

Chairman's Report

Arie Veenendaal

Joy and Praise

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;

Come before Him with joyful songs. Psalm 100: 1,2

For unto us a child is born,

To us a son is given,

and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9: 6

It is again that time of year when we pay special attention to the birth of our Savior. The two scripture passages quoted above speak to both praise and the reason for our praise. Christ has been born! Shout for joy! It is both good and necessary for us believers to reflect on our sins and our sinful condition, but do we spend enough time focusing on praising our God for what He has done among us? Let us spend some extra time this holiday season focusing our attention on that word "PRAISE!" Our sins have been dealt with. God, through Jesus Christ, has taken care of all of them. May our lives and our homes be overflowing with praise as we remember the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.

On behalf of the school board, it is our wish that you may experience Joy and Praise to God as you ring out the Old and usher in the New Year.

Ongoing board matters

It already seems so long ago that that we held our Annual School meeting. At that meeting an open letter was read regarding the Sports Policy. Whether the concern came to the floor in the form of an open letter, as opposed to simply a question/comment from the floor, is deemed immaterial by the board. A member from the society has a concern and as such has the right to bring that to the attention of the membership at the Annual Meeting! After all, the purpose of having such a meeting is that it gives members opportunity to bring forward their concerns or appreciations. Also, debate on matters that involve the education of our children can be of real benefit whether you agree or disagree with a person's point of view. If discussion and debate is done in a brotherly manner, then we should all come out

stronger at the end of the discussion and debate. The board will seek further input from the society members who wish to as yet submit their thoughts and we will need to consult with the administration of DCS, as well as those persons most closely involved with the sports programs, for their input. We have placed this whole issue in the "important" – "but not urgent" category as we need some time to seek input, identify the issues and let our thoughts percolate. The Sports Policy, as well as all of our other policies, will be dealt with and input will be sought from the membership where applicable.

Your board has also been in discussions lately to see if and how we can work more closely with Immanuel Christian School in Winnipeg in certain areas? Elsewhere in this Beacon you will find a report on a meeting that took place last Saturday, November 26. The vision committee has still been at work dealing with the various challenges as they aim to have a final report ready for the board in the near future. December and January are again the months when teacher contracts will be dealt with. It is a nice opportunity as well when the board members can meet face to face with the staff to discuss the various matters surrounding their employment.

Farewell

The month of December is the last month for Miranda Veenendaal as educator of DCS. Thank you Miranda for all the teaching and love that you have given to your students and your colleagues over the years. We wish you God's blessings as you look forward (with John) to a new addition to your family.

This past week the board was informed that Michael and Sigrid Bauer have decided to take some of their children out of DCS to fulfill their desire to have them home-schooled. We wish them well in this endeavor. The children will be missed by the staff and their classmates. We hope that your departure from school will not mean that you feel unwelcome to any of our school functions and concerts moving forward.

Observations

One of the real highlights of being allowed to serve on the school board is the board visit to the school. This past month it was the chairman and the vice-chairman's privilege to visit all of the teaching staff as well as the special needs coordinator together with some of the teaching assistants. If anyone has questions as to the work of the Holy Spirit then take a visit to DCS. Remember that our starting point in life is that we "hate God and the neighbor". Unless we are guided by the Spirit this condition remains with us! What a blessing to see the work of the dedicated staff members and the enthusiastic faces of the students. In a broken and lost world God has allowed His light to shine among us. From the kindergarten room to the grade 12 World views class, His name is praised! Thank you as well to all of the parents who send their children out of the door in the morning prepared for a day of learning and fellowship. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Prayer

As always, remember the school and the staff and the board in your prayers. May our life indeed be a "Life of Praise" as we thank God for not giving up on us!

ICS / DCS Combined Board Meeting

How can Immanuel Christian School and Dufferin Christian School better benefit from our co-existence?

This question has been the topic of discussion among the board members of both schools. No doubt, on many levels, the two schools have benefited from each other. Each year, combined staff meetings etc. have proven beneficial, but still the question remains, 'Are we utilizing each others combined opportunities to the fullest?' Last week, the administration of both schools, together with the representatives of ICS and DCS school boards met for a day of professional development and exploration. The following two reports will give you a flavour of the discussions. No decisions have been made in this regard but the opportunities that were uncovered offer exciting possibilities.

Board Governance/Responsibilities and Maintaining Effective Board Meetings.

Anton Borst – Treasurer of the DCS School Board

On Saturday November 26, 2011 members of the DCS school board and the administration team braved the icy roads to meet with their colleagues from Winnipeg at ICS. The purpose of such a venture, was to attend a seminar led by John Doornbos on 'Being Incorporated' and on 'Efficient Meetings for Maximum Effectiveness'. I will provide you with a very abbreviated version of what we learned.

In the first part of the morning we reviewed what it means to be incorporated as a school society and why. It gave some insight into what responsibilities directors have in view of the Manitoba Corporations Act. The reason why we are incorporated is fairly simple, as the provincial government has made it clear that for independent schools to receive government funding, they have to be incorporated. It also provides continuity and stability for the organization, even though the membership may change over time. As to what it means to school board members and directors, the list of responsibilities seems fairly lengthy, but can be summarized in a few short sentences. The directors have a fiduciary (new word for me too) responsibility toward the corporation. In other words, we can understand the directors are holding the corporation in trust. Therefore, directors should always act in the best interest of the corporation exercising due care and diligence. The presentation then went on to detail what some of the duties entailed.

