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Conversation Partners

by Marlene Bylenga,
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It's hard to believe that we have again reached the halfway point in another school year. Each new year begins with a great deal of excitement and energy and the prayer that our students will grow academically, spiritually, emotionally and physically.

As we reach the mid-point of this school year it is important to step back and take the time to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of our programs and, if necessary, make changes to ensure their continued quality.

It is a good exercise for those working with international students to step back and assess the program not only in terms of the effectiveness of ESL and homestay programs but also in terms of how well the students have adjusted to the school and whether or not integration is taking place. One of the rationales for the enrolment of international students into our schools is that our school's culture will be enriched by the presence of students from cultures very different from our own. A question to ask ourselves mid-year is whether or not the international students are becoming part of the established school community: have we made opportunities inside and outside of the classroom for them to share their experiences, insights, cultural expressions and perspectives?

We need to be reminded that the presence of international students gives all our students the opportunity to develop skills in effective communication across cultures and that we need to provide opportunities for students to develop these skills.

An excellent way to begin the process of integration and understanding within a school is to develop a "Conversation Partners Program." The purpose of this program is to help facilitate the integration of our international students. By meeting with a partner once a week and just talking, the international student will develop their spoken English; more importantly each partner will learn more about the other's culture and hopefully forge a lasting friendship. Canadian students are encouraged to involve the international students in a full range of Canadian experiences and to include them in social events outside of the school.

In his book *Third Culture Kids*, David Pollock writes:

"As teenagers and adults, probably nothing strikes at our sense of self-esteem with greater force than learning language and cultures, for these are the tasks of children. Suddenly, no matter how many decibels we raise our voices; people don't understand what we're trying to say. We discover gestures we have used all our lives—like pointing someone out in a crowd using our index finger—have completely opposite meaning now (in some cultures, it's a curse). Our cultural and linguistic mistakes not only embarrass us but make us feel anxious and ashamed of being so stupid. Initially, the community may welcome us warmly—even

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What I Re-Learned Last Month about Curriculum

by Robert Koole,
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In December I had the privilege of participating in two professional learning opportunities. Both experiences reinforced what I know about Christian schools but have not sufficiently put into practice/seen put into practice.

Learning Opportunity # 1

On December 2, I attended the SCSBC curriculum leaders meeting to participate in a presentation “Touching the Heart Through Faith Enhancing Practices” by Dan Beerens, the Director of Curriculum Instruction at Holland Christian Schools in Holland, Michigan. Dan involved us in an exploration of his work in their schools to encourage student faith development throughout the educational program and thereby be more distinctively Christian.

The “Faith Enhancement Model” consists of 12 modules:

1. Modeling and testimony of teacher in and out of school
2. Intentional teaching and coaching of virtues, habits, and prophetic living with students
3. Narratives and faith stories
4. Case studies – comparing values
5. Reflective writing – journals, credos, portfolios, assessments
6. Dilemmas, life difficulties
7. Difficult questions of life
8. Use of time, talent, treasures
9. Personal faith commitment questions
10. Culminating experiences
11. Understanding student faith development
12. Teacher pedagogical practices

Christian schools should be communities of practice characterized by collaborative cultures and covenantal relationships.

Each module is designed for a 1 or 2 hour staff discussion with potential to become an ongoing theme or topic throughout the year. If you are looking for ideas to stimulate your own/your school’s teaching practices in and around children and young people’s faith development, the “Faith Enhancement Practices” modules are an invaluable resource. Dan Beerens has graciously made the material available on his website (www.hollandchristian.org/dbeerens/faith_enhancing_practices). Be sure to give him credit when you use his resources.

Learning Opportunity # 2

On December 4-7, I attended the National Staff Development Conference (along with 3500 others) in Vancouver. This conference provided me with an opportunity to learn more for my own work by participating in day-long sessions with educators from across North America and some from throughout the world.

