the idea that the Christian school is the extension of the home and that Christian school teachers stand in the place of the parents. They view the school as an independent sphere alongside of the home. The parent has the responsibility to educate his children, but the authority to do so lies with the educators. Parental involvement with education is seen as limited to what the child wears, when he does his homework, and what he eats for lunch. On the other hand, in the school are the professional educators, or team of teachers, who have authority in such vital matters as curriculum, discipline, textbook selection, criteria for passing and failing, and outside activities of the school. But the parents have no control of the education of their children because education is a sphere distinct from that of the home. The A.A.C.S. constitution states, "The responsible freedom of the scholar must be protected against any constraint or domination of church, state, industry, or other societal structure." James Olthuis, in his book *To Prod the Slumbering Giant*, writes, "While parents have the responsibility for determining the spiritual direction of their children's education, the body of educators in the Christian community has the office of articulating the content of the educational curriculum." It is even the case that school boards must take a hands-off attitude, and allow the teachers to be free in the fulfilling of their teaching office. The result of this philosophy is that a class of professional, independent educators is formed which is beholden to no one. The parent is told, "Bring your child to the classroom door, but you don't have to come in, and you don't have to concern yourself with what goes on here. We know what we're doing. We have the vision of the kingdom. Trust us!"

Toronto and this educational philosophy may seem a long ways away from us and our schools, but let us recognize the danger. Although the A.A.C.S. was often times rebuffed in the early days of its existence, they have had a remarkable success over the years. They have succeeded in getting many school societies to rewrite their constitutions and educational principles; they have many teachers and

administrators on their side through their writings and seminars; they have taken over the teacher training departments of several Christian colleges so that more and more the teachers in the Christian schools today are A.A.C.S. men and women. And as long as our teachers are trained at these colleges the danger is acute.

Positively, the calling to educate covenant children comes to the parents, and there is no way in which the parents can be eliminated from the process. Generally it is stated that the parents have this responsibility because they have brought the child into this world. There is a certain amount of logic to that statement, but the issue goes deeper than that. We ought to notice that God addresses parents in the Bible, and gives them this task, because this is in harmony with the covenant and with our covenant God Himself! The relation between God and His people is that of Father and children. As Father, God instructs His sons. He nourishes them with His Word unceasingly. Because God does that, He demands of us (Deut. 6) that we act toward our children with the same unfailing, continual instruction. He demands that of you and of me because that is what He Himself does toward us.

Parents, then, may not shunt this responsibility, nor may we allow any one else to seize it from us. Parents are to be involved, perhaps more than we are, in the educational process of the school. Even though many actions of the parents are accomplished through an elected board, we ought to be careful lest a professional class of board members arise in our circles. Parents have the right and the ability to be involved in the choosing of textbooks and other educational materials, the stocking of the library, the setting of guidelines for discipline; and parents certainly have the right to "visit school" in order to view their children in the classroom situation and to listen to the instruction. Nor ought we think that P.T.A. meetings exhaust parental involvement.

III. The Word of God Is the Basis of All Instruction

Again, strange winds are blowing. All the A.A.C.S. writers hold to a view of the Bible that does not square with the traditional, Reformed view, nor with the claims that the Bible makes in regard to itself. By speaking of a cosmonomic word, an incarnate word, and an inscripturated word (some add to this), they downgrade the Bible as only one of the words of God. Hendrik Hart in *The Challenge of Our Age* writes, "It is high time that we become struck with this undeniable message of the Scriptures that although they in numerous places speak to us of the Word of God, in no place do they mean themselves. As such, as in-

scripturation, there is nothing unique about the Bible, for God's revelation is certainly not limited to that book. Nor is the inspiration of the Bible limited to it alone. For we certainly do not believe that after the Bible was complete God stopped inspiring authors. No, the uniqueness of the Bible is that it is an authoritatively inspired inscripturation of God's Word-revelation to His people." And Arnold DeGraff writes in *Understanding the Scriptures*, "You must read the Bible as the book of the acts of God. The Scriptures are first of all the recital of God's mighty acts in Jesus Christ through whom He created and recreated the world. Secondly, they contain man's response to God's revelation. This means that you distort the Scriptures when you read them as a collection of objective statements about God and man, as truths in propositional form, or as a collection of moral lessons."

What does this do to the Scriptures, especially now as those Scriptures are used in the Christian school? First, by separating the Bible from other Words of God, they make the Bible *subject* to these other words. Since the creation word was first, and is basic to all the other words, we are to read the Bible in the light of the creation word. John Calvin instructs us to look at creation with the Bible as our spectacles, but the A.A.C.S. turns things around. Secondly, this view means that Scripture really has nothing to tell us about anthropology, history, or science; the Bible is for the church while creation is for the schools. And as science continues to shed more light on creation, this new information becomes for them the Word of God. And they are eager and ready to tell us what this Word of God is!

But the Word of God is *one*! There is no Word of God apart from Christ, the Word from the beginning. Christ is that personally as the Son of God incarnate; He is that as regards creation, for all things were made by Him and for Him; and He is that as far as Scripture is concerned. It is by the Spirit of Christ that we have the Bible; and that Spirit always speaks of Him. Rather than several different words of God, the Word of the one true God is *one*. That Word speaks to faith and life; that Word instructs in the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom in all areas of human investigation; and therefore that one Word of God is the basis of all truth and all true instruction.

In our schools, let that Word be open in every classroom; let that Word be open on the teacher's desk as he prepares his lessons. Although no one would claim the Bible is the only textbook we need, yet it is the case that no worthy textbook for any subject can be written without the Biblical givens of creation, flood, and end of the world. There is no true understanding of history without a humble, believing

understanding of the prophecy of Daniel and the Revelation of John. So it is with any subject we would care to hold before our children.

How wise our fathers were to insist that the basis of the instruction given in our schools is the infallible Word of God. And then to add, "as interpreted by our Three Forms of Unity." Heavy criticism is being brought against that inclusion. These are church creeds and have nothing to do with Christian schools. We must set them aside and write educational creeds. And many schools have done this. Yet if we should remove the Reformed Creeds from our schools; we stand in danger of losing it all.

IV. Our Schools Are Jealously To Be Guarded

Briefly, the fourth basic that we should be reminded of is that our schools are jealously to be guarded. There are several forces present that would destroy them or alter them as to make them unrecognizable. There is the state, with its educational grants and title programs; there is the willingness of the state to allow our students to attend the public schools for non-religious, non-sensitive subjects; there is their willingness to share their buses with us. Let's understand that the only language the state can speak is money. That's all they have to offer. And when governments of various levels give away the taxpayers' money, they want to set the standards and they want to have control.

There is also the A.A.C.S. that is out to destroy the Christian school as we know and love it. They are out to take children away from the parents unless the parents get on the ball and catch their vision of the kingdom. They are set on getting the Bible out of the classroom as surely as is the Supreme Court of the United States.

But all the dangers are not necessarily from without; we must also be on our guard within. Although we cannot operate our schools in an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion, it is nevertheless the part of wisdom to be alert within our schools and societies. If the price of freedom is vigilance, surely it is true that one cost of good Protestant Reformed schools is spiritual awareness and watchfulness. There may be those who clamor for frills at the expense of solid academics. There may be those who want less emphasis placed upon the antithesis between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Let us guard our schools as one does guard the apple of his eye.

V. Our Educational Yoke Is an Easy Yoke

The final basic of Reformed education is that our educational yoke is an easy yoke. No matter what you or I may think of the matter, this is unalterably true because Jesus has said so. We have in mind the closing verses of Matthew 11, where Jesus commands, "Take my yoke

with the faces. Covenant's graduates are just too many, and the rows too uneven, to allow for easy identification. For them we have therefore simply listed the graduates in alphabetical order. (Note: Redlands has no graduates this year.)

To all of you graduates, of all of our schools, we express our hearty congratulations, and wish you the Lord's continued care and guidance as you leave one or another of our various schools.