The second morning session was on 'Efficient Meetings for Maximum Effectiveness'. It covered such items as: how should a board member come to the meeting, the role and rights of the Chairperson, what should be on the agenda, what should be in, and the timing of the pre-meeting package, discussion guidelines, and the characteristics of an effective and an ineffective director. Also covered, was the decision making process, formal and informal votes, how to deal with motions, and what the board members' responsibilities are. This is just a snapshot of the many items we received useful information on. I will quickly mention a few interesting thoughts that were shared with us. One topic of note was on being an effective director. An effective director has reviewed the documents before the meeting and has done his homework. He attends all meetings and participates in discussions, and when he is opposed to a certain proposal he offers a better alternative. On the other hand an ineffective director is "A

victim of servitude rather than an example of servant-hood". In other words, he is a director, but sees his position as a burden rather than as an opportunity to serve the Lord and his neighbour, and he allows this attitude to reflect in his work.

There was much other useful information shared with the boards by John Doornbos, and we had an enjoyable educational morning together.

How can we better benefit from our co-existence ?

Tessa Mostert – Secretary of the ICS School Board

An enthusiastic group of board members and administrators met for the afternoon brainstorming session on ways in which we could be of assistance to one another. We approached our discussions with the understanding that no idea was a bad one, and that we were not there to discuss the relative merits of one idea over another – just put the ideas on the table. Quite frankly, there were a lot of them! I'm sure that our respective memberships have more ideas, and we would love for you to contact a board member and let them know what yours are.

Continued joint professional development for boards, communication between board members in the same positions, policy sharing, the use of technology and distance education, continued joint professional development for staff and the impact this has on curriculum development and teaching, and WOW, so much more was explored.

Ideas are great, meeting together is always nice, but where do we go from here? How do we make this meaningful and useful for all of us? We certainly have much to offer each other! Building on our morning session concerning the fiduciary responsibilities that we owe our societies, we are looking forward to finding real ways in which we can assist each other as we fulfill our mandate of assisting the parents in the education of these covenant children.

Treasurer's Report

Anton Borst

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1-9:13

Hello All,

We are approaching the time of year again where we pay special attention to the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is easy to be busy with our many activities especially at this time of year and we can lose sight of what we are actually celebrating. Let us be on guard that we do not follow the rest of modern society in this direction.

From the treasurer's desk a very brief update. We are headed into the month of December. This is the last month of yet another year and we are approaching another year end contribution deadline. The last day you can send in your contributions for 2011 will be Sunday, **January 1, 2012**. If you are unsure or have lost track of what you have contributed for 2011 you can call me at 436-2032 or send me an email at treasurer@dufferinchristian.ca You may also call our bookkeeper Sarah Visscher at 828-3267. Please double check that you are all up to date.

Something I was remiss in doing at the Annual Meeting is thanking our Bookkeeper Sarah Visscher for all the work she has done again this year. So Thank you Sarah for all your help and work you do for the school.

To all the school society members, supporters, staff and students of DCS -- Have a blessed Christmas and New Year.

Anton Borst.

Principal's Report

Andy Huisman

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform and longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:1, 2 (DCS Theme Text)

As I sit behind my desk writing this report, with my office door open, I can hear the beautiful sounds of music floating through the halls. Many times, it will be the singing of opening devotions but at other times of the day, you can hear the various choirs in preparation of the upcoming Christmas concert. What a blessing when children of all ages, use their voices to praise the Lord. There are so many daily occurrences that we could and should be thankful for. Sometimes we really just need to slow down and appreciate what truly takes place, not by accident, but by God's plan – his story of salvation. DCS is a vibrant place, a place where the Word of God is central to daily life. I have highlighted the mission statement before and I will do so once again - *"For living a life of Christian Discipleship in contemporary society."* Wow! That is a huge task, and not one that we can say we do of our own strength. This can only be accomplished through God's grace and love for us. When you start to look at that statement, you can see that it is talking about the intersections of faith and life. Sometimes, we may think that these intersections have to be huge. But in reality, they are not always. Sometimes they are the quiet, small things that most people may not even notice. I would like to take a bit of space and share some of the daily celebrations of these intersections that occur at DCS.

- Thanks to the moms (and dads) who volunteer in school and lend a helping hand whenever it is needed. So many of our events need extra help and it is a blessing when parents are willing to jump in and get the work done. From Kindergarten helpers to field trip drivers and supervisors to the 'soup – makers', you are all greatly appreciated!
- Thanks to the librarians who give so much of their time to keep the library a vibrant learning place within the school. Countless hours go into cataloguing resources, leveling books to make it easier for the children to pick books at their reading level.
- Thanks to the various committee members and the School Board members who spend immense amounts of time working for the benefit of the children and the school.
- Thanks to all those who substitute in DCS. Your ability to drop things at a moment's notice, to take over for an absent staff member is greatly appreciated.

- Thanks to the volunteer coaches who spend their time providing guidance and encouragement for the various school athletes.
- Thanks to SALT and the Elementary Student Council for finding ways in which to make DCS a great school! Your hard work in providing for the needs of COL , goats in Africa, Christmas shoe boxes for needy children around the world as well as for encouraging donations to the Local food bank is greatly appreciated.
- Thanks to all those who call and ask, “*What can I do to help?*”
- Thanks to the older students of the school who continually help the younger ones. There are numerous examples of this that I witness on a daily basis. What a blessing when we can have a Kindergarten to grade 12 school. It truly becomes a family.
- Thanks to the entire staff for their dedication and love and a strong desire to see children succeed.
- Thanks to all of you as parents and supporters who continually keep the work of DCS in your prayers.

All of these and many more incidents just go to show how truly blessed we are, in many small ways, every day. Let us give thanks to God, for it is only through His care and love for us that we can start everyday anew. It is on Him that we rely on for the strength to do this wonderful task – educating children. Let us celebrate that gift.