- a. “Powerful Designs for Professional Learning”—This session involved participants in an in-depth look at three strategies, a brief introduction to four additional strategies, and a copy of NSDC’s new book and CD, “Powerful Designs for Professional Learning.” (available soon from SCSBC library). This collection of 21 professional learning strategies (10-15 pages each) includes: accessing student voices, action research, assessment, case discussions, classroom walk-throughs, critical friend groups, curriculum designers, data analysis, immersing teachers in practice, journaling, lesson study, mentoring, peer coaching, and more.
- b. “Building Student Responsibility for Learning” – This sounded exactly like something I wanted to learn more about, but the workshop didn’t match the description. It was overloaded with content and introduced excessively complex models for working with teachers at a classroom level. The main thing I learned was ‘keep your presentation simple and make it usable for teachers in schools and classrooms’.
- c. *Leading Foothills Learning Communities* – A wonderful, involving, and stimulating day-long session. The presenters demonstrated and engaged us in experiencing their process of becoming a professional learning community at the district and school-level. Guided by the principles of shared leadership and professional learning communities, they have engaged in a systematic look at their student learning goals – where are we now? where do we want to be? and how do we get there? Teacher teams held discussion meetings to gather intuitive, qualitative, and quantitative information and used it to establish learning goals. The presentation and our interaction resulted in valuable dialogue about the process of developing professional learning communities.

Reflections

I believe that it is important for us to renew and strengthen our efforts at developing Christian schools as learning communities: principals, teachers, children, young people and parents focused on becoming a truly Christ-centred learning community. Christian schools should be communities of practice characterized by collaborative cultures and covenantal relationships. People in collaborative cultures “are committed to working together toward goals and purposes that they share.” Covenantal relationships are “promises that imply certain mutually held actions and commitments that are considered obligatory.” Covenants are commitments that “are planted in the hearts of people and bind them together morally and obligate them morally to the conditions of the covenant.” (T.J. Sergiovanni, 2004. “Communities of Practice and Collaborative Cultures,” *Principal Leadership* [September] p.51.)

Are covenantal relationships alive and well in our schools? Are our schools and classrooms collaborative cultures?

Effective Visionary Leadership or Micro-managed Midnight Marathons?

by Henry Contant,
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What time did you get home from your last board or committee meeting? Were people prepared? Were good decisions made?

Most board members have heard the challenge to exercise 'visionary leadership' and keep the 'big picture' in mind. They have been encouraged to set overall direction and develop policy, yet many board meetings deteriorate into micro-managed midnight marathons that cause frustration and disappointment. Why?

Biehl and Engstrom (The Effective Board Member, p.117) in their study of church boards, school boards, and boards of non-profits/charities identified nine key points that caused frustrations at board meetings. The challenge for each school board member is to avoid contributing to these frustrations:

1. *Digressing from the agenda into low-priority items*—Be sensitive to your own personal involvement in the meeting. Before you speak ask yourself, "Is what I'm about to say on track, or is it a tangent?"
2. *Not doing the necessary homework*—Never come to a board meeting unprepared. Set aside time on your calendar to make sure you get your homework done in advance. If you come unprepared, admit it up front. The public admission will keep you from doing it too many times in the future.
3. *Failing to adequately plan the agenda*—Typically the chair/executive plans the agenda at least 7-10 days ahead of time. Items that require board decisions should be placed early on the agenda. Ensure that all board members have the required materials/information well in advance so that they are prepared to make decisions.
4. *Interfering with staff operations*—Boards should avoid getting involved in the day-to-day operation of the school. Most decisions that boards make should affect the future (next year and beyond) rather than the present operation of the school. The chart below serves as a good reference point for board members to keep in mind when wondering if they are exercising leadership or falling into a micro-management mode.

Who's Responsible?