For an added attraction on our bulletin board this time we have been given the manuscript of the graduation speech delivered by the valedictorian of Grand Rapids Covenant's class of 1988. Miss Barb Bergman earned the honor by virtue of her unexcelled academic performance in grades 9 through 12. The maturation of which she speaks in her valedictory address is not however limited to the intellectual, nor to the intellectual and the physical. She includes in it most emphatically the spiritual. That's evident already from the title she chose. She understands well the purpose of education, namely, to equip the child of God for a life of service — service to Christ, in the way of serving the brethren for His sake. Our schools have evidently not forgotten "the basics."

Training for Service

by Barb Bergman

Parents, teachers, friends, and fellow students. On behalf of the senior class of 1988, it is my privilege to speak to you on this important occasion. For those of us who are graduating tonight, this is truly a momentous event.

God has known and called His people from the beginning of time. From their very birth He prepares them for their life's calling. God trains His people through their experiences in life. Their parents train them to be Christians in the home. At

church, young people are instructed through the preaching of the Word, catechism, and societies. Teachers train these young people through the studying of God's creation at school.

Certainly our training for service in God's Kingdom does not end with our graduation tonight. Still, in a certain way it can be said that our high school years have been the finishing touches for our formal training. Just as the disciples of Christ were

prepared for their service as apostles and ministers, so also can we, the graduating class of 1988, be viewed not just as an ordinary group of young people, but as servants of God who have completed their training for service and are now going out on our separate missions in life.

Throughout our three brief years at Covenant, we as graduates have learned a lot.

We first came as sophomores in September of 1985. We came naively, knowing little about what was ahead and how God would use us in the future. We were immature, just coming from junior high; and we acted the part.

We were dependent on others: our friends, our parents, our teachers and our God. But, as typical sophomores, we didn't realize this; we thought we were tough because now we were in high school.

Gradually, with the aid of teachers and parents we made it through our first year. Then we were juniors.

As juniors we made a little more progress toward maturity; we realized how we had tended toward foolishness as sophomores. We also gained some valuable knowledge of God and of His creation. This was the basis for further learning.

As juniors, for the first time, we began to wonder about the future. What were we to do with

our lives? Were we to become electricians? mechanics? teachers? ministers? doctors? Maybe we would end up working on an assembly line in a factory. How were we to know?

We did the best we could. We chose the elective courses that interested us, we prayed, we talked to others and gained advice. Throughout all this we began to learn about ourselves as Christians and what service to God was all about.

About this time our junior year ended. We had matured and gained insight. Now we were seniors.

As seniors many of us began to work toward definite goals we had set for ourselves.

Our training had led us to the point that we had to become independent. We had to get ready to go out and face the world. We could no longer lean on others for support. We would now have to do things for ourselves.

Added to this we had yet another responsibility. Besides trying to figure out our own lives we had to give senior leadership. We had to set examples for our classmates and underclassmen.

In order to face the world we first had to be able to face our peers and stand up before them as servants of God.

As we look back today on the three years gone by, we realize many things that before passed by

BULLETIN BOARD

unnoticed. Unknowingly, we matured. Without realizing it we grew both spiritually and mentally. We gained insight and knowledge. We acquired new friends and interests. We became more responsible and independent. Before we knew it our high school years were ended. Now we are ready to graduate.

You, as parents, teachers, and supporters have helped put us where we are today. You have continually encouraged us throughout these years of growth. You have helped us when we needed a hand, you have given us advice (even when we didn't ask for it). By God's grace and according to His counsel, you have guided us in the way that we should go.

And now you are finished helping us. We must now strike out on our own. Following your example and remembering the things you have told us, we must go our separate ways on the missions God has prepared for each of us.

Some of us will continue our schooling and go on to college. Others may already know what they will do in life. Some of us may earn great honors and degrees. One of our classmates,

Rosie Rau, has already fulfilled her life's calling and has gone to heaven to be with her eternal Father. All things are in God's hand and determined by His will.

Wherever we go we know that God will never let us stray from His hand. And whatever we do, we do so as servants of Christ our Lord. This is a comfort to us as we move along.

But, our leaving school not only changes *our* lives, it changes the lives of others we leave behind. Our leaving is a challenge to you who remain.

You as parents must continue to instruct young people in the home and send them to Christian schools. Teachers, keep on using the Scripture as a basis for teaching in the classroom. Friends, continue to support the cause of Christian education. And students, strive to help one another and walk as servants of Christ. Pray to God and He will guide you.

Now, as we must say our final good-bye, let us all remember the words of our class text, that, in whatever we do and wherever we go, "God is our God for ever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death." ■■■



Covenant Christian High School (Grand Rapids, Michigan)

*Lynn Bekkering
Jeffrey Berens
Barbara Bergman
Timothy Block
Jonathan Bruckbauer
Chad Brummel
Thomas Cammenga
James Daling
Jeffrey DeYoung
Brent Dommissee
Jonathan Eldersveld
Barry Elzinga
Marsha Engelsma
Keith Garvelink
Shelley Gunnink*

*Karen Haveman
George Hoekstra
Douglas Holstege
Jana Huiskens
Joel Huiskens
Jason Kalsbeek
Julie Huizinga
Johnathon Kamps
Nathan Kamps
Lorraine King
Brent Klamer
Karen Knott
Michael Kortering
Natalie Kuiper
David Langerak
Patricia Lotterman*

*Michael Mastbergen
David Miedema
Eric Miersma
Dennis Offringa
Diane Ondersma
Erika Pipe
Jeffrey Potjer
Marc VanAssen
Pamela VandenBerg
Donald VanDenTop
James VanDyke
Randall VanDyke
Beth VanMeeteren
Dianne VanTil
Amy Velthouse*



Adams Street Christian (Grand Rapids)

*l. to r.: Kevin Timmerman, Kevin Gunnink, Emily Eldersveld,
Phil Doezema, Betsy Newhof, James Knott, Nicole Pipe,
Timothy Pipe, Robert VanTil, Michael tenHaaf*



*Free Christian School
(Edgerton)*

Andrea Brummel



Covenant Christian High School (Lynden)
Elisabeth Hilton, Amy VanderMeulen, Jerry Roetcisoendor



Covenant Christian School (Lynden)
l. to r.: Chad Stuit, Vernon Maas, Heidi Hilton,
Del Roetcisoender, Julie denHartog



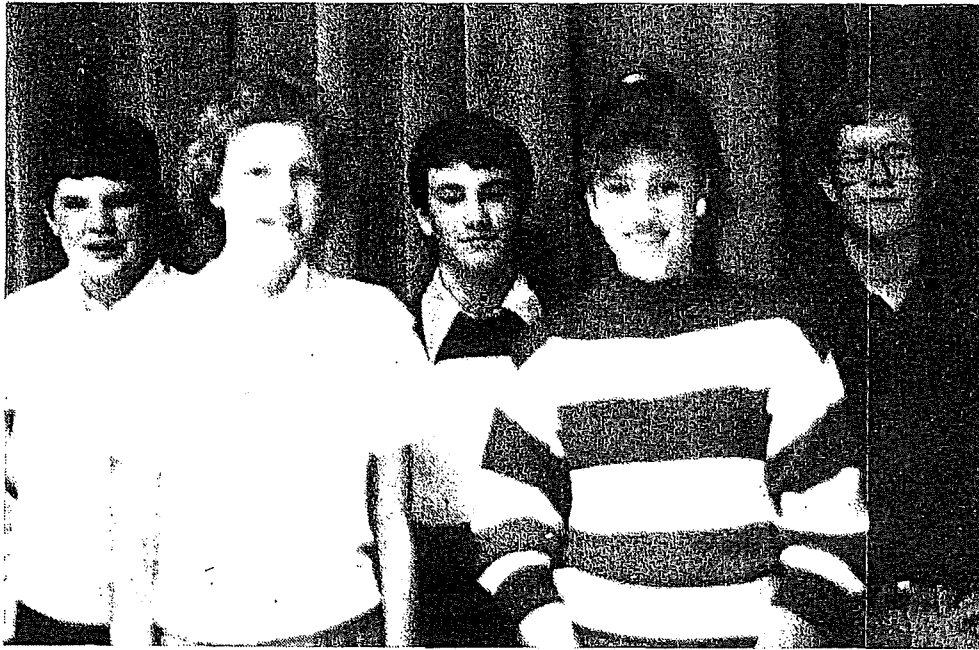
Heritage Christian School (Hudsonville)

