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## Will More Information Lead to Wisdom?

by Robert Koole, Director of Curriculum [koole@twu.ca](mailto:koole@twu.ca)



*Does every student in your school have access to a computer whenever they need one? Does every teacher use computer technology to enhance their lessons? If your answer to either question is no or maybe, you may be shortchanging the students in your school. At least that's what proponents of full technology immersion claim.*

**L**earning about and with computer technology is an expectation in schools today. However, there is a wide range in levels of access and use across subjects and grades, and there are mixed reviews about the realized educational benefits and social impacts of using computers to learn.

### Promises

A survey of literature promoting computer technology in education reveals promises of expanding student knowledge, higher test scores, increased motivation, faster learning of skills, improved global awareness, and increased problem-solving abilities. Optimism abounds: teachers have almost immediate access to information and illustrations that previously they wished they had time to locate; students have almost immediate access to worlds of information a previous generation did not even imagine. Yet for all this access to information, will the next generation be wiser? After all,

...history is a growth of good and evil side by side, a real growth of good – a real attainment of progressively higher goods, but along with this an equally real growth of evil – a growth in the power and range of evil forces. (L. Newbigin, 2003. *Signs Amid the Rubble*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans p.44)

### Cautions

We now realize that computers will not eliminate a need for teachers, displace the need to read, replace writing, or do away with a need for numeracy. In fact, computer

technology has actually increased the need for basic skills. Although computers are not “substitutes for teachers and education, they are powerful tools to support and stimulate education.” We need to “...guard against being seduced by technodrool and technolust.” (Ian Jukes and Anita Dosaj)

Principals and teachers should be cautious: as students and educators wait on “slow loading educational content pages, banner ads sometimes flash high priority messages grabbing for the attention of the waiting browser.” We need to “sift through marketing claims, the hype, and the promises to determine what and who they can trust.” (Jamie McKenzie)

Internet access does not intrinsically lead to worthwhile learning. Being “connected” will not automatically result in better teaching or increased learning.

Schools and classrooms do not improve simply because Internet connected computers sit in corners . . . Students do not automatically analyze, evaluate, and consider what they are browsing. They may snack. They may gorge. But thoughtful, discerning, and deliberate use is not a given.” (Jamie McKenzie, 2003. “Beyond bamboozlement,” *The Educational Technology Journal* 12:8)

Online lessons may or may not enhance student knowledge and understanding.

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# A Different World



by Marlene Bylenga  
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Imagine waking up one morning to a world totally different from your own. The inhabitants speak a language that is unfamiliar, and the way they interact with each other is totally different than in the world you left. Imagine the fascination, confusion, frustration and shock you would experience as you attempted to work through the maze of cultural differences in this new world.

International students know this experience first hand; even though they may have had more time to prepare for the move to their new country they are often shocked and surprised by the enormous hurdles they encounter entering into a new culture. Students and their parents may enter their new environment with a great deal of anticipation and excitement. Very quickly the newness wears off and they begin to realize the enormity of their decision to live in a new country.

One of the greatest stressors entering into a new culture is encountering values and customs which contradict your own culture of origin; for example, students from collective cultures have been taught that maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships is crucial. In some instances they may hesitate to confront others in order to avoid creating interpersonal conflicts. Students may tend to keep to themselves or choose to endure rather than confront when they experience problems. Although admirable, these unresolved issues can hinder the student's integration into school life and may hamper the cross cultural understanding that we wish to foster in our schools.

It is extremely important that schools enrolling international students appoint an International Student Coordinator who understands the challenges facing these students and their families. This coordinator can provide the necessary support and can be the link between home and school, providing resources for parents, students and teachers, and facilitating activities to promote intercultural understanding within the school community. Some practical ways in which the coordinator can assist parents, students and teachers are:

- to have important school documents (e.g. Code of Conduct) translated and available for current and prospective students and their parents;
- to facilitate relationship between the new families and existing families within the school community;
- to develop relationships with individuals who have been successful in integrating and who are able to provide valuable information regarding their specific culture;
- to build a resource base on cross-cultural issues as they pertain to learning and adjustment to a new culture for students, parents and teachers to access;
- to be a promoter of increased cross-cultural understanding in the school and its community.