Other News

Elementary Christmas Program

The elementary school is busy finalizing the program that they hope to present on Thursday, December 22. The program is called “*The Story of Salvation*” and it is filled with many beautiful scripture references and songs. We look forward to seeing many in attendance at this concert. The choirs also plan to perform some of the songs at various locations in the community. They have already visited Cornerstone and had a thoroughly enjoyable time there. On December 15th, the grade 1-3 choir will be at Parkview Manor and on December 20th the 4-6 choir will be at the Boyne Lodge.

Band Concert

As this is the year in which we have both a Junior Band and a Senior Band, they will not be performing at the concert on December 22nd. They will be having their own concert evening in January. We will keep you posted as to the exact date when details are worked out.

High School Exams

As we look forward to the month of January, please take note that the first semester courses will be coming to an end. The grade 12 Provincial English exam is scheduled for January 10 – 13 while the Provincial A-Math exam is scheduled for January 25 – 26. The remainder of the high school exams will take place from January 30th – February 2nd.

The Mouse Trap

The play by Agatha Christie, *The Mouse Trap*, is currently being rehearsed by a number of the Senior High Drama Club. It is the plan to perform this production at the Carman Collegiate Theater on Friday, February 24th and Saturday, February 25th. As the time draws closer, check for further details in the various school publications or on the website.

As I come to the end of this report I wish that you all may have the peace for which Christ came to earth and a blessed new year. My hope is that all will have a restful break and be invigorated to resume classes in the New Year.

Have a blessed Sunday.

CRTA West Convention

"Inclusive Practices Reaching ALL Learners."

My Reflections: Yolanda Grant

What is Inclusion? **"The act of including, or the state of being included"**. Inclusion in school is not just a physical location. It is not the same for everyone. We are not inviting anyone in, they are already there. They are in the same group, already together. God wants that child, from those parents, to be in that class, with those students. We need to consider the specific needs of each student with exceptionalities and include them in the lesson plan. EVERY student has something they excel in, we need to find and elaborate on that "something". We take them from where they are at and move ahead, same concept for all, multiple ways.

There are seven pillars of inclusion:

1. developing a positive attitude
2. supportive policy and leadership
3. school and classroom processes grounded in research based practice
4. flexible curriculum and teaching
5. community involvement
6. meaningful reflection
7. necessary training and resources

Pillars all uphold one thing – they work together.

"TO GO FAST, WALK ALONE, TO GO FAR, WALK TOGETHER."

The gifts we see among the children in our schools are given for the purpose of building and strengthening the Body of Christ. Whether the student is on one end, with a

disability, or on the other end, being gifted, the LORD has given this as a GIFT and it is our task to discover and build upon the unique talents given to each student.

SAGE 2011 Reports

(Special Area Group of Educators)

Tim VanderHooft

Have ever used G.P.S. to search for snowy owl excrement? I have. Can you say that you have re-constructed the skeletal systems of small birds and rodents after they have passed through the digestive system of a bird of prey? I can. Do you know how to create a compound for fossil creation out of recycled coffee grounds? I do. Have you ever used a \$7,600.00 dissecting microscope to look at the wonders of marsh insects? I have. Do you know how to survive in the wilderness using only cattails as a food and water supply? I *think* I do. Did you know that Manitoba's landscape is 41% wetlands and that it has the most wetland area of all provinces? You do now. Can you differentiate between a marsh, a bog, a swamp, and a fen? Don't worry, I'm still working on that too.

For me, this year's S.A.G.E. conference was a great experience. I attended a session entitled *World of Wetlands* organized by the Science Teachers' Association of Manitoba. It was held at Oak Hammock Marsh and was conducted primarily outdoors.

Wow. It was a very full day. In the beauty of God's creation, I had the opportunity to explore 3 of the 4 grade six science units. In addition, since it was a K-6 workshop, I had the opportunity to re-visit some of the other science units I've taught in the past and bring back suggestions for my colleagues. While connecting with teachers from all over the province who teach similar grades, I was able to glean all sorts of wonderful strategies and suggestions for teaching science in interesting ways. In all respects, it was a day well spent!

“The Difference a Team can Make for The Struggling Learner and You”

Jane Stad

For this years SAGE conference I chose to attend a workshop entitled "The Difference a Team can make for the Struggling Learner and You" by Dr. Mark Cooper. He stressed the importance

of a positive attitude towards learning. Dr Cooper himself had learning disabilities as a child and spoke passionately about his subject. He said "In my dream, children with learning challenges move mountains with motivation; taste defeat without quitting; replace thoughts of 'I can't' with 'I can'; utilize their resources and take more risks." He stressed the importance of seeing the struggling learner as a gift not a project. He emphasized a team approach with everyone involved in the struggling learner's life to be on board. One thing that I really liked was his idea that a learning disability doesn't have to be a secret but can be seen as a challenge. Dr. Mark referred to the following mental messages:

- ❖ How fast you develop doesn't determine how far you can succeed.
- ❖ It doesn't take being at the top of your class to be successful.
- ❖ I am as good as "we" are.
- ❖ You can't fail, if you don't quit.
- ❖ Make willpower a #1 priority.
- ❖ Don't cap children's capabilities by the label, "overachievement."
- ❖ Understanding requires no patience.
- ❖ Beware: Shining too much light on the peaks also illuminates the valleys.
- ❖ Never forget the "ability" in disability.
- ❖ Separate the performer from the performance.
- ❖ Treat time as your friend rather than your foe.
- ❖ You have more to prove to yourself than to others.
- ❖ Learn to embrace the good, the bad, and the ugly.
- ❖ Learn to embrace the good, the bad, and the ugly.