Area	Board	Principal
Long-term goals (more than 1 yr.)	Approves	Recommends and provides input
Short-term goals (less than 1 yr.)	Monitors	Establishes and carries out
Day-to-day operations	No role	Makes all management decisions

5. *Unqualified board members who are lacking in vision and motivation*—Board members who lack motivation or never contribute to any discussion at the committee/board level need to seriously question whether they are serving at the appropriate level. Perhaps they need more training, insight or experience first.
6. *Focusing most of the meeting on money*—Prepare financial reports (charts, graphs, summaries) so that they take 20 minutes or less at a meeting. Set a time limit on the discussion of financial issues unless there is a major problem. Instead, spend most of your time talking about major directional and policy issues related to the school.
7. *Making decisions without seeing the big picture*—Ask yourself, "Am I thinking of my special interest, or what's best for the entire school?"
8. *Not having a record of previous decisions*—It is important for each board member to have a reference that organizes one's thinking about the school's past, present, and future. It is a good idea to prepare an annual summary of board decisions made the previous year. In addition, the school's strategic plan needs to be updated/ revised annually.
9. *Poor chairmanship*—A chair can improve their leadership of meetings by doing the following:

Before the meeting

- Know what decisions need to be made
- Know what's in the board "package"
- Plan agenda accordingly

At the meeting

- Communicate 'rules of order'
- Summarize issues
- Use speakers list
- Clarify assignments for next meeting
- Clarify timelines

After the meeting

- Review previous meetings to identify issues and problems
- Consider how you can assist new members, deal with absenteeism, remediate poor performance
- Review annual agenda
- Review checklist

A good board meeting needs purpose, preparation, procedure, and punctuality (remember, few wise decisions are made after 10:00 p.m.).

If your board wishes to improve the effectiveness of your meetings, consider scheduling an SCSBC Board Leadership workshop (*Effective Visionary Leadership or Micro-managed Midnight Marathons?*) for your community.

Why not just *ask?*

When I was a student at Dordt College in the 60's, my roommates and I liked to go to the 'soup suppers' put on as fundraisers by the local Christian schools. Christian school mothers made the food, then brought it and their families to the school gym and bought their supper. We would get a large bowl of homemade soup, one or two 'taverns' (or 'sloppy joe's', as we would call them), a large piece of homemade pie, and coffee.

What a great meal! What a great deal! The food was better than what we got in the Commons on campus and the price was right – free! (Actually, you were expected to make a donation, but as impoverished college students, we felt that a minimal donation was all that was expected.)

Our college theology professor used to say, deprecatingly, that there were enough soup suppers in Sioux county to float a battleship! His comment comes back to me frequently as I survey the ocean of 'sales' that characterize much of the fundraising that is done by our Christian schools here. Our schools sell everything from pies to poinsettias, crafts to Christmas wrap, T-shirts to cow manure. And it is my contention that in doing so we trivialize the cause we support and demean the Christ we serve.

What's wrong with product sales?

- Product sales often sell junk at an inflated price (E.g. the Christmas catalog which will remain nameless, but you know what I'm talking about.)
- Purchasers buy not because they really need the product, but because they can't resist the baby-blue eyes of their grandchildren.
- Product sales are often used by boards to avoid their responsibility of including operating costs (like lab equipment or computers) in the budget and passing those requests on to the fundraising committee.
- Each of these sales is an 'ask' in the mind of your supporters: the more you ask, the less you get. So when a board really needs to raise serious money (like for a capital expansion), supporters have been 'asked' out.



Product sales as a means of fundraising belittle the worth of your school and equate the importance of your cause to nothing more than the value of the product you sell.

And what do our parents, supporters and teachers think about all of these sales? Here are some comments:

- "My son comes home with a different product to sell each week: all the school seems to be teaching him is to be a good Christian beggar."
- "I wasted a whole morning using my truck to pick up bottles. I spent more on gas than we got for the bottles."
- "Our school newsletter looks more like a Costco flyer than a report on our mission and vision."
- "Our auction items go for so much less than their true value, that the community knows us better as a discount store than a Christian school."
- "I sometimes think the board wants me to spend more time organizing fund raisers than I do in preparing to teach their children."
- "I'm so sick of all these requests to buy something; why doesn't the school just ask me for a gift?"

Indeed, why not just ask for a gift? Why are schools so afraid of asking for a gift to support what, I trust, they believe is an extremely worthy vision?