*The SCSBC provides training and on-going support for International Student Coordinators through workshops, on-site visits, networking meetings and telephone/e-mail support. Mrs. Bylenga is available to boards/committees to answer any questions regarding the implementation of International Student Programs, and can also provide support for the selection of an International Student Coordinator.*

## Integrating Technology: Teaching Suggestions

Assist young people to be critical interpreters of messages portrayed by mass media/the internet: who created this message and why?

1. what techniques are being used to attract my attention?
2. what lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented?
3. how might different people understand this message differently?
4. what is omitted from this message? (E. Thoman, quoted by S. Powers, C. Rafferty, and B. Eib in "The role of technology for learning in the reinvented middle school" in T. S. Dickinson, ed., 2001. *Reinventing the middle school.* )

Develop school websites that:

1. introduce visitors to the school -its mission, character, programs, and overall spirit;
2. offer an opportunity to publish student works that exemplify biblical principals/reflect the school's vision;
3. point to excellent information on the web, especially those related to its own educational programs;
4. provide locally collected information on curriculum related topics (adapted from [www.fno.org/mar97/why.html](http://www.fno.org/mar97/why.html))

Prepare an Education Plan for Using Technology:

1. Articulate your vision of learning.
2. Outline how you will use technology to support your vision of learning.
3. Develop supportive human resources (professional learning) & technology resources (network, hardware, software, and facilities).

4. Understand the broader context (school/larger community).
5. Develop connections (support of/ links with school/community)
6. Assess on-going implementation and refine education plan. ([www.ncrtec.org/capacity/guidewww/gqhome.htm](http://www.ncrtec.org/capacity/guidewww/gqhome.htm))

Incorporate digital lessons that challenge thinking/increase student engagement to enhance classroom curriculum. For example, "Five types of slam dunk digital lessons"

1. rich site/essential question
2. the dramatic image
3. the database
4. the provocative article/poem/text
5. the persuasive image (Jamie McKenzie, 2004 *The Educational Technology Journal* 13:9 [www.fno.org/sum04/fivekinds.html](http://www.fno.org/sum04/fivekinds.html))

Develop discerning use, exercise good judgment by strategies such as:

1. focusing – keeping an eye on philosophical commitments/ program purposes;
2. investigating – looking past the surface claims to find out what really happens when the tools are installed/implemented;
3. debunking – stripping off the hype, the marketing claims/excessive promises;
4. inventing and evaluating locally – engaging in the development and testing of innovations to develop first hand knowledge of what works and what doesn't;
5. delaying – slow down the purchase and installation process in order to learn from the mistakes of others. (Jamie McKenzie, 2002 "Prospecting for digital riches" [www.fno.org/mar02/covmar.html](http://www.fno.org/mar02/covmar.html))

# Your Weekly Newsletters . . .



## Are they getting to your readers?

by Gerry Ebbers, Financial Stewardship & Development  
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*Principals and community relations committee members struggle with the question of how best to communicate news to parents. Let's take a look at what schools are doing, how effective it is, and what best practices should be considered.*

Weekly newsletters (not to be confused with the quarterly PR piece that goes to the school's larger mailing list) are sent out by most principals, especially at the elementary level, to keep parents informed about the myriad details of the week's activities: everything from what field trips parents need to prepare for to reminders about parent-teacher interviews.

By and large, newsletters to elementary parents are read. Parents recognize that they have a responsibility to be informed if for no other reason than that they do not want to have a teacher or the principal call them on the carpet for not having done their "homework." Also, these newsletters get home to the parents because the younger children still want their parents to be informed. In fact, most schools send the newsletter home with the youngest child in each family (delivery rates are higher, the lower the grade level).

But what about the middle and high school grades? Are newsletters getting home? By and large, the consensus is that they are not. This causes a lot of problems for schools, and schools are looking at alternative ways of informing parents.

Some schools are putting their newsletters on the school website. That works—providing parents have been trained to check the website regularly. Even if they know that information is available on the website, they are not likely to check it unless they are looking for something specific. And that's not good enough for a school.