For more information on this thought provoking speech check out Mark Cooper's book "Bound and Determined to Help Children with Learning Disabilities Succeed".

The Difference a Team Can Make for the Struggling Learner and You

By Lisa Bergsma

Heading to a conference or seminar, I always experience some trepidation. I wonder if the title will live up to the message. This October we set off for Winnipeg to listen to a Dr. Mark Cooper. His seminar was titled "The Difference a Team Can Make..." and it intrigued me because at DCS we really strive to work as a team to help all of our learners. So would we learn anything new? Would we gain new insights or skills?

When Dr. Cooper walked to the front of the room and started speaking, he got my attention. He spoke with a southern drawl, and accents are always interesting, and told us he had a secret. Well, the secret was never revealed, but everything else he spoke about was worth listening to. What stood out for me was his honesty and candour. He was very open about his struggles as a learner. He had an extremely difficult time as a student, but here he was now a doctor with many other "extra letters" behind his name. Also he was a parent of a struggling student and shared the feelings of frustration and hopelessness experienced. His

passion for helping others with learning challenges was evident as was his faith. He had been a teacher for many years, spanning a kindergarten class in a “ghetto” to now educating university students.

His passion was shared with us. He really spoke well of how every learner is in need of a support system. Dr. Cooper’s inspiration and support came from his mother. So parents do not underestimate your influence on your child’s education. You have an incredible opportunity to encourage and challenge and be a positive influence. He also told us about the educators who worked and still work with him. He talked about how important it is for parents and teachers to combine forces so to speak in order to help children succeed. So did he tell us many new things about giving support or working as a team? No, not really. I do enjoy how the staff at DCS already strives to work as a team for all of our students. But it was encouraging to hear someone else connect faith, parents, and educators as the driving force behind learning. It was encouraging to see a student who struggled so much persevere to enjoy success. It was encouraging to spend the day with my colleagues and be reminded that we have one of the most difficult, exhausting, frustrating, enjoyable, energizing, rewarding jobs.

SAGE - The Difference a Team Can Make For The Struggling Learner and You.

Submitted by Alice Linde

These are some memorable and thought-provoking quotations by Dr. Mark Cooper, Ph.D.,LPC from his presentation The Difference a Team Can Make For The Struggling Learner and You.

- “Create thoughts of hopefulness in your students.”
- “Keep trying with less hurry and less worry.”
- “Some children dig holes with spoons while their peers are using shovels and backhoes.”
- “Embrace the child as a “gift” not as a” project.””
- “Replace thoughts of I can’t with I can.”
- “Never forget the ‘ability’ in disability.”
- “Magnify children’s skills and minimize their deficits.”

SAGE - ALL of our Students are Gifts

Amanda Ellens

“Children are a heritage from the Lord” – this is a phrase that we are use to hearing in our Christian circles. Our kids are a gift from God. First and foremost, they belong to Christ, and it is our job to love them.

But it was quite refreshing to hear this same idea at a workshop held for resource and classroom teachers from all sorts of schools across the province. We were reminded that our

students are gifts, first of all and that God has a plan for each student – those who excel as well as those who struggle.

Each day is a day that the Lord has made. For many, it is easy to see the beauty in creation and in life all around us. But there are also many for whom there is a painted grey mural blocking their view of the sunshine and blue skies.

This SAGE workshop was a good reminder for me that those who hope in the Lord really will renew their strength, that we will soar on wings like eagles, and that we can run without growing weary and walk without becoming faint. May it be that we really do look to God to break down our cloudy grey murals and to refresh our view of the creation that surrounds us.

The Beatitudes: For Friends of Exceptional Children

After we returned home from the MART workshop led by Dr. Mark Cooper, we had many discussions regarding teaching children with learning disabilities and exceptionalities. Although we didn't get this poem at the workshop, we found it nicely summarized much of what we learned and discussed there.

Submitted by Miranda, Yolanda, and Nicole

Blessed are you who take time to listen to difficult speech:
For you help us to know that if we persevere,
We can be understood.
Blessed are you who walk with us in public places,
And ignore the stares of strangers,
For in your companionship,
We find havens of peace.
Blessed are you who never bid us to "hurry up",
And more blessed are you
Who do not snatch tasks from our hands to do them for us,
For often we need time rather than help.
Blessed are you who stand beside us
As we enter new and untried ventures,
For our failures will be outweighed
By the times we surprise ourselves and you.
Blessed are you who ask for our help,
For our greatest need is to be needed.
Blessed are you when you assure us,
That the one thing that makes us individuals
Is not in our peculiar muscles,
Nor in our wounded nervous systems,
Nor in our difficulties in learning,
Nor any exterior difference.

**But is in our inner, personal, individual self
Which no infirmity can diminish or erase.**

--- Author Unknown but Appreciated!

Transforming Literacies for Diverse Readers

Mrs. L. DeWit

I attended the session for English teachers where Carol Jago, the key-note speaker addressed us on the topic "Transforming Literacies for Diverse Readers". She said, "Every text is a lazy machine, asking its students to do some of the work." She then detailed some of the things that are working against the achieving of competent literacy in our students. Contrary to public opinion, multitasking, at which our kids seem to be so proficient, is leading to distraction and mediocrity in their work. (As a product of electronic life, face to face interaction now needs to be taught.) Single tasking is important; students need to slow down, downshift to do academic work, less speed, more power. Academic reading and writing is important; more and more the workplace is evaluating its workers on their ability to produce a professional written document.

Those children who are readers have the double advantage of ready vocabulary, a knowledge of the conventions of grammar, and a crystallized knowledge of many events, facts, things, and places in this world that non-readers never attain.