*back row: Mr. G. Kuiper, Lisa Boer, Stefan Haney, Jeff Miedema,
Shawn Feenstra, Chad Huber, Kim Berens, Mr. D. DeBoer
front row: Melonie Offringa, Lynne Brummel, Cindy Kaptein,
Janna Haveman, Brenda Yonker, Susan Overway*



Hope Christian School (Grand Rapids)

*back row: Mr. G. Koning, David King, Mark Ondersma,
Thomas Mastbergen, Peter Reitsma, Jeffrey VanBaren,
Christine Rutgers, Mr. John Buiter
front row: Carla Slopsema, Holly Ondersma, Miriam Kamps,
Jeremy Huizinga, Kristina Moelker, Michael Holstege,
Brenda Huizinga, Kari Velthouse, Rebecca Lotterman*



*Hull Protestant Reformed Christian School
l. to r.: Kerwen Kooiker, Dawn Bleyenberg,
Chad Groeneweg, Beth Kooiker, Brent Vogel*



*Loveland Protestant Reformed Christian School
l. to r.: Cheryl Brands, Cindy Moore, Mr. Ron Koole*



Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed Christian School (Doon)
back row: Rachel Blankespoor, Lanette VanDenTop,
Lavonne VanDenTop, Brent Boon
front row: Cara Bonestroo, Heather Dykstra, Angie VanBemmel



South Holland Protestant Reformed Christian School
back row: Andrea Lenting, Chad Busker, Elizabeth DeJong,
Ryan Zandstra, Greg Lenting, Brian Staggs, Ann Hanemaayer.
front row: Rob Koontz, J. Scott Medema, Melanie VanderNoord,
Deb Lenting, Joanne Poortenga, Garry Eriks

PARENTS' CORNER

This rubric in our Spring issue carried an article by Mrs. Evelyn Langerak. Perhaps you will recall that she was one of four members of a panel which, at a Spring Breakfast sponsored by the Mothers' Circle of Hope Protestant Reformed School (Grand Rapids), presented the intriguing topic, "Considering the King's speech to His Daughters." In the article which appeared last time, Mrs. Langerak prepared the way for a presentation of Scripture's injunctions with regard to the calling of wives and mothers. She did that by examining the antithesis of that calling as it shows itself in the "anti-Christian, self-seeking philosophy of feminism." Scripture's answer to feminism comes then in the form of three separate presentations, one of which we will include in this issue of Perspectives.

Mrs. Jean Kortering, in the article that follows, speaks of the calling of the God-fearing wife to cultivate an inner attitude of submission to her husband — motivated by a desire thus to obey her Lord and to avoid doing anything which gives the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme the name of Christ. Feminism neither knows nor wants any of that, of course. The concepts with which Mrs. Kortering deals would in fact be denounced by feminists as hopelessly antiquated. But (and this is Mrs. Kortering's thesis) to live up to what we know to be our God-given calling is not all that easy for us either. It requires, she says, "spirituality and diligent work." What more incentive do we need to give thoughtful consideration to what she writes below?

The God-fearing Wife

Mrs. Jean Kortering

The beauty of the Christian young wife is that she is character-

Mrs. Kortering is a member of our Grandville Protestant Reformed Church, where her husband serves as pastor.

ized by a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price (I Peter 3:4). She is obedient, sound-minded, God-fearing. The word obedient in Titus 3:5 is also translated in Scripture as "be in subjection" or

"be submissive." Consider Ephesians 5:22 and 24: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. As the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." And Colossians 3:18: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." From these passages it is clear that God calls the wife to be in subjection to her husband and to obey. To be in subjection requires spirituality, for submission is an *inner attitude of the heart* by which the wife knows and wills her husband to be in authority, and consciously places herself and her life under that. Obedience is the outward behavior and the fruit of submission in the heart. When the wife submits, she will be able to do the many other things which are required of her; but when she fails in this respect, she will not love her husband, love her children, do good, et cetera. All happiness in the marriage relationship is based on mutual love. It is in the way of submission and obedience that the wife manifests her love to her husband.

Did you notice the last part of Ephesians 5:24? "As the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in *everything*." In everything — that means there are no exceptions! All areas of life come under the

headship of the husband. This includes the relationship as husband and wife, rearing of the children, managing the home, and even the wife's personal life. Submission is a matter of trust. We submit to Christ because we trust Him. Children submit to parents when they trust their parents. It is important that the relationship between husband and wife be established in trust, so the wife can more easily submit to him. The wife must be in subjection to her husband not only when he lives with her according to God's Word but also when he fails in this calling. A wife must not obey her husband when he orders her to sin, but even then she is still called to submit. This spirit of submission is evidence of her meek and quiet manner. Sometimes the husband may be very weak in certain areas of his life. At such times the wife may not usurp authority over the husband. Her role is to be a helper to her husband as set forth in Genesis 2:18, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."

It isn't easy all the time to submit. That is why it requires spirituality and diligent work. Our nature is to rebel, become angry, complain, nag, put our husbands down, assert ourselves. But isn't it beautiful that God gives grace to the Christian wife

to submit? We don't do this just so that we may have peace in our family or to satisfy our husband; we do this in obedience to the Lord. We are accountable to God for the whole of our life. We must admit that we are not adequate in ourselves to fulfill this God-given calling of loving our husband, loving our children, being sober-minded, chaste, keepers at home, good. *We need help!* And that help comes from God. We must study God's Word and meditate upon it and spend much time in prayer. When we become negligent in this, Satan is sure to step right in and take over. When the attitude in the heart is right, we will have the energy, the stamina, the desire, the joy and contentment in performing our calling. When the heart is right with God, it becomes so much more pleasant to do our work. It is no longer a chore or drudgery but we can be joyful and direct our thoughts in positive ways. "Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands" (Proverbs 14:1).

Many of you may have thought about this passage in Titus, as I often have, and wondered, "Are the older women failing in giving us this instruction? It just seems we aren't learning that much from them." The natural way of instruction is, of course, that of mother and daughter. Our

daughters observe, very really, without any put-on, how we treat our husbands, how we submit and obey. But now in regard to others also, opportunity must be given. Sometimes this can be done with a small group of women over coffee. Naturally, the conversation will center on family, children, activities, etc. Effort, however, must be put forth when discussing these topics and others, to bring them up to a spiritual level so that through our visits we can be refreshed and built up. A very meaningful conversation can also be had in a one-to-one, heart-to-heart visit. The older women can invite someone over for coffee; and it is also good for the younger women to invite an older woman over for a time of fellowship. Other opportunities are given when we remember the sick and go to visit them. Just a few words of encouragement can be such a day-brightener for a sick person, and can be a blessing to us by their word of testimony of God's love and care for them. Are you able to help a family by bringing some food or a meal when the mother is laid up? This, too, is an act of love and a way in which we experience the love and concern we have for one another in the household of faith. The point here is that young and old alike must seek out ways in which we may be drawn closer together to help and en-

courage one another as we
struggle along in our calling.

Sometimes our biggest problem is with ourselves. It doesn't take much before we can really be feeling sorry for ourselves. It appears to us that everyone has everything so good and we have this problem and that problem; and we even question God's wisdom by asking, "Why does this have to happen to me?" or, "Why must I have to put up with this situation?" When these thoughts arise in our minds; our first question should be, "What does the Lord want me to learn through this?" Remember, we are not bothering God when we go to Him with all our cares. He *careth* for us! He directs all things, however hard and difficult the way may be, to work out for our good. Sometimes we can't imagine how that is possible, but He *is* faithful. And when we look back on a situation, we must confess that if it were left to our own doing, we would utterly fail. But understanding that God is in control, we can see how the whole

pattern of our life fits together
so beautifully.