A mass emailing of information to parents might work, but most of us are so inundated with emails that we dread opening the mailbox. When we do, the first thing most of us do is delete all the unsolicited mail, which often includes the school newsletter. Schools have found that mass emailings are most effective for emergencies only: the more they are used, the less effective they become.

So what's left? Surprisingly, schools are going back to 'snail' mail, especially at the high school level. If a student is

disinclined to deliver your newsletter, giving it to him or her to take home is a bad option. With regular mail, home delivery is more likely and there is the chance that someone else—like a parent—may get to the mailbox before the student does.

If your school is looking for the greatest likelihood that your newsletters will reach their intended audience, consider the following:

- Send the newsletter once a month, twice at most, but not weekly.
- Repeat information but not so often that parents decide there is nothing new anyway so 'why bother to read the newsletter'.
- Make the newsletter attractive. Include some pictures; some interesting, even funny, short blurbs. Color is not necessary, but clear black and white copies are possible on most school copiers.
- Highlight the information that you most want to get read. Use bullets, not paragraphs. Be clear about deadlines and protocols for how you want parents to respond. Prioritize parent's required responses.
- Summarize the important points on the top of the first page and on the last so that you connect with the front-to-back and back-to-front readers.

**Use whatever techniques you can to get people looking forward to receiving and reading the next newsletter.**

- Use whatever techniques you can to get people looking forward to receiving and reading the next newsletter. Trivia, 'identify the person in the photo' contests, jokes, cartoons, funny things said in class or on a test. One of my high school students once wrote about 'the barbarians raping the villages and pillaging the women.' He's now a parent in an SCSBC school; I'm waiting to see if he reads this and contacts me. I'm not placing any bets, mind you.



# RE-EXAMINING *the* SCSBC Leadership

*“Flatter me, and I may not believe you. Criticize me, and I may not ignore me, and I may not forgive you. Encourage me, and I will not.”*  
- William

One of the most important tasks of a school board is to assess the leadership it has appointed. If the leadership is working well, likely the whole school is also working well. A very effective way for a board to make that determination is to involve a team of people with recognized leadership competencies who are external to the school. A good evaluation by recognized leaders addressing questions of Christian leadership and educational excellence does much to answer the questions a school board should ask, and recommendations from such leaders will greatly assist those responsible for the school. Our current SCSBC Leadership Review process is premised on such a working model.

For many years, this Leadership Review process has helped SCSBC school boards evaluate their school's leadership. Recently, a group of experienced SCSBC administrators came together to revisit this current practice, with an intent to affirm what's good about the present SCSBC Leadership Review process and tweak/change what may need improving.

The SCSBC currently conducts several types of external evaluations for schools, namely:

- Leadership Reviews (principals and admin. teams);
- Curriculum and Program Reviews;
- Financial Stewardship and Development Reviews, and;
- Administrative Structural Reviews (system reviews).

Given the variety of Reviews available, it was deemed important to reconsider how each type of evaluation interfaces with the others and how to avoid both the overlap and gaps that may occur with each type of Review.

Taking into account several other Leadership Evaluation models in use within the Christian school community, it

was felt that our SCSBC Leadership Review Model could be strengthened by:

- providing the board and administrative team a more extensive self-evaluation component prior to an external team on-site visit.
- allowing the board and administrative team some choice and flexibility in which leadership areas they would want the SCSBC Leadership Review to focus on. Depending on need and circumstance, these could include such areas as administration; governance structure; philosophy, mission and goals; curriculum and program; financial management; or public relations.
- revising the current questionnaires used. Feedback indicated that questionnaires are too long, cumbersome and redundant.
- encouraging the development of a follow-up school implementation plan, based on the findings and recommendations of the SCSBC Leadership Review.

**“What if you train them and they leave? What if you train them and they stay?”**

Schools scheduled for a Leadership Review during the 2004-05 school year will notice a gradual transition to this revised Leadership Review model. Questionnaires are now being re-written, a board and administration self-evaluation component is being developed, and feedback on these changes will be incorporated into future Leadership Reviews.