In the classroom, literary interaction is important for a good understanding of the material and for a broadening of horizons; other people's ideas add to our own. This kind of interaction is hard to achieve; students talk about many things, but seldom get to experience the pleasure of exchanging ideas. I talked to one student about this; fear of error or of being laughed at seems to be the great inhibitor. A pity!

The second session involved the handling of the paper load – marking. Mrs. Jago, the presenter stressed the importance of focusing, in the marking, on key areas for improvement. Marking should be personal and should engage the thinking of the student. Improvement on the part of the student is then the expected result. Mrs. Jago has found peer marking to be of little value; a more productive exercise is having the student read his own product out loud to a peer. Other types of oral presentations were also encouraged as a means to share student work and to reduce marking.

Talia Pura spoke on the use of social justice issues to create improvisations and theatrical pieces. She had the teachers attending this session go through the exercises she introduced to demonstrate how they could be used effectively in the classroom, involving all the students in the drama and engaging their attention and interest for controversial social issues.

My final session was an hour long production of "Shakespeare in the Ruins" Romeo and Juliet, where 5 young men performed a Shakespearean play with the traditional limited props, all male, limited number of players cast so that each performer had to switch hats repeatedly. It was very well done and included a few contemporary stage bits that made the play itself easier to follow.

Bound Yet Determined

by Mark Cooper, PhD., L.P.C.

Submitted by Kathy Vandersluis

A conference that a number of colleagues attended proved to be familiar in some sense and thought provoking in another sense.

Mark Cooper, our speaker for the day, enlightened us on the topic of Learning Disabilities. And who better to speak on such a topic than one who has experienced first hand and overcome years and years of personal struggle and then to see them repeated again with a son who also suffered through similar experiences.

“Falling through the cracks” is a term used most often when these learning disabilities are not noticed, not taken seriously, avoided, or undetermined. Year after year Mark Cooper presses on with his message, which is the same as the title of his book “Bound and Determined”. He gives insight into his life and many practical strategies that he has studied, experienced, and compiled over the years. He is not satisfied to let things be, but is determined to find and use strategies that help struggling learners.

His focus comes from the most important aspect and that is “Embracing the Gift.” That is the gift that God has given in each new life that has been granted, with the gifts and struggles that accompany each learner.

It was wonderful to hear that things begin with the most important foundation, we must be Christ centered and branch out from there. Prayer is one of the greatest gifts we can use for a child.

When you read strategies which begin with words like caring, determined, hope, acceptance, achieve, encouragement, meaningful, rejoicing, dream, reality, success, prepare, transform, connect, embrace, etc, it helps you to focus on the positive in every situation. Begin on the inside, with the heart of that child not just in the academic sense but in the practical sense. Embrace the mindset that says, “Try, and if all things appear to fail, try again!” “You can’t fail if you don’t quit!” Show children where they are going rather than limiting the vision to where they are. REJOICE in the good times!

A worthwhile conference, a worthwhile read!

Bound and Determined

Submitted by L. Lodder

They're a gift, not a project. Begin by noticing the child with whom you are dealing—they are not a project but a gift—what they have received is a gift, and though you may need to help them, the best way to help them is to give them hope.

Hope creates the inner strength to combat the outer challenges.

Who better to have hope than a child of God? Who better to instill this hope than a brother or sister in Christ? What an advantage we have to have a school where students and teachers/aides are brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ? These thoughts were going through my mind as Mark Cooper, the presenter, was talking to us about how we could best help children with learning disabilities succeed.

Hope-filled education encourages the growth of inner strengths to counter outer challenges. It is so tempting to be caught up in what cannot be done. It is so tempting to see only the limitations of the child with a learning disability. But God-fearing people have every reason to fight that temptation. There is hope, a hope that is not founded on wishful thinking that humanists might think they have bound up in the worth and self-esteem of the child. No, this hope is based upon the almighty, ever present power of the living God who makes covenant with His people, including the children!

Hope = desire + expectations. Pay close attention to their thoughts rather than their behaviour. The thoughts are the powerhouse behind our feelings and actions, the inner voice that shapes our character. We must strengthen the inner voice.

Dr. Mark, as he is best known, went through his youth with a learning disability and still struggles with it now. He knew what he was talking about. He spoke as one who had authority. A long-time friend writes about Dr. Mark's long struggle with a learning disability by pointing to Psalm 56:8 and stating, "All of Dr. Mark's many tears have been collected in his Creator's bottle, where every moment of bitter pain has distilled into sweet wisdom" (p110 Bound and Determined). I didn't know about his faith during our time with him, but learning about it afterward made me think of the disciples Jesus met on the Emmaus road when they exclaimed, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us" (Luke 24:32)? As Dr. Mark spoke, I "knew" his passion was based on more than experience.

What I found was that a lot of this material would be equally helpful for self-discipline and for working with children who do not have a learning disability. It was a day well-spent.

SAGE - Mathematics with Trevor Brown

Submitted by Jordan Ellens

This conference was very good! In fact, it was a pleasant surprise. The speaker was from Tyndale University in Toronto. He had quite a lot of energy, was passionate about math, and had good perspective to boot. I will sum up (no pun intended) the conference with four main points:

1. Teachers, both in the higher and lower grades, should be careful to let the beauty of mathematics speak for itself. This will help to engage students. This means teachers should feel confident enough in their math skills to let the students ask questions about *why* things are the way they are. In addition they should show them the amazing patterns that occur in math. The incredible number of patterns should shock and amaze us!
2. Often the beauty of math is destroyed when math becomes a system of rules and abstract thought. In order to make sense of math it is very important to root it in concrete experience. For instance, even high-school binomial factoring can be done with algebra tiles. Giving students concrete objects to work with and getting them to come up with the rules will provide a better understanding of math.
3. Also, students are required to struggle with math. They have to be willing to work at problems. Often students will look at a question and think (or say) "I don't get it". But students must spend some time attempting to figure it out. That is, for more than around 2 minutes. Students in North America are too worried about being wrong or making a mistake; they want the answer and want it now. This means they really do not care about solving problems; they want others to give them the answers to the problems.