To the Christian woman it is important that the Word of God be not blasphemed, especially not on account of her. If we walk wickedly, we bring reproach upon the Word of God. When we walk uprightly, we bring praise upon the Word of God. When the world sees a wife who professes Christ Jesus and does not live in peace with her husband, not only do they mock her and her marriage but they also speak evil of the Word of God which she confesses. She gives occasion to the world to mock. The fact that God's Word is blasphemed by the bad behavior of a wife implies that God's Word is praised by her good behavior. This is a powerful motive for the believing woman. She detests all blasphemy of God and His Word and she loves to have God's Word praised. With these incentives, the God-fearing woman will be submissive and sound-minded.



VIEWPOINTS

Competition among students cannot be eliminated from the classroom. That's a given. Nor, for that matter, has anyone ever advocated that an attempt should be made to do so. For, properly handled, competition can help to make of learning a more stimulating experience for many children. Especially is that true when a student is taught to compete against his own

record. That kind of striving for excellence is not only a healthy thing academically, it is also required of us by God Himself. Whatever we do, after all, must be done "heartily, as to the Lord" (Col. 3:23). The apostle Paul adds, however, in that same verse, this: "and not unto men." In individual competition there is always the danger that the "unto men" becomes a powerful motivator. And it is for that reason that, among Christian educators, there is always a concern for how to handle in the classroom, effectively and properly, a force which can work for good or for ill in the lives of the students.

That any activity which offers promise of competition elicits interest and effort on the part of many students is recognized by everyone who has ever stood for any length of time in front of a classroom full of youngsters. But how to use that spirit without establishing a kind of competitive climate in the classroom — that is the question. Too easily a pupil who "loses" regularly can develop feelings of inferiority, to say nothing of frustration and social maladjustment; and those who "win" can, just as easily, develop a complex of superiority, which can work an equal amount of havoc in the life of the individual. Further, when excelling becomes too important a goal in a student's life, learning tends to lose the importance it has for its own sake and becomes little more than a means by which one wins or loses.

Considerations such as these, I say, have moved experienced Christian educators to take a cautious approach to the use of individual competition in the classroom. And, needless to say, there is not always complete agreement among them as to which competitive activities should be considered legitimate and which should not. Included in the agenda of our Teachers' Convention last October was a symposium on academic competition. Two teachers, Miss Winifred Koole and Miss Agatha Lubbers, were asked to present the benefits of such competition. Accordingly, they urged judicious use of it in the classroom. Two other teachers, Mr. Doug DeBoer and Mr. Deane Wassink, in turn warned of the dangers involved and advised against using much of any individual competition in our work as teachers. Two papers were submitted to us for publication in this space: the first by Miss Lubbers, principal/teacher at Covenant Christian High in Grand Rapids, and the second by Messrs. DeBoer and Wassink, both teachers at Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville. If you find the various points of view interesting, and would like your-

self to enter the friendly fray, please don't hesitate to address the matter via a letter to the editor.

Academic Competition

-Yes

Agatha Lubbers

For many years teachers have used various forms of competition in the classroom to promote academic excellence. Methods such as these have been called extrinsic motivational devices. Such terminology seems to justify the use of this kind of teaching technique. There are however those who adopt the position that the use of competitive games in the classroom violates the principles of Christian education. I contend that academic competition has a legitimate place in the Christian classroom.

What is competition? My dictionary defines competition as a "struggle or rivalry for supremacy, which usually results in a victor and a loser but does not necessarily involve the destruction of the latter." I like this definition because it describes the academic struggle in the classroom. Although the classroom should not be seen as a battlefield, it should be viewed as a place where students who have an interest in academic excellence are attempting to be superior to their classmates. It should be obvious

that a highly motivated student will not be satisfied with being less successful than fellow students. He will be satisfied only when he endeavors to attain the highest degree of excellence.

Academic competition need not be threatening. I agree with Kathy Wiersma who wrote an article entitled "Competition" in the April-May, 1985, *Christian Educators Journal*. She writes as follows: "As a teacher I realize now that my students are first of all God's children. My love for them must be based on that truth and not on their scholastic achievement. When a student is secure in that relationship, competition will not be threatening, but it will be profitable."

Grade school students thrive on competition. They love Bible games, spelling bees, math flash card games, and sentence diagramming contests. Every student plays to win just as he plays to win when he competes in ice hockey or a game of chess.

Gilbert Highet, a professor at Columbia University says: "Competition keeps a class from being

merely a group of faceless nonentities, and gives it something of the diversity of life."

**The classroom provides
an arena for
three different kinds
of competition.**

1. The first kind of competition is the competition between individuals. This kind of competition exists in the classroom just because of the nature of the situation. It also is the kind that can be fostered by means of the typical classroom competitive games.

2. The second kind of competition is competition with one's self. In self competition the student competes against past test scores and previous work. Slower students can also benefit from self-competition because they can work at their own pace without the threat of comparison with other students.

3. A third kind of scholastic challenge is competition between student groups. This kind of competition promotes cooperation as well as competition. When students are working together against another group, they work towards a common goal and yet they can use their individual talents. In this situation the good student must help the poorer

student so that the whole team will benefit.

**Competition has
several benefits.**

1. Competition brings out different talents in different students and allows those talents to develop.

Competition helps students recognize that they are not all exactly the same. Each one possesses his or her own individual talents. Competitive games will show them where they fit in the classroom. Some will be better in the spelling bees and math flash card games but will not do so well in the sentence diagramming contests or Bible games.

2. Competition between students helps to make learning interesting and stimulating. Competitive games break the monotony of the classroom routine. These games stimulate the students by causing them to concentrate their energies to achieve a higher level of success than their opponents. The spelling bee adds the motivation needed to memorize the correct spelling of the word or learn the correct spelling of the word by assigning the correct letters to the sounds. A new competitive game, *GLOBAL PURSUIT*, produced by the National Geographic Society, will help students learn many geography facts.

3. Competition produces a lift in the winner's morale and encourages him to continue working. Competition can also help the "loser" to work at eliminating the causes for his "losing." That, in turn, will also help to produce a "lift" in the "loser's" morale.

4. When competitive games are used for review of test materials, and everyone enters into the review, they can have a beneficial effect on the quality of work done by the entire class.

Although competition can have the negative result of humiliating others, this tendency must be recognized and controlled in the Christian classroom. The task of the Christian teacher is to give positive leadership to his or her students so that they will not attempt to hurt others. Instead they must be helped to develop and practice the Christian virtues of meekness and kindness. The student must learn more and more to love the neighbor as he loves himself.

One might argue that competition makes it impossible for a student to practice the Christian virtue of consideration for the neighbor and also strive for excellence. For the Christian the purpose in winning the game is not to see the other person suffer. The purpose in playing the game well and winning is to use the talents that the Lord gives to the

participant. If he does this and also plays so well that he wins in the competition, he must learn and practice the Christian virtues spoken of previously. It is the responsibility of the student to learn that winning is not the only thing. He must learn that winning is only part of the game, really a very small and comparatively unimportant part of the game.

The Scriptures recognize that in this life there are winners and losers. In order for one to win he must strive for the prize. The prize for which he must strive is not a carnal prize but is the prize of the high calling which we have in Christ Jesus. In Philippians 3:14 we read, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

In I Corinthians 9:24-25 the apostle Paul says it this way: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."