Many elements of the current SCSBC Leadership Review process will be retained: the SCSBC will continue to appoint an external team of people with recognized experience in the areas of school leadership that the school chooses to focus on; the Review will adhere to guidelines affirming excellent practice and make recommendations in areas that would benefit from strengthening/new initiatives; the appointment of a local community representative to serve as adjunct to the Review team will remain; and a final report will be

# Review Process

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*like you.  
forget you.”  
Arthur Ward*

written that will attempt to address both the interests and concerns of the board in overseeing the mission of the school. The report will make recommendations for the members of the administrative team who are immediately responsible for any adjustments in policy and practice.

The SCSBC will continue to oversee the review process, appoint the review team, shape the school self-evaluation and data gathering process, coordinate the campus visit (typically 1-3 days), shape recommendations and share these recommendations with the board and members of the school's leadership team.

Much has been written about “investing” in school leadership. The question has even been raised by some of our larger school boards, “What if we train a leader and they leave for another school?” John Maxwell put

**a leader and  
if you don't train  
?”**

**—John Maxwell**

that question in perspective when he asked, “What if you don't train them and they stay?” Given the two choices, I trust boards are investing in their leaders. As Madjidi stated, “We need leaders who empower people and create other leaders. It is no longer

good enough for a leader to make sure that everybody has something to do and is producing.”

Maxwell claims that “one of the greatest gifts a leader can give others is to lift them up to a higher ground”. He goes on to state that “the problem with too many people in leadership positions is that they want to lift themselves up above the people.” What is your board chair's/principal's agenda: to lift up him/herself or to lift up your school, staff, board members, students, parents, and support community? “Leaders who fail to lift others in the long run, fail to lift themselves.” (John Maxwell)

Boards are encouraged to adopt and implement a Leadership Review Policy for their own school. It may be one of the most important policies they oversee.

**It isn't *what* you find,  
it's *what* you do  
with what you find.**

*Phillip B. Crosby*

By now every school has received or has web access to last year's FSA results. What has happened with the results in your school? Have they been filed away since they apply to last year?

Recognize that the FSA is a snapshot assessment that has significant limitations. At the same time, realize that it has value for assessing aspects of your program.

Why not use the information as a diagnostic assessment to assist the grade 5 and grade 8 teachers in developing their understanding of the reading, writing, and numeracy abilities of the students they have in their classes this year? Are the results being used by grade 4 and 7 teachers to help refine their educational programs?

Remember not to be distracted by a narrow focus on the score! Instead, use the results as a vehicle to talk with colleagues and parents about the qualitative characteristics of learning to read and write and numerate. On the basis of your school's mission, develop shared expectations for reading, writing, and numeracy.

## Reviewing Results

1. what are the results for each level and category?
2. what are the particular needs or strengths of this group of students? (who are now in the next grade)
3. within each category what are areas of strength? weakness?
4. given these results, what goals should we set for the grade 4 and 5 program and for the grade 7 and 8 program?
5. is there anything in the results that indicates you need to look at the grade 2-3 program?

Above all, be honest with your interpretation. Celebrate the strengths of your students. Address areas of apparent weakness.

- R. Koole

*“The primary purpose of FSA is to help the schools, school planning councils, school districts and the province evaluate how well reading, writing, and numeracy are being addressed and make plans for improvement. The secondary purpose is to provide individual student information.*

*FSA is intended to measure the basic reading, writing, and numeracy skills over school years to date, not just skills acquired in a single grade or course.”*

BC Ministry of Education [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/)

# Community News

- **The Christian Schools Canada (CSC) Conference was a big hit in Calgary.** Over 50 SCSBC principals, assistant principals and curriculum leaders joined administrators from the Prairie Association of Christian Schools (PACS) and the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) in Calgary for the CSC Leadership conference. This



historic conference saw over 125 Canadian Christian school administrators/board members come together for three days of learning and sharing. The next conference is planned for Ontario in September 2006.

- **The new John Knox Christian Middle School facility opened this September.**



Located at 7650 Sapperton Avenue in Burnaby (Sapperton & Holmes), the new middle campus facility currently houses grades 5-7 and can accommodate 250 students.