Fundraising has become a broad category. For many schools it is primarily product sales, but fundraising also includes events like charity banquets, benefit concerts and golf tournaments which can fit in with a school's vision and mission if they are presented correctly. But the most important aspect



Fundraising, Product Sales, and Your School

by Gerry Ebbers
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Here are some guidelines:

- The first step is the crucial one: get rid of all your product sales! (Get rid of all your walk, jump, and skip-a-thons as well.) Forbid all committees and teachers from raising money for any project or trip which has not been specifically approved in advance by the board.
- Implement an annual giving program which includes one or two ‘asks’ each year. An annual drive, mailing or phonathon is one good option. One annual event or activity that is correctly designed to raise support is also good.
- Inform your parents and supporters at the beginning of each school year that the school will be offering them the opportunity once or twice that year (identify when and how) to support the school’s mission.
- As part of your new-parent orientation process, explain what it means to be supportive of the school, including gift support above and beyond tuition.
 - Clearly indicate what activities are community building events (and therefore are free or at-cost only, and are not fundraisers) and which events or activities are fundraisers (and therefore have the expectation of significant financial support).

**True giving is not gimmicks...
 It is a faithful response to the opportunity
 God gives us to partner with Him in promoting
 His kingdom, in spreading His word, and
 in fulfilling His mission.**

of fundraising, the one that has the greatest potential for increasing long-term support for the school, is voluntary gift support. True giving is not gimmicks; it is not sales. It is a faithful response to the opportunity God gives us to partner with Him in promoting His kingdom, in spreading His word, and in fulfilling His mission.

The problem for many boards is that product sales seem like an easy way to raise additional funds beyond tuition and government grants. After all, every charity one can think of seems to be doing it so it must be the most effective way of raising funds. WRONG! Non-Christian charities have had to move to sales and gimmicks because the average Canadian has generally lost his philanthropic spirit. News reports of responses to disasters notwithstanding, Revenue Canada statistics show that very few people claim charitable deductions in any given year.

The most effective, most efficient, and most mission-compatible method of fundraising is simply to ask for a gift. When a supporter donates to a school because he is moved by the mission of the school, that donor is much more likely to continue contributing to the school year after year. So how can boards get out of the product sales method of fundraising and get back to a better Biblical approach?

If you need help as a board making the transition from your current fundraising methods to this new approach, please ask me to meet with your board, your committees and your staff to assist you in making changes that will enhance the support of your mission. And no thank you, I don’t need any light bulbs—I have enough to last me 100 years.

Community News



Henry Vanderveen (Langley Christian Middle/High School) leads devotions at SCSBC's "Leadership for Christian Schools" Conference

- **Over 160 people attended the SCSBC's 5th annual "Leadership for Christian Schools" conference**, increasingly being embraced by SCSBC schools as their premier conference for training, equipping and encouraging new board and committee members.
- **A sincere thank you** to Tim Breedveld, Bea Vanderheiden and Paul Tigchelaar, who recently retired from the SCSBC Board, for their years of faithful service.
- **The SCSBC also welcomes new board members** Barb McKenzie, John Nieboer, and Rudy Ydenberg.
- **Our thanks to Brian Roodnick, who represented SCSBC on the FISA Board for the past 5 years.** Bill Helmus is the new SCSBC appointee to the FISA Board.
- **Both the SCSBC and CTABC Boards approved the 2005-07 Compensation Report prior to the Christmas break.** Copies of this report have been sent to all schools for circulation among school boards, employee relations committees, salary committees and school staff.

new RESOURCES

BOOKS

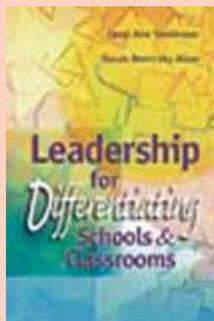
Learning Together, Leading Together: Changing Schools through Professional Learning Communities. Shirley M. Hord, Ed. New York and London: Teachers College Press, 2003. ISBN: 0807744115.