We can compete in the classroom but the competition must not take us away from our main calling in life. It must serve to equip us and make us more qualified to do that which we are called to do — *"Fear God, keep His commandments, and enjoy Him forever."* ■■■

Academic Competition - No

Doug DeBoer and Deane Wassink

Academic competition recognizes students for achieving certain goals or certain heights of learning. It is supposed to be a motivational factor for a student. It usually “puts everyone in the same boat” with no handicaps for ability as in golf or bowling. Because of that I think that academic competition can be more harmful than good. It can be the cause of students having the wrong concept of what makes studies worthwhile and successful.

With academic competition you must have a winner and a loser, otherwise you wouldn’t call it “competition.” Too often we give the laurels to the winners and not much to the losers. Don’t we then give the impression that winning counts more than losing? Isn’t the winning student viewed as more valuable than the losing student?

The problem with all of this is that God doesn’t reward us on the basis of how we compare to others. He rewards us based on what we’ve done with what He has given. So why should we reward students differently? We tend to base our awards solely on

what students accomplish instead of on what they have been given to work with and then manage to accomplish. One example of this would be the honor roll. Only those with the highest grades are given this honor. What about the student with limited ability who works as hard as he can and receives C’s? Sorry, you are not “honored.” We issue a very loud statement that says you have accomplished more if you have B’s and A’s. It is good that you have tried and thus have C’s, but you’re not publicly recognized. It is obviously not as much of an accomplishment.

When we demand the same high level of achievement, from all students, in order to be recognized, we’re telling them that the achievement is what counts — not the getting there. We are threatening the intrinsic satisfaction of knowing you’ve done your best. Self-competition we definitely need. But academic competition which includes all students — is that proper?

Would it be fair to ask an experienced carpenter and an electrician each to build a china cabinet, and then award the experienced

carpenter for building a superior cabinet? That is what we do with some types of academic competition. We are forcing all students to compete in areas in which some of them are simply not going to succeed. They are not working with the same abilities or tools. Is such competition going to motivate anyone? Instead we must work with each child to set his own goals. Then we will have students that achieve. Students who achieve are students who see their studies as worthwhile. They will actually enjoy school. Then students will recognize that God has given differing abilities, and success comes when we have used that ability to its fullest.

That's the idea that I want in the classroom. I don't want the idea that only high marks and only college bound students are noteworthy. Let's not force all students to compete with one another. We would never force an uncoordinated child to play interscholastic sports. Why do we force students into feeling the pressure of academic competition? Satisfaction, success, and motivation in academics may be found in competition, but let's be careful how we use it.

A number of practical suggestions can be made with respect to teaching that builds up all the students and avoids improper academic competition.

In the first place, we must

create a classroom environment where every child feels valuable for who he is, a precious covenant child with important gifts that must be developed, rather than for his accomplishment in academic scores. A teacher can do this by making positive comments on a regular basis to all of the students. So often we fall into the trap of creating a negative classroom environment. Though control must be maintained we do great harm to those students whom we frequently criticize for their misbehavior or lack of accomplishments. A public comment of appreciation would do much to bolster the student who is struggling.

In the second place, we should do things in class in which a student who is not academically talented can do well and feel good about. Once we get to know the students we should seek out ways to make all of the students feel like valuable, contributing members of the classroom. Even if a child's "claim to fame" is that he has supplied the class with some raw material for an art project, he feels as if he has an important place in the classroom.

Another suggestion is that we must be careful that the review games we use in the classroom build up all the students rather than only a few "winners." One sad event that is frequently repeated is that the children choose

their own teams for a game. There are always one or two children, usually the same ones, who are left to be the last ones whom no one wants on their team. A variation of this is that the same children always are the first ones to have to sit down or stand aside for missing their question during a game. The child soon resigns himself to being a loser after that kind of repeated public humiliation. We must set up games to review the material without setting up some students as the "smartest" and putting down others as the "dumbest."

I am reminded of a "road race" game I once used to motivate children to read. Tags were

placed in a row around the room to represent the number of pages the students read. From a motivation point of view many students really read a lot of books in order to stay in the race. However, there were a few poor readers who had to come into class every day and be humiliated that they had hardly left the starting line. In hindsight, perhaps I could have changed the race to a voluntary event or even somehow represented improvement rather than accomplishment.

All the children entrusted to our care are important in God's sight. We do well to convey that truth in our classroom.

READERS' FORUM

May 13, 1988

*Perspectives in Covenant
Education*

Don Doezema, Editor
1904 Plymouth Terrace S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

Dear Don,

Having just received the Spring 1988 issue of *Perspectives*, I take this opportunity to express my wife's and my appreciation for

this fine magazine. There is good material for Marilyn as a teacher and for both of us as parents. The articles are instructive, stimulating, and interesting.

May God give you and your staff grace to continue this important work on behalf of the cause of Protestant Reformed covenant education.

Cordially in Christ,
Prof. Robert D. Decker

CURRENT ISSUES

Ordinarily this rubric is reserved exclusively for Mr. Brian Dykstra — it's not even encumbered by notes from the editor. We hope he'll forgive us for this one exception.

My guess is that "All Children of the Covenant" will strike a responsive chord in many hearts. In the article Mr. Dykstra speaks of the hurt done to a child by his being rejected in one way or another by his classmates. I know that teachers are very sensitive to that sort of thing; and I'm sure there's many a parent who feels the hurt right along with a child who suffers for it. I'm reminded of a letter written some time ago by just such a parent. She carried it to school, on the first day of the year; and parts of it were read to the students in the beginning-of-the-year chapel exercise. I'm reminded too of a short article written by Mr. Fred Hanko, Sr., on the back of a 1982 school note to the parents of students in Hope School. The former addressed itself in large part to students; the latter to teachers and parents. Both provide something of a sequel to Mr. Dykstra's fine article, so we'll include them both in his rubric.

All Children of the Covenant Brian Dykstra

It seems almost every class has one — an outcast. Arden Ruth Post, associate professor of education at Calvin College, touches on one small aspect of the issue in an article in the April '88 issue of *Christian Home and School*. In her article, "Why Wasn't I Invited?" Post speaks of the heartache experienced by a girl who is not included in a class birthday party. She writes:

"A few years ago a sixth grade girl entered my remedial reading session looking dejected and

downcast. All of my attempts to interest her in the lesson failed. I sensed there were more pressing matters to deal with, so I asked, 'Kim, is there something I can help you with?' Immediately, she burst into tears.

"'Jeannie is having a birthday party. She passed out invitations today. There are fourteen girls in the sixth grade; twelve were invited, and two weren't. I wasn't invited. And it happens every year! For the next week all the girls who are going to the party

will talk about the fun they are going to have and what presents to buy. I just hate school the week before a party, and the night of the party I sit home and cry!' ”

Not being invited to a birthday party is just one example of the treatment given an outcast. The problem is far greater than being shut out from after-school social activities. It is not impossible that an outcast could experience rejection every day of the school year.

What about these outcasts? What is it that sets these children apart from the rest? What, if anything, can be done when we as teachers and parents know that a child is being shunned by the others?

First, however, we need to recognize that this is a serious problem. It is not serious in the sense that a large percentage of our children are objects of such treatment. Rather, the problem is serious because we are a covenant people. As a denomination this is the doctrine we claim to have developed. On mission fields this doctrine has been noticed as being distinctive. When we fail to live the covenant, therefore, it brings us shame.

We state that God calls His people from the children of believers. Yet, are there times when shunning is encouraged because a certain child does not measure up to some kind of *social* standard?

Is the doctrine of the covenant being put into practice when we know of this treatment but nothing is done to stop it?

The covenant also emphasizes that we, undeserving sinners, have been sovereignly called by God's grace into the fellowship of His family as one, complete body with Christ as our head and Lord. Each of us needs the other as fellow members of that *one* body. Because God has saved *one, complete* church, either we are all saved, or none of us is saved. Is shunning, then, something insignificant?

God has shown His love for this complete body through His Son. As members of His covenant church we have been commanded to love one another as He has loved us. We are told in I John 4:20-21, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." A perfect God has called depraved sinners into His covenant fellowship. Shunning should not be viewed as a childish trifle, since we have been taught of God how to love one another (I Thess. 4:9).