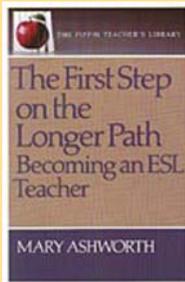
In September of 2005, John Knox Middle School will be sharing this facility with *Discovery Christian High School*.

## new RESOURCES

### BOOKS

***The First Step on the Longer Path: Becoming an ESL Teacher.*** Mary Ashworth. Toronto: Pippin Publishing, 1992. ISBN: 0-88751-054-X.

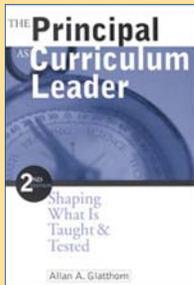
Plenty of practical ideas for helping children who don't speak English.



***The Principal as Curriculum Leader: Shaping What is Taught and Tested,***

2nd Ed. Allan A. Glatthorn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2000. ISBN: 0761975578.

Helps you discover how working with teachers and districts can result in more meaningful curriculum for classrooms—and raise the level of learning and teaching in your school.



***Teachers Wanted: Attracting and Retaining Good Teachers.*** Daniel A. Heller. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2004. ISBN: 0-87120-881-4.

Practical insights into the changes that are essential to building a dynamic, intellectually challenging school environment that will attract and keep the most highly qualified teachers.

### NEW TEACHER/PROGRAM 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

- *Creation Studies: Perspective and Framework*
- *One Body, Many Parts: Our Local Community*
- *One Body, Many Parts: Our Home and School Communities*
- *One Body, Many Parts: Our Historical Community*
- *God Keep Our Land: Canadian Stories*
- *God Keep Our Land: Canadian Symbols and Celebrations*
- *God Keep Our Land: Canadian Citizenship*

### SCIENCE FIELD TRIP RESOURCE

***The Bug Lab Invertebrate Zoo,***  
616 Columbia St. New Westminster.  
PH: 604-523-2847

Interactive presentations for Kindergarten through Grade 12: Arachnids, Insects, Beetles, Preying Mantids.



- **Enrolments have been tabulated as of September 30th:** 14 school communities saw an increase in students while 19 communities saw a decrease in students. Overall enrolment in the 43 SCSBC schools is down by 153 FTE's. The single greatest contributing factor is that many schools graduated a larger grade twelve class than their incoming Kindergarten class (reflecting a similar trend among BC's public schools). *Powell River Christian School realized the largest percentage gain growing from 21 to 37 students!*



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- **Bulkley Valley Christian Elementary and Langley Christian Elementary are the latest in a growing list of SCSBC schools adding pre-school programs to their curriculum.** Opportunity to build relationships with pre-school families a year earlier has resulted in increased enrolment in several Kindergarten programs, despite the fact that there are fewer school aged students in BC.



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- **Discovery Christian High School is advertising for a high school principal.** The DCSH council hopes to appoint their inaugural principal early in the Spring of 2005.

- **Penticton Christian Secondary (a small e-school program) is in the process of amalgamating with Penticton Community Christian School.** Karl Boehmer is principal of both school programs.



- **Vernon Christian School added grade 11 to their high school program.** They plan to graduate their first grade 12 class in June 2006.
- **The SCSBC Educational Developments Society (charitable arm of the SCSBC) gratefully received a gift of \$18,000 from Maranatha Christian Academy.** The SCSBC is deeply thankful for the generous gift, yet saddened as it acknowledges that this gift was precipitated by the closure of the school some three years ago and the recent decision by the school's society to disperse the remaining assets according to their Society's Constitution. We remain thankful for Maranatha's years of effective ministry in the Hudson's Hope community.

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- **Haney-Pitt Meadows Christian School has a new name and a new logo!** Starting this year, look for them as *Maple Ridge Christian School*.



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## November

November 3	Curriculum - Middle Team meeting
November 11 (Thursday)	Remembrance Day
November 12	Charitable Tax Receiving Seminar; Business Managers Networking Meeting
November 12	SCSBC Board Meeting
November 13	5th Annual Leadership Conference for Board Members, Committee Members and Administrative Teams; SCSBC AGM

## December

December 17	Schools close for Christmas
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## January 2005

January 4	Schools reopen
January 28	Sunshine Coast CTABC Pro D - Gibsons, BC
January 28-30	Missionsfest



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and Christian Schools Canada.