Let me leave you with this problem:

A school has 1000 lockers in a row labeled 1 to 1000. The school has 1000 students.

- The first comes in and opens every locker
- The second comes in and closes every second locker
- The third switches every third locker (closes the open ones, and opens the closed)
- The fourth switches every fourth locker
- And so on until every student has passed all of the lockers

Which lockers will be left open when they are done?

The Art and Science of Math Education

By William Hoogerdijk

On Saturday, November 19 I spent an entire, exhilarating day at a mathematics conference! This conference caught my attention because it mentioned JUMP Math, a program being used in elementary grades to promote understanding. While little of JUMP Math was covered in my sessions, the speakers presented a wealth of information that was extremely interesting, informative, and challenging.

The day started with a presentation by Dr. Brent Davis from the University of Calgary entitled "***What We Know About What Math Teachers (Need to) Know***". While much focus in math education is placed on educating the teachers (which is important), Dr. Davis indicated the need to look at the teacher's content knowledge something which needs to be activated in the classroom through metaphors, analogies, examples, etc. He asserted the web of knowledge is vast, intricate, and evolving. This was illustrated by looking at the changing applications of multiplication.

The use of multiplication changes significantly from its introduction until its use in Grade 12. Initial definitions of multiplication do not necessarily apply straight through school so we have to redefine it, extend its definition, or apply its original definition in new ways. He referred to this as "substructuring" - revising and rebuilding the definition of multiplication as we move along through the years.

Dr. Davis encouraged us to work through these "concept studies" – working with a concept, studying where and how it is applied and utilized, and then substructuring these concepts as part of our "perfected" instruction. This can be a time-intensive practice but ultimately it gives a greater understanding of how concepts develop and how they relate to each other.

The second presentation on the agenda was a refreshing, if somewhat cynical, presentation by Dr. W. Stephen Wilson of Johns Hopkins University entitled "***The Changing Math Wars in the US***". Dr. Wilson was heavily involved in work on the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics in the US. This work saw a math war of sorts where accusations were made such as "traditionalists only want rote learning". Dr. Wilson's assertion was the issue has nothing to do with the method of teaching math but with the content of math education. He supported this by referring to the fact that K-12 education controls its own content and is not governed by what colleges or universities teach. As a result there is often no connection to post-secondary math requirements and a large proportion of kids finishing Grade 12 math end up taking remedial math in college.

Dr. Wilson maintained that even Grad 4 math education determines whether students drop out of college math. Using calculators throughout school, no longer memorizing multiplication tables, and not teaching standard algorithms all lead to handicapping the student for future math education. In the end, he emphasized the need to promote basic numerical fluency, knowing standard algorithms, and understanding basic math facts as being essential to success in any mathematical endeavour.

My first elective session was a presentation by Darja Kalajdziewska, a University of Manitoba doctorate student: "***Towards University Readiness***". She presented results of surveys she did in first year math courses due to concerns over student readiness for university math. Even students graduating from International Baccalaureate courses had difficulties in introductory math. Sadly, I do not believe any of her surveys would stand up statistically. While the results could lead to further study, the surveys were set up in such a way that they could never be regarded as statistically accurate.

The second elective session was by Carole Bilyk from the Manitoba Department of Education. Arriving on the scene two sessions after Dr. Wilson put her "***Manitoba Mathematics***" presentation on the defensive. The entire session ended up as a loss for Carole when she attempted to defend herself by

quoting Dr. Wilson (for the fifth or sixth time) to show how Manitoba mathematics was doing all the good things he had talked about. He spoke up indicating she had misquoted him every single time so far. That stopped her long enough for the host of the session to lay into her none too gently about the failure of the Manitoba math curriculum to provide a real firm ground for a continuing math education.

The last major session of the day was "***Disorders of the 'Mathematical Brain': Developmental Dyscalculia and Math Anxiety***" by Dr. Daniel Ansari of the University of Western Ontario. His main point was the importance of developing basic number processing. He steadfastly maintained that should be the main focus of developing math education – allow students to learn basic math facts, basic numerical fluency, and standard algorithms.

Dr. Ansari's study on number processing found that these abilities develop in specialized parts of the brain. As they develop they decrease reaction times in performing basic mathematical tasks. The brain seems to work with a "noisy" number line where numbers overlap each other. The overlap decreases over time as numerical processing abilities develop so that the number line becomes less noisy. Other studies analyzing brain activity when working through math problems came to similar conclusions. One found that students demonstrating higher brain activity in performing simple mathematical calculations performed poorer on college admission tests. Dr. Ansari explained the increased brain activity in performing these activities robs the brain of processing time required for more difficult problems.

Dr. Ansari moved on to a discussion of dyscalculia and math anxiety. He defined dyscalculia as a deficit to represent and process numerical magnitude in a normal way. When students have this deficit, they lack the understanding of numerical magnitude which, in turn, leads to difficulties in learning the meaning of numerical expressions and their maintenance in memory.

Regarding math anxiety, Dr. Ansari provided the following description: "When engaged in mathematical problem solving, highly math anxious individuals suffer from intrusive thoughts and ruminations." Some students may have predispositions to anxiety. Others may be dealing with deficits from dyscalculia or dyslexia. These may make it more likely for the student to suffer from math anxiety.