What will happen to the spiritual attitude of the shunned child, not to mention the children

who do the shunning, toward the doctrines of the covenant and communion of the saints? Will these doctrines be seen as being alive, vibrant convictions which arise deep within faithful hearts, or will these doctrines be seen as matters of theological disputes which bear little relevance to day-to-day life?

At best, what will be the emotional scars left on the child who has been shunned by peers for years? At worst, what will be the emotional open wounds which have been left to fester? Would these be the memories we would desire a child to have from attending a Christian school? If such treatment has gone on for a few years, what could assure a youngster that such treatment will not continue tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow until the last syllable of ninth grade? Where would we expect such a child to turn for friends?

What can be so frustrating is that the outcasts are judged by what they cannot control. Perhaps someone is shunned because of looks. The child might be too tall, short, thin, or heavy to suit the tastes of others in the class. Maybe nobody in the class cares to have the outcast on their team because of a lack of athletic ability. The style of clothing is also a standard of measurement these days. What is sometimes discovered is that even a change in

wardrobe is not enough. Besides, what type of true friend would it be that gives friendship on the basis of what one wears? Especially, however, the outcast is vulnerable. There is no need to worry about a loss of social position by picking on the outcast. In fact, it is discovered that picking on the outcast is acceptable and ensures one's position in the group.

Post sums this up in her article.

"Kim was small and shy in a class of preadolescent girls who were developing physically and socially. Besides, Kim was from a poorer family than her classmates, and her clothes didn't stand a chance of competing with the latest styles and fads. I could have told her that these things don't really matter, that character and spiritual maturity are more important than being in style, but in her daily world, clothes, friends, and parties did matter."

There are a few problems in solving this type of trouble. Teachers can see that a child is being shunned; however, the unkind treatment that is given is rarely seen. Students do not feel free to inform the teacher of this treatment because this puts them at risk of experiencing the same thing. The largest obstacle might be that the outcast will find it difficult to trust friendly advances after years of harsh treatment.

Our children need to become

sensitive to how the outcast feels. If they can sense that someone is vulnerable, they should be able to understand how they would feel if they were to be treated as underserving of kind treatment. Were you shunned at some time? Do you now feel guilty about the treatment you or your classmates gave to somebody in your class? Tell your children about it. Stories from your past might make a needed impression and improve a child's school life.

Finally, could you encourage your child to make the first friendly advance? Although there

might be social danger in this, we can assure that this would please our Father in heaven. We would be following the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves.

A new school year will soon begin. Has your child told you that the way a classmate is treated bothers him? As covenant people what can and should we be willing to do to help? Is this an area in the life of our schools where we can improve? Shouldn't we do everything possible to help the outcast? After all, they are all children of the covenant.

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Note From a Very Concerned Mother

It's the first day of school. The time is 6:30 in the morning. Our home is bursting with excitement: "What shall I wear today?" "Does my hair look alright?" "I can't eat my breakfast, Mom, I'm too nervous!" Such excitement the first day of school can bring!

But wait, here sits a child saying nothing, just sitting there with a rather sad-looking face. "Now, honey," I begin to say, "cheer up. It's a new year with a new teacher and friends. Just wait and see, it won't be so bad."

But, deep down inside, this mother doubts her own words. Her heart aches for this child and others like him.

And then the tears start to flow. "But, Mom. I don't want

to go to school. Can't you send me to another school? The kids think I'm stupid; they call me all kinds of names!"

Well, here we go again — another school year; another unhappy child. Under normal circumstances this would be a situation that a mother would know how to handle. But, you see, it isn't that simple. I have a child with a learning problem, a child who has been called "Stupid," "Idiot," "Dumb," a child who tries so hard and still can't get it right.

Naturally, this mother wants to protect her child from this unkind treatment. But what can she do? She can't walk along with this child step by step, every day. She

can't take him out of school and away from this abuse. It's such a sad situation. It's something that should *not* be happening in our Protestant Reformed schools. Aren't we taught that we must do and say all things that are pleasing in the sight of God? Doesn't the Bible also teach us that we shouldn't do things to others that we wouldn't want done to us? Of course it does. Yet this is hard to do because of our sinful nature. But, let's not use that for an excuse.

God has given us all different talents. Some of us are very smart, some of us have to struggle. We'd better always remember that what we are and what we do, if it's done to the best of our ability, is what God wants us to be and do. And when we tease or call names because someone doesn't have the intelligence or the abilities that we have, aren't we teasing and laughing at God's handiwork? Didn't God create this child exactly the way He wanted him or her to be? Should

we mock the work of God? Of course, we should not.

If you children only knew the hurt and frustration that you cause when you use your mouth in such a manner. This is certainly not something you would expect to hear from children in a Christian school! Your lights should be shining so others can see that you are children of God; that you are different from the world.

May you children remember this in your prayers. This is a situation that should not be; but by the grace of God, it *can* be changed. Let's work on it, shall we, kids? Let's try not to call others names, and let's try to be kind to others. The next time you open your mouth to call someone a name or say something mean, stop and think about what you are doing. Think about how *you* would feel if someone said that to or about you, and think about how *God* wants us to act towards each other.

■□■

"And Be Ye Kind One to Another"

"My son (or daughter) hates school. I can hardly get him to go to school in the morning. He says all the kids are mean to him." By the time I hear such a complaint, it is usually a serious situation. Children are usually reluctant to complain if other children are

cruel to them. They are afraid that such cruelty is due to a failure in themselves. Further, they are afraid that the other children will hear that they have complained and will make it still harder for them.

What can a parent do when his

child faces such a problem? Although rare, there is always the possibility that the child is doing something or has an attitude that irritates others. It is wise to talk to the child and observe his words and actions to see if that is true. More often the problem is simply that the others have discovered that the child is sensitive and can be hurt. Often the child will think that there is something wrong with him. He will put pressure on his parents to buy him special things, like clothes, thinking that it will win him the approval of others. Parents should be careful not to do that kind of thing. It doesn't work. It is more important for parents to be supportive of their children without themselves showing malice.

What can the teacher do about the problem of harassment of other children? If the teacher punishes the guilty students upon the complaint of the parent or the child, the child is likely to suffer more harassment because he has "tattled." It's better if the teacher can observe the child being harassed and then punish the guilty ones. That's hard, though, because children are very careful that they don't do those things in the presence of adults. When they are caught, they usually react very indignantly: "We were just having a little fun. We didn't mean to

hurt him. We say those things (or do them) to others all the time, and they don't mind. He just can't take a little teasing."

The heart of the problem is this: some students seek to enhance their own social status by putting down others. Many other students either participate in this harassment or give their assent by silence. They are afraid to help the victim or be friendly with him themselves for fear of losing their own status.

There are several things that we parents and teachers must do. First, we must beware of our own behavior. We must not criticize others or belittle them before our children. We so often give a bad example to our children in the way that we speak about others. Second, we must observe the behavior of our children to see that they are not responsible for such behavior. Strangely enough, the child that is most cruelly treated by others will often be cruel himself if given the opportunity. Third, we must impress upon our children from the time that they are very young that love of one another is a basic requirement of Christian behavior.

Kindness to one another is the mark of Christians. By acts of love for another we show our love for God as a reflection of the love that He has shown to us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God,

but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sin. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (I John 4:11). We must

remind our children again and again that they must show that they are Christians by the way that they treat each of their fellow saints. Fred Hanko

[illegible]

Dear Miss Koole,

QUESTION:

“Recently I have heard that there are some of our Protestant Reformed families that are considering “home schooling” for their children. What is your opinion of such a move?”

A Mother-Teacher

ANSWER:

The Winter, 1986, issue of *Perspectives in Covenant Education* did feature divergent "Viewpoints" on this subject, but I would like to add my opinion to those of the previous writers.