## Continued from Page 1 . . .

Furthermore, as with any other resource, teachers will need to help students uncover the lesson's implicit values. For example, a lesson may suggest that students

"take a virtual tour of a region and collect a whole bunch of 'stuff' about the towns and people they might encounter along the way. Sadly, the sources they suggest students use will provide them with a tourist office view of life in those towns, a Disneyfied image of those regions and a distorted collection of facts that focus on entertainment, recreation, shopping and attractions.... an approach to learning that falls far short of learning the truth of the communities being studied." (Jamie McKenzie, 2004. "Stuffing technology into the curriculum," *The Educational Technology Journal* 13:8)

It is important to keep in mind that access to more and more information faster and faster

"... does not make one a better informed, or smarter, person. There is as much misinformation on the web, or outdated information, as there is useful information...having children learn that the world and its people are easily explored through computer use is simplistic and dangerous because it must, to have mass appeal and be accessible to school children, be marketable. This often means downplaying or ignoring sharp cultural, religious, and historical differences among people." (Patrick Farenga, 2003. "The importance of computers does not compute." [www.creatinglearningcommunities.org/book/internet/farenga1.htm](http://www.creatinglearningcommunities.org/book/internet/farenga1.htm))

Finally, we need to remember that "...for all their benefits, cyber-technologies also provide new ways for us to act foolishly. They do not fundamentally improve human nature. Instead, they give people new means of being who they already are – confused creatures with mixed motives and a severely limited capacity to predict the future. (Q. Schultze, 2002. *Habits of the High-Tech Heart*. p. 94)

### Guideposts

A biblical worldview leads us to "... develop technology in such a way that the blessings, riches, and potentials God has put in creation are allowed to flower. We are called to develop technology [so] that the creativity and joy for which God created men and women can exist in abundance, the riches of the world can be uncovered and utilized, and the plant and animal worlds can be perceived and used for what they are and for what God intends them to be."

Our technological activity needs to show respect for the various entities in God's creation by developing and using

them as God intends – i.e for God's glory and human flourishing. (p.68-69 S. Monsma, ed., 1986. *Responsible technology: a Christian perspective*)

The benefits of employing computer technology depend on how we understand, develop, and use it in the service of biblical principles of life. Today's pace of life pressures us to feel that "doing things quickly and effectively is more important than doing them carefully, thoughtfully, and ethically." As we teach and learn we need to place as much emphasis on the quality of our character as we do on technological information. (Schultze)

If computer technology is to increase learning, we need to learn to discriminate between information and wisdom, and between skill and virtue. Principals and teachers need to engage students in virtue-nurturing practices as much as if not more than focusing on teaching skills and implementing risk-reducing policies. A consequence of not doing so is "...an information explosion that becomes a plague of misinformation – endless volleys of nonsense, folly, and rumor masquerading as knowledge, wisdom, and even truth." It is essential, therefore that principals and teachers help students develop "...the capacity to recognize what is intrinsically good and right, what is worth knowing and remembering, and how to use it wisely, if at all." Q. Schultze, 2002. *Habits of the High-Tech Heart*.

### **Resources with Biblical Perspective for Information Technology**

- C. Adams, 1995. "Transcending technophilia & technophobia," *Christian Educators Journal* 35:1 (October) p. 2-3
- V. House, 1997. "In the beginning was information" *Pro Rege* XXV:4 (June) p.19-26.
- S. V. Monsma, ed., 1986. *Responsible technology: a Christian perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Q. Schultze, 2002. *Habits of the high-tech heart: living virtuously in the information age*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- E. Schuurman, 1995. *Perspectives on technology and culture*. tr. J. H. Kok. Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press.
- *Using Computers to Learn K - 8, 2nd Edition*. Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, 1999. [www.oacs.org](http://www.oacs.org)
- *Learning with the Internet: a resource for teaching and learning in Christian schools*. Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, 2000. [www.oacs.org](http://www.oacs.org)

**See *Integrating Technology: Teaching Suggestions*, on page 2 of this issue of The LINK.**