Even students with low math anxiety had increased reaction times in number difference recognition. This seems to support the idea that a lot of processing time is being dedicated to these intrusive thoughts. One suggestion for assistance was to allow students to verbalize these thoughts. For many students these thoughts and ruminations are dealt with when verbalized. The processing time they would take from the mathematics task is now restored to the task at hand. The long term solution includes remediation by focusing on strengthening magnitude processing, symbol–quantity mapping, and strengthening abstract understanding of quantity.

The entire conference was intense with an abundance of information and a similar abundance of opposing viewpoints on what should be done to improve math education overall and specifically in Manitoba. In the midst of all this information and these viewpoints came some extremely interesting and enlightening information. Some of the main sessions were extremely helpful in terms of verbalizing some common sense items, promoting an understanding of how math is learned, and a perspective on

how to develop good practices in terms of the teaching of mathematics. Time extremely well-spent on a Saturday!

Gr. 8's Experience Live Theatre

The Hobbit, On Stage, at the Manitoba Theatre for Young People

Submitted by N. Gunnink

Reading a novel offers an opportunity to step into another world. How often haven't you been surprised at the passage of time while reading a novel? A good novel takes you places you may have never visited. Such a novel draws you in with compelling character development and intriguing twists of plot. This was my experience with *The Hobbit* and it was my first experience with the fantasy genre aside from C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*. I was never enthusiastic about the *Chronicles* but *The Hobbit* took off with my imagination.

And so it was with some trepidation that we cracked the novel as a class and toyed with the idea of attending a live theatre production of the same novel. We found that once you have wrapped your head around the plethora of characters and allow the novel to get underway you are rewarded with an escapist reading experience. In *The Hobbit* you truly step into another world.

And as Tolkien spun his yarn in our classroom we began to wonder how a theatre company would bring the novel to life. How do you rescue 13 dwarves, a hobbit and a wizard from the tops of towering evergreens? Can you find an actor short enough to be a hobbit? How do you condense almost 300 pages of text into a 90 minute theatre production? Will the dragon really be shot out of the sky?

What follows are portions of the student reviews of what they saw and heard on stage. For your information each student selected a paragraph they felt comfortable with. These are included here anonymously. The submission below is a little choppy because the paragraphs are grouped by topic but it gives a good impression of their experience. Enjoy!

The plot of the play is based on the book The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien. Bilbo Baggins (a hobbit) is enlisted as a professional burglar to help thirteen dwarves recover a mountain of treasure stolen by the evil dragon Smaug. The play is ninety minutes long, approximately, with a five minute stretch break.

Based on a book called the *Hobbit* written by J.R.R Tolkien in 1937, the production has never lost its mythological impressiveness, but just like Bilbo you might want to stay home with your eggs and bacon and spoons all shined up.

J.R.R. Tolkien's 1937 fantasy novel, the hobbit, we still enjoy it the book in 2011. They have just recently performed a play based on that book, at MTYP (Manitoba

Theatre for Young People), on Nov. 18, 11. It also got a rating of 4.5 out of 5 from the Winnipeg Free Press.

My favourite character was Bilbo especially in the first scene when he was catching dishes.

My favorite character is Gollum in the hobbit. He's awesome. I like it the way he says my preciousssssssssss!!!!

The actors and actresses were so close to you, you could reach out and touch them if you wanted. They did an amazing job. Some of them even play more than one character, and did a great job changing into different characters.

With Herbie Barnes as Bilbo Baggins, David Warburton as Gandalf, and James Durham as Gollum, they made a great play. Allison Gills gave it a rating of 4 ½ stars out of five. My favourite actor is Herbie Barnes as Bilbo Baggins.

The sound was quite spectacular, utterly jaw dropping the way they portray the sound with the scene. If there is something to be heard you heard it. If something bad happens the music goes all scary, you could also hear the dragons wings flapping as he flew about. Seems like there's a million different speakers everywhere.

The sound effects sounded real (ex: the rain, the thunder etc..). The lightning was cool. the lights flickered when there was a lighting strike. And the voices were good and loud plus they were clear. They sounded exactly like how I read them in the book.

The costumes really fit the characters, and I liked how the trolls, goblins, and elves costumes looked different. Somehow I didn't expect them to be. I really like the goblin scenes because of the costumes. The creepy masks and gleaming swords made their costumes look amazing.

Some of the costumes were pretty neat. The spiders looked really odd because you could see the people's bodies.

Another part I liked was the dragon. The skin was silvery and it looked almost like tinfoil. The gold was just a picture. Whenever he breathed fire they just did the smoke, so you couldn't actually see the fire, which was a little dumb. My mom thought it was a little bit cheesy, but I guess they couldn't have a real dragon in the theatre!

My favourite parts were when there were special effects and sounds. When Smaug breathed fire, there was "smoke" everywhere! When Bilbo came back home after his quest, he picked up a stool and blew the "dust" off. And when there was thunder, there really was thunder, and for the lightning, they flashed the lights. The music was brilliant; it was appropriate for every scene.

The theatre was very colourful and the sound effects were cool. For example, when Gandalf yelled thunder rang out, and when the goblins came scary low music started, or when Bilbo was pouring his tea soft music started. I was surprised to see how long it was 11:45 – 2:00 with a five minute break.

One of my favourite scenes was when the lord of the Eagles came to the rescue Bilbo and the Dwarfs I would give this performance a rating of 5/5. At \$11 it was a real deal!!!! I'm real glad that Mr. Gunnink (my teacher) took us to the play in Winnipeg.

From the Library

Submitted by Kathy Vandersluis

The First Step in Teaching Children to Read is to Encourage Reading

As a first step in teaching children to read, below you will find some ideas to encourage reading with and in our children.