First of all, I would want to know what is the motive for this move. Is it:

1. a genuine concern that God obligates a parent himself or herself to give academic instruction to the child — that children are given to parents to be educated, trained, and reared only by themselves and that delegating that responsibility should not be done?
2. the inability to meet the rising cost of tuition?
3. a complaint about the way the child is taught in the

school, or a complaint or dissatisfaction with the person or persons instructing the child (or children)?

4. the inability of the child to adjust to certain conditions or to the school environment or to fellow students?

I would certainly hope that motives 2, 3, or 4 could be partially if not completely alleviated without resorting to "home schooling."

Secondly, I would have to know about the qualifications of the parent to provide instruction in the academic field. We are to be obedient to the laws of the land unless in direct opposition to the Word of God, and there are laws regarding the education of children by qualified persons.

There is also the emotional makeup of the educator to consider. It takes a disciplined, orderly person to see that the instruction is carried out faithfully. Can the parent find enough time to add this time-consuming job to the other home responsibilities? With few exceptions this instruction has to be given

each day; and if more than one child is to be taught, the responsibilities increase greatly. I have met parents who have great difficulty seeing to it that their children's home work is properly done.

Thirdly, I would be concerned that the child would miss the interaction, and the challenges that the school situation can provide. This interacting with one's classmates generates a wholesome excitement and interest. Life-long friendships are formed and strengthened through this daily fellowship. Also, will the home be able to give the child the many extras that are at the disposal of the teacher in the school?

Does "home schooling" insure a happier child, or perhaps one that might be more rebellious, complaining, or self-centered? In the school situation a child learns at an early age that there are many different kinds of people that make up the Church of Jesus Christ. Each teacher and each fellow student has his or her own strengths and weaknesses. God gives to each of His children a unique personality, and it

behooves us to learn early that we are called to bear with one another's weaknesses.

Yes, there are some parents who could take on these added responsibilities and do an excellent job. But we do have our own Protestant Reformed schools. Many grandparents and parents have made great sacrifices to attain and maintain them. We have God-fearing, concerned teachers who perhaps have also made sacrifices to be able to continue in the work that they feel called to do and that they enjoy doing. Teaching God's children has been my life, and I thank God for this great privilege. Is there nothing to be said for the communion of the saints? Shouldn't our children be participants in this day-to-day activity? I do not believe that isolation from other Christians of their own age is for the spiritual benefit of the children — and of the church.

There might be unusual circumstances that would make "home schooling" either necessary or preferable. But I would like to think that such cases are few and far between.

The growth of grace is the best evidence of the truth of it;
things that have no life will not grow.

Thomas Watson

from the TEACHERS' LOUNGE

From the teachers' lounges of various of our schools we hear some first-year teachers this time reflecting on the year that was. Experiences vary, of course, since the situations in which teachers find themselves can be so different. Some teach upper level classes, others lower, and still others may find themselves with a little of both. Some teach in combined-grades situations, while others have but one grade. Some find in their classroom a more or less even mix of boys and girls. Others, like Mr. Bos, are faced with a four to one imbalance. In spite of those differences, however, we catch from all four of those who kindly submitted a short article something of the excitement which is the usual corollary of a successful first year in teaching. And we might add too that we catch something of their vision, their hopes and aspirations — enough to be assured that they are coming to grips with “the basics.”

The first two, by the way, hail from Hull. That's Mrs. Van Maanen and Mr. Gritters. Mr. Bos teaches at Hope (Grand Rapids) and Mrs. DeKryger at Heritage.

The First-Year Teacher

Jacque VanMaanen

Being a first-year teacher, I have found the Kindergarten and first grade very challenging but yet rewarding. Every day brings new experiences — from learning to deal with problems on the playground and classroom, to bundling up the kids, which includes snow boots, stocking caps, gloves, and snow suits, in the winter months.

Throughout my college years, I was constantly reminded and challenged in my classes with meeting the needs of every child, and how difficult it really is. I often questioned that, but now find myself figuring out ways to meet each student's needs. It is difficult, at times, to keep the higher achiever challenged, when you work so hard on getting the

lower achiever to understand what's going on so that he'll not become overwhelmed with his work.

The age of these children is also what makes teaching exciting. There are always so many happy faces. In the morning when they come to school, they are always so cheerful they fill you up with joy. So often I am reminded of that childlike faith. When I see

these children listen to a Bible story with such eager ears, I am again reminded of Matthew 18:4. God has given me the responsibility and the grace to nurture the minds of these little children. I am thankful for this responsibility and pray for the grace needed to fulfill the task of teaching God's covenant children.

■□■

Reflections

Loren Gritters

As I near the end of my first year of teaching, I am fascinated by how fast the school year has gone. Soon it will be time to say good-bye to the students for the summer. My first year of teaching has been one of great joy, with much learning and growing both intellectually and spiritually. Each day throughout the year has brought many new and exciting challenges to me. Being able to teach God's children and see the eager learning which the students show, whether it be in the classroom or in their daily life, has enabled me to have much happiness.

My first year has been one of great learning. The business of preparation for the various subjects and seeing the results and reactions in the students brings even greater motivation to me.

Trying to find ways to challenge all of the students in the classroom, in order to help them reach their highest potential and become better servants in God's kingdom, is a daily task which isn't so easily carried out. Each subject involves much study and research, to try to find fresh ideas to present to the students in order to enhance their learning. But this preparation is also of a spiritual nature. Being prepared to apply the principles of God's Word to my teaching in all the subjects has helped my students and me see the wonder of God and His creation. I realize that God has placed me with a great calling of instructing the children in the words of the Law of God and showing the students how this applies to their covenant walk of life.

Teaching two and one half grades has kept me very busy. It has made my first year very challenging, yet very rewarding. I can see in myself the changes that a year of teaching has had on me. I began the year with many doubts and fears, in not knowing completely what to expect or how things would turn out. Now I feel more comfortable with certain things and am eagerly looking forward to my next year.

I have learned many new ideas throughout the year. Trying out different techniques (some of

which have worked and others of which have not) in the various subjects is also included in my first year of teaching. I realize that it is through God's grace which has helped me throughout this year and all of my life. I hope I can continue to learn and meet the needs of all my students as I continue down the path God has laid out for me, giving Him all the praise and honor.

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," Ephesians 6:20. ■■■

The First Year - a Real Learning Experience

Ed Bos

Everyone said the first year would be rough. But this year presented a couple of situations which made the normal even more challenging. It didn't take long to realize that it was a good thing I gave myself a few extra years before I began teaching.

I graduated from college with a certificate to teach on the secondary level, yet I spent half of my time teaching fourth grade. My mornings were spent in the junior high and the afternoons with the fourth grade. It seems that the younger class adjusted quite easily to having two teachers, but it was a nearly constant struggle

to shift down every noon.

Yet, teaching at this lower level proved to be a more rewarding experience than at first anticipated. The eagerness of the students was nice to see. Time moved so quickly that often we found ourselves behind where we wanted to be; I found it difficult to try to fit geography and science into a fifty-minute time slot. Yet moving quickly every day kept the students involved in what was going on.

Now I am not saying there was no eagerness or enthusiasm in the upper grades. They tried to hide it sometimes, but the discussions

showed that, in spite of themselves sometimes, there was a real desire to learn.

Also, I am not saying that time did not go fast in the upper grades. But there, the class periods lasted forty-five minutes each, which left more time to get things done. So it didn't seem as if I were rushed for time.

However, the seventh grade presented its own special challenges. For one thing discipline plays a greater role. This was accentuated by the fact that seventeen of the twenty-one students were boys. The class was also a very active class.

However, this activity had its advantages. It definitely helped when it came to discussions. There were many in the class who were willing to contribute to

discussions, which certainly made things easier for me. Of course, it was a great temptation for them to get me off on a tangent, and sometimes they were successful; but it was always a learning experience for all of us.

All in all, I guess it is a good sign that I am looking forward to teaching again in the fall. There were times when it took much perseverance and prayer for strength. But there were also many times of prayers of thanksgiving for God's providing of strength and showing the way. It becomes clear very fast how much we need to depend on His gracious care to get us through, especially when the task at hand involves helping to bring up the covenant seed.