Clearly defines the professional learning community; identifies the benefits to staff and students; outlines the strategies required to launch, develop, sustain a community of professional learners that will promote student learning; examines the construction of learning communities; focuses on the important part of the principal plays in spurring change by building trust with teachers and other staff.

Leadership for Differentiating Schools and Classrooms.

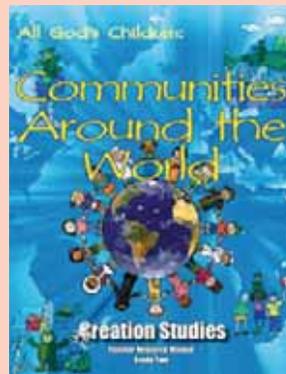
Carol Ann Tomlinson and Susan Demirsky Allan. Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD, 2000. ISBN: 0871205025.

Explores how school leaders can develop responsive, personalized, differentiated classrooms (rather than teaching as though all individuals were basically alike). Until every student is growing and successful, our own growth is unfinished. The authors show how leaders can encourage/support growth in our classrooms.



NEW TEACHER GUIDES FROM OACS

Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, 617 Garner Road E, Ancaster, ON L9G 3K9 PH: 905-648-2100 FX: 905-648-2110, EMAIL: oacs@oacs.org WEB: www.oacs.org



Creation Studies - Lori Salverda & Dorothy Vaandering

- All God's Children: Communities Around the World
- All God's Children: Countries Around the World
- All God's Children: Homes Around the World

AGRICULTURE RESOURCE

BC Agriculture in the Classroom, 1767 Angus Campbell Rd. Abbotsford, BC V3G 2M3. PH: 604-556-3088, FX: 604-556-3030. WEB: www.aitc.ca/bc

Available resources: teacher resources (library resource centre), AITC website, *Summer Institute for Educators* (one week intensive program of agriculture education), 13 regional science fair awards for outstanding projects with an application to agriculture.

- **For three weeks in November/December, Fraser Valley Christian High School hosted 10 teens from the African Children's Choir.** The choir students



made use of an empty portable and were tutored by Helen Robinson, and where possible FVCHS teachers, while in Canada as part of their *Prince of Africa* tour. It was an excellent opportunity to "be global neighbours, to learn from each other through

school connections and home stay experiences, about the rich cultural and racial diversity that God's image reflects."

- **Congratulations to Langley Christian School's Senior Boys Volleyball Team--Provincial "A" Champs!** The tournament took

place Nov. 25-27 and was hosted by our own Richmond Christian School, whose senior boys team also participated along with several other SCSBC school teams: Houston



Christian School (who placed 2nd), Cedars Christian School, Centennial Christian School, and Abbotsford Christian School. Congratulations to all on a great season!

- **Congratulations to all of the teams who participated in the Senior Girls Provincial "A" Volleyball Championships.** The tournament took

place Dec. 1-4 at Columbia Bible College and saw some great play from all 12 teams, including three SCSBC schools: Cedars Christian School, Langley Christian School, and Richmond Christian School.

- **A new season is beginning at White Rock Christian Academy.** WRCA is changing its current governance structure under the Board of Elders of White Rock Christian Fellowship to that of a separate school society. The school hopes to secure expanded/new facilities in the future.



- **Abbotsford Christian Middle School has a new home.**

Approximately 250 students and their teachers (grades 6-8) moved into their new facility on December 8.

- **Six SCSBC schools successfully underwent an External Evaluation by the Office of the Inspector of Independent Schools:** Beacon Christian (Parksville), Fraser

Valley Christian High School, Maple Ridge Christian School, Penticton Community Christian School, Valley Christian School and Vernon Christian School.

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January 2005

January 4 Schools reopen
January 17-28 Korean Educators Tour

January 28 Sunshine Coast CTABC Pro D - Gibsons, BC
January 28-30 Missionsfest

February

February 11 SCSBC Board Meeting
February 11 Island CTABC Pro D Day - Duncan

March

March 4 Lower Mainland CTABC Pro D
• Elem.- Richmond
• Mid./Sec - FVCHS
March 4 Sch. Secretaries Pro D
March 25 Good Friday
March 28 Easter Monday
March 21-29 Spring Break - 1 wk.
March 21-April 1 Spring Break - 2 wks.