Some of these ideas are very simple and basic, but just maybe there are some ideas listed here that you haven't thought of. And remember, the biggest encouragement comes from parents within the home. **Children who come from a home where parents read personally, value reading, and having reading material readily available they are much more likely to become readers themselves.**

- **Make books available and accessible.** Children who become readers almost always come from homes where books and other reading materials are present throughout the house. Don't put your children's books out of the way where your child cannot see them or cannot reach them himself. Remember babies, toddlers, and preschoolers are small. Put the books near the floor, within their reach.
- **READ YOURSELF.** Modeling to your children is one of the best ways of teaching children to read. If your children see that you read, you choose to read, and you enjoy reading, they are more likely to develop the same habit and pursue the same activity.
- **Don't forget to give books as gifts** at birthday time, holiday time, or whenever. There are so many inexpensive, good books out there and something given or received as a gift becomes more valuable and cherished. Eg. Children routinely receive books as gifts from their grandparents, and get so excited when they see them coming with them. Children value books because they are valued by the important people in their lives.
- **Make reading fun!** Something that is enjoyable is favoured. Act out stories, use different voices, and most importantly use enthusiasm. Presentation can be everything. A boring reader makes for a boring story no matter how exciting the story may really be. You might just find out that you are having more fun as well.
- **Read frequently.** Offer to read to young children everyday, even several times a day. Encourage older independent readers to read everyday as well, and engage them in conversation about what they're reading.
- **Turn off the television and provide quiet time.** Turning off the TV forces children to "find something else to do" and too much television can have a harmful affect on a developing child, especially when it comes to teaching children to read.

- **Take your children to the library** on a weekly or monthly visit, so they can choose their own books. My older son routinely asks “when can we go to the library” if we haven’t gone for a while. He really enjoys being able to pick out his very own books.
- **Remember that comic books and magazines are a great way to encourage reading and are very useful in teaching children to read.** Books on tape and CD are also an excellent choice to encourage reading.
- **Take you children to free story-time** at your local library, resource center, or wherever else they are offered in your town. Sometimes hearing an animated reader read a story *how the author intended* makes all the difference in the world for teaching children to read.
- **Read chapter books.** A good chapter book will entice a reader and make them want to come back for more and find out how the story ends.
- **Use movie or video tie-ins.** Maybe your child likes Berenstain Bears or is a Thomas the Train Engine fan. Use you child’s interest to your benefit and read books that tie into these characters.
- **Use your child’s favourite nursery rhymes.** Maybe your child really likes “The Itsy Bitsy Spider.” Find the book and read it.
- **Above all, make your read aloud sessions fun.** This is a great start to teaching children to read because children love to make sound effects, so add them whenever you can when you read aloud. For ex., in Cinderella we always make the sound of the clock chiming as it strikes midnight “dong...dong...dong.” We make knocking sounds as we read The Three Little Pigs when the wolf knocks on each of the three little pigs’ doors. The kids really seem to like this added interaction and activity as we read. There are countless opportunities to make sounds and add another fun dimension with each story you read.

Encouraging reading is really an easy thing to do and there are so many benefits of teaching children to read that are derived from reading to our children that we as adults and parents need to make sure we do so!

Check out this website for more ideas on Reading www.littleonesreadingresource.com

The Resource Centre

Submitted by Sandra Vanderwoude

Through this short submission, and future submissions, it is the plan that you will be able to walk with us through the various components of the learning assistance program. Through these submissions I will present a variety of concepts that have to do with learning in order for all of us to gain a better understanding of the challenges in learning. We as a school society can be very thankful for the dedication and caring of the many people who help our children learn and develop skills that will benefit them for the rest of their life.

At a recent workshop we were made aware of the term “*executive function*”. This term describes the function that is needed in order to carry out a plan or achieve a goal. It is a term that is used when we

need to use a variety of steps to complete a task. Executive function activities describe the messages that are sent to and from the brain; and the ability to respond in a timely and orderly fashion to a certain stimuli.

A young child's executive function may be the steps they take to get out of the door and on the bus each morning. Do they have the ability to remember the steps needed to complete the task (*i.e. finding their shoes, grabbing their coat and then their lunch and giving Mom a hug before they go out the door*).

As adults we can also evaluate our executive functions by thinking on some of the following questions:

- Do I jump to conclusions?
- Do I think before I speak?
- Do I remember the things that I have committed myself to doing?
- Do my emotions ever get in the way of performing my work?
- Is procrastination a problem for me?
- Am I an organized person?
- Am I good at prioritizing tasks, to help get things done?

Now as adults and teachers, we can break down some of the above tasks in order to plan and implement a skill or activity. Sometimes we may have to help our children plan their activities to increase their executive function. We, as teachers, break up activities into smaller chunks or more manageable pieces in order to help our students achieve their goals. We, as teachers and parents, often do this without realizing. For example, watch how many times we say to our child as they leave for the bus "*Don't forget your backpack*".

The Mousetrap

Agatha Christie
The Mousetrap



You may have heard rumours of a drama in the making. It is true! On **February 24 and 25, 2011** we hope to produce the

drama, "The Mousetrap". Now, I come to the reason for this very early announcement. **Each of our characters arrives wearing a long, dark overcoat, a light scarf and a soft felt hat.** Since these are 60s clothes, we had no luck in our first try at the self-help center. They suggested that we ask people to look in the back of their closets to see, if perhaps, they might still have a set that we could either have or borrow. **We need eight sets. So, would you all please check and consider**

whether you can help us out! If you can, please drop the items off at the school or contact Liz DeWit, Janine Lodder, or Lisa Bergsma. Thank-you.