■□■

Rejoicing in Diversity

Vicki DeKryger

If variety is the spice of life, then a teacher's life is spicy indeed! In my first year of teaching I have never ceased to be amazed at how many different things are found daily in my classroom. My life with my students is filled with variety.

I have often noted that many people like everything and everyone to be the same, or nearly so. People are much easier to deal

with when they think and act much like oneself. Diversity and variety can be threatening to us at times, because we don't know quite what to expect next.

In this first year I have found myself sending so many messages to my students which encourage them to conform. So often I have had to say, "Put your name here. Go out row by row. Line up for gym. Do your math work this

way." So much time and energy is given to doing this in school. We *have* to teach children to do certain things in the same or nearly the same ways. If we did not, our school life would be very chaotic.

But before this first year I'd never realized how little of a teacher's time is spent actively encouraging children to be *different!* So often, I've had to remind myself that my actions must *show* my belief in each child's uniqueness. I've really worked hard at seeing each child as an individual — a person with a variety of likes and dislikes.

In my prayers with the children, I often ask God to help us rejoice in the ways we are different, while uniting us in our common goal of serving Him. These prayers have been answered. When we have class discussions about current events and issues, we work hard to understand each class member's point of view. When we do our art, the children are amazed (as am I) at the variety of interpretations. I often overhear things such as, "Wow, I never thought of doing that!" and "Your idea really worked out neat!" When we share creative writing, the

students love to hear all the different literary works.

As a classroom teacher I have come to understand that I must promote diversity and unity simultaneously. This is no easy job, especially when one considers this in terms of a classroom full of students! However, this is a task that is so necessary in a Christian school that it cannot be ignored. Conformity is important in many aspects of our lives. We serve the Lord our God and follow His Word. We are united in that goal. But we cannot forget to encourage each child to develop his own unique talents and skills. Promoting diversity strengthens our faith because children and their teachers then become more aware of the diverse ways of serving the Lord. Some of us have the gift of singing and serve the Lord with that talent. Others can be extremely encouraging people to be around and serve God with that talent. Approaching a classroom of students in that way can sometimes be more work, I have discovered, but the rewards are incalculable! God has taught me to rejoice in my students' diversity! Variety is the spice of this teacher's life! ■■■

In our Spring issue we carried the first of a two-part series on brain hemispheres and right/left dominance. While the first installment tended to be more theoretical, the second is more practical. Here, again, is Mrs. Quenga.

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

(2)

Antoinette Quenga

In my first article under this title I wrote about hemispheric specialization, about which areas of brain activity were in what hemisphere, and gave some characteristics of right-brain dominance and left-brain dominance.

The scope of this second article is the importance of the physical development of the child in relation to his mental activity and some of the observations you can make that might indicate a hemispheric preference.

I will begin by saying that the human being is a unity. One cannot separate the various aspects of the person. We have a tendency to think the physical body doesn't have much to do with the way we learn. But it is just as likely that there be a lack of co-ordination in the body as in the brain, which is truly affected by it. Most of the children have exercised well their large motor muscles, especially the lower half of their bodies. Have you ever watched to see if the top half co-ordinates with the bottom half — if the right arm

swings with the left leg, left arm with right leg? Or does the right arm go with the right leg? Are the arms moving at all or are they crossed, or hands in pockets when legs are going? Are the feet coming off the floor or are they shuffling? How is the fine motor control? There is a direct connection between the vision area in the back of the brain, and the fingers by way of the neck, shoulders, and arms. When the right hand is touching each finger to thumb, are the fingers of the left hand unconsciously moving, too? Can the child do a head lift? He should be able to lift his head off the floor easily, drop his chin on his neck, and return to the floor position without straining these muscles. Strengthening these muscles helps support the nerves that control the eye-hand co-ordination.

Now the eyes. These are far more complicated than we are usually aware of. I would dare say that many of the learning problems, especially in young

children, are due to some lack of development or inequality in the eyes. Some of these have to wait for maturing while others need the care of a developmental optometrist. Sometimes the eyes do not track (follow a line of print), or one eye is being suppressed (watch for tilted head), or there may be a lazy eye. I am told it is normal for young children to be far-sighted and for their eyes to have difficulty focusing close-up. Yet we give them a great deal of seatwork to do. And sometimes what *you* see is not what the child sees. There are special exercises we can do to strengthen the eye muscles, too. The goal of all this physical activity is to have a well co-ordinated body, to support and assist a well co-ordinated mind.

The overall goal, of course, is to be a balanced person — physically and mentally. In order for a person to attain his fullest potential, then, it is important that he exercise all elements that are located in both hemispheres of the brain. We have a tendency to go heavy on the left-brained academic activity. Often we feel inadequate in teaching art, music, and physical education, so we put that on the bottom of the list and they're the first to go when time runs short. Art, music, and phys. ed. are all right-brain activities, so in effect we tend to cut out the use and exercise of

half of our brain. Besides that, these areas serve to enhance the self-esteem of a right-brained child because he often has difficulty with the left-brained activities.

I have hinted in the foregoing about some of the things to look for in body and eye movement. Now look at this part. Teachers and parents alike will recognize some of these characteristics in their pupils and children. I think when we realize the hemispheric dominance of these children we tend to be a little more patient and understanding. Not all of these will be found in each "different" child, but here goes.

A right-dominant child may appear to daydream frequently. He may talk in phrases or leave words out when talking, or confuse the order of words or syllables. He will often use his fingers to count. He loves to doodle on his papers. He will often have difficulty following directions. He may communicate non-verbally: by his facial gestures, his hands, by the way he walks. He will often have trouble with fine motor skills such as cutting, pasting, writing, or drawing. Phonics are often difficult for him to handle or use. He moves a lot — in and out of his seat, will often fall off his chair or sit down where the chair isn't, or sit with knees on chair, toes hooked on back, or he may stand up. His pencil always needs

sharpening, he goes to the bathroom more often than usual, his shoelaces are often not tied. He often will have a messy desk. He'll have trouble getting his work done. Sometimes he will be able to give the right answer to a question but won't be able to tell how he got it; on the other hand he will often give responses that are unrelated to what is being discussed. He will chew on his pencil, his eraser, even on the metal tops, or his tongue, or hair. He needs body contact — he likes to touch, trip, poke; he is likely to be affectionate and emotional. He may be very color sensitive. I once had a 6-year-old at my house for dinner who wouldn't even try the red cabbage because it was not the right shade of purple. They are often creative, imaginative, and tell "tall tales."

Keep in mind that "balanced" children may show characteristics of both right and left brain. And there are the alternators, those who switch back and forth either at will or without control or awareness.

When a child, usually an older one, says, "I can't draw," or "I can't write," or "I can't sing," it is often because he has allowed his bossy left-brain to build a fence around his exciting, creative right-brain! There is a need in our schools not just to expand the left-brain, but we need to teach the children how to open the gates in the right-brain wall so

they have access to all the delights cooped up in the right hemisphere.

Now the questions are: What difference does this make in how I look at each child? What difference does this make in how I teach the child to look at himself?

First, when I look at a child, I spend a good deal of time analyzing what "equipment" he has brought for me to work with — physical and mental. I know what results I want to achieve and my challenge is to figure out how I can best attain those results with the equipment each child possesses. I know the child very much wants to learn (at least the young ones); it's my business to discover a way in which he *will* be able to learn.

Secondly, I believe that a child should know, as much as his understanding will allow, what kind of a brain he has to work with, what his strengths and weaknesses are.

The most important thing of all is to get across to each child that all of God's children are equal and precious in the sight of God, Who made them exactly as He wanted them. Each one is just right for the task God has planned for him or her in His Kingdom, and sometimes the Lord takes longer in getting one individual ready to serve in His Kingdom than He does with another. ■■■

PERSPECTIVES

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