April

April 6-8 SCSBC's Developing Christian Schools conference (see pg. 8)

CORRECTION NOTICE

In the November issue of The LINK, in the article "Will More Information Lead to Wisdom?", the citation for the quote from L. Newbigin should read:

p. 44, L. Newbigin, 2003. *Signs Amid the Rubble: the purposes of God in human history.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. (edited and introduced by Geoffrey Wainwright)



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Christian Schools International
and Christian Schools Canada.



Continued from Page 1 . . .

overwhelmingly. But in every culture the newcomer is still exactly that—and newcomers by definition don't yet fit in. Our basic position in the new community is one of statuslessness. We carry knowledge from past experiences—often including special knowledge of people, places and processes—but none of that knowledge has use in this new place. No one knows about our history, abilities, talents, normal responses, accomplishments, or areas of expertise. Sometimes it seems they don't care. Soon we question whether our achievements in the previous setting were as significant as we thought. People may now see us as boring or arrogant because we talk about things, places, and people they have never heard mentioned before. We feel the same way toward them because they talk about local people and events about which we know nothing. Even with an initial warm welcome, we may discover it's not as easy as we thought it would be to make close friends. Circles of relationships among our new acquaintances are already well defined, and most people aren't looking to fill a vacant spot in such a circle.

Pollock goes on to say that at this point it is important to have a good mentor to help new students adjust and become valued members of our community. It is also important for international students to remember that “we must not forget that this entry stage is a bit uncomfortable for members of our new community as well, although they may have been eagerly anticipating our arrival. Before we came, everyone's roles were clear. Relationships—whether positive or negative—were established. Life functioned without explanation. We show up, and life changes for them too. Now everything seems to need an explanation. They also have to adjust their social order at least slightly to help us find our way in.”

By establishing a “Conversation Partners Program” the school will enable the new students to find their way in and also assist the existing students to develop an awareness of a culture very different than their own and the challenges the new students face when entering a new culture. Hopefully, lasting friendships will be developed and students will gain an awareness of the diversity with which the Lord has created us.

Some other ways to promote intercultural understanding is to plan a “United Nations Day.” This day could include an opportunity for all students to share their cultural

backgrounds through a Potluck Dinner, displays of items specific to their culture and perhaps an event which would highlight traditional dress, music, dance etc.

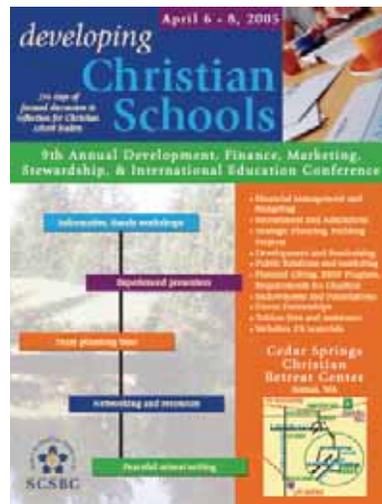
As we reach the mid-point of the school year, let us continue to encourage each other to continue to find ways to enhance our International Programs.

If you require more information regarding the “Conversation Partners Program”, please feel free to contact Marlene Bylenga, the SCSBC International Education Program Coordinator. Marlene is available to schools to provide assistance in the on-going development of International Programs. For a list of workshops and services pertinent to international education please check out our website at www.scsbc.ca/international/index.html or contact Marlene by e-mail or telephone: ieprogram@scsbc.ca, 604-533-4513 or 604-789-6472.

References

Conversation Partners. Developed by Susan Calder, International Student Liaison, St. Andrews Regional High School, Victoria, B.C.

David C. Pollock and Ruth E. VanReken. **Third Culture Kids.** Intercultural Press. 1999



developing Christian Schools

SCSBC's 9th Annual
Development,
Finance, Marketing,
Stewardship, &
International
Education Conference

April, 6 - 8, 2005
Cedar Springs Christian Retreat Center,
Sumas, WA