

Secretary's report

Jeremy Kamminga



Welcome to the last Beacon edition of 2009!
Wow, how time flies!

It seems like the school year just began and now it's the Christmas holidays. As quick as the time went by, a lot of work has been done over the last four months – especially in the classrooms of DCS. On behalf of the Board and Society I would like to wish the students and staff of DCS a joyous and restful holiday

time with family and friends.

A job well done by the students and staff involved in the Christmas Concert this past Wednesday. I have to admit, I kind of miss teaching music and choir at the school. It was great to see participation from students of nearly all (if not all) grade levels. Keep it up!

On Friday, Dec. 11 the Board was able to join the staff for dinner and curling for our annual Board/Staff Christmas Social. It was good to be able to interact in a less formal atmosphere. These kinds of events help us to remember just what we have in common – among other things, that we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

One of the larger items on the board member's minds is the proposed building plans. As of yet we have received very little feedback from the membership. In order for us to make a decision we will require written feedback from the membership. We plan to (re)publish a detailed overview of the school building's needs and how we would suggest going about meeting those needs in the January Beacon. If you are unsure about which direction we should go, then perhaps wait till after that information is published. Otherwise, please don't hesitate to let us know.

We welcome Elsa VanLaar to the Library committee and thank her for agreeing to help out in this capacity. We also thank Frances Vandermeulen for her work on the committee over the past 5 years.

That's about all I've got to share with you for now. Please remember to keep the students, staff, board, and the Society as a whole in your prayers. As we look back over the past year, there is much to be thankful for. And because of the life and work of Jesus, whose birth we celebrate, we can also be assured that our prayers for God's continued blessings in 2010 will be answered.

Enjoy the beautiful, crisp, and clean Manitoba winter!

Treasurer's report

Dolf Feddes



Hard to believe that this is already the last Beacon of 2009. Time surely flies! The first decade after the so much anticipated year 2000 is already gone. Instead of the traditional reviews of the year the news seems to be filled with reviews of the decade. Good to know that we have a God for whom 1000 years is as one day for us.

In the financial department we are looking at closing the income tax year 2009. The last day you can send in your contributions for 2009 is **Sunday January 4, 2010**. All donations coming in after this day will be applied to income tax year 2010. In this way I can have it all in the books before our board meeting on January 6 and get the receipts for charitable donations out to you soon after that.

If you have lost track of how much you have donated for the year, or you want to compare your records with ours, you can call our bookkeeper Sarah Visscher at 828-3267, or myself at 828-3371. If you have not donated this year consider the many blessings the LORD has given to us in this past year and make sure you show your support towards Christian education of your children and grandchildren.

From time to time the school receives donations from various businesses in our community. Sometimes cash, and sometimes by not invoicing for work done for the school building or grounds. Instead of a personal thank you I want to show our appreciation for these contributions as well in this report. Your generous support also helps to operate the school in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Have a good Christmas celebration and the Lord's blessing for 2010.

Principal's report

Andy Huisman



“Yet, O Lord, You are the Father. We are the clay, you are the Potter; we are the work of Your hand.”

Isaiah 64:8

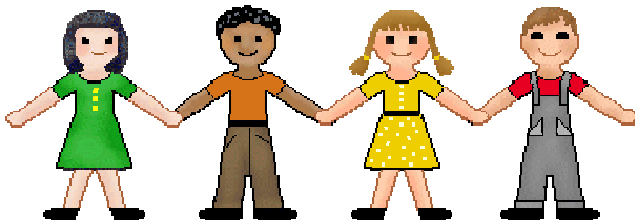
Isaiah 64:8 is the theme text of the year for Dufferin Christian School. It is interwoven throughout various devotions, assemblies and stands as a guide for the students on a daily basis. It is discussed often with the students and serves as a reminder that in all that we do, in all that we stand for, it is not our doing at all. We are created by our

heavenly Father for His glory. What a blessing when we can live that out in our daily lives at DCS.

As you read this report, the school Christmas concert is another piece of DCS history. The weeks of preparation, the working out of details, the memorization of numerous songs, the dedication of staff, the effort and enthusiasm of students have culminated in a very successful concert! The theme of the concert was *"In the Hands of the Potter"* in keeping with the school theme. It is truly a blessing from God when our young people praise God through music and song. We extend our appreciation to you as parents and community for the support that we witnessed in the full house and in the voices that you raised in song!



As we close out this year and look towards a new year, I would like to take a few moments to reflect on and give thanks to God for the blessings of covenantal education at Dufferin Christian School. It is important to point out the intersections of faith and life that occur on a daily basis, so here are a few that I would like to share:



- Thanks to the little kids (even kindergarten) who absolutely love to clear the snow off of anything that has snow on it!
- Thanks to the older students of the school who continually help the younger ones. There are numerous examples of this but one that I would like to point out - the Grade 6 girls who help out in the Kindergarten class at lunch and with getting them dressed to go outside.
- Thanks to the Librarians who give so much of their time to keep the library up to date and organized.
- Thanks to the moms who volunteer in school and lend a helping hand whenever it is needed. I think also of the moms who helped out in the Kindergarten this past week making gingerbread houses.
- Thanks to the high school students who volunteered their time again this week in the delivery of Christmas hampers to the local needy families.
- Thanks to the various committee members and the School Board members who spend immense amounts of time working for the benefit of the school.
- Thanks to S.A.L.T. and the Elementary Student Council for finding ways in which to make DCS a great school!
- Thanks to all those who call and ask, *"What can I do to help?"*
- Thanks to our volunteer coaches who spend their time giving guidance and support for the benefit of our school athletes.
- Thanks to the janitorial staff who continually strive to ensure that DCS has an excellent facility, ready to greet the students and staff everyday!

- Thanks to parents who continually keep the work of Dufferin Christian School in their prayers. Thank you for your support in the many different ways that you show it.
- Thanks to the entire staff (teachers, aides, secretary, janitorial staff) for their dedication and love.

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.

Other News

The only other item that needs passing along is the exam schedule. The complete schedule is attached to this Beacon. As well, it can be found on the school's website. Examination times are published early so that there will be no conflict with other commitments, i.e dentist appointments.

The rules for the Senior Four Provincial Exams have been discussed with the students in the various classes. A list of the exam rules for the DCS exams will be published in the newsletters prior to the exam week. I would also offer a small piece of advice. Start to study early, do not leave things to the last minute. Research has shown that studying in smaller increments of time over a longer period of time produces far better results than a lot of studying in a shorter amount of time. Structure your time wisely and if you have any questions about the material, feel free to ask your teacher.

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. *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favour rests."* Luke 2:14. My hope is that all will have a restful break and be invigorated to resume classes in the New Year.

Have a blessed Sunday.

Elementary Student Council

Thanks to all who attended our Council Meeting this past Monday. Excellent brain-storming everyone! We planned our next **Soup Day for Wednesday, January 13**. Also, there will be a **Fun Day on Wednesday, January 27th**! More details will follow in the next newsletter. Wishing everyone a blessed Christmas holiday!

Christmas Cheer Board

The Cheer Board table in the school hallway was overflowing this past week! Thank-you for the many donated items! Hats, mitts, games, toothbrushes, toothpaste, food, and much more. What a variety! *"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."* 2 Corinthians 9:7

Animated Literacy – Literacy In Motion

by Jane Stad



Learning to read can be a great mystery. It can be exciting, hard, frustrating or enjoyable. Reading is a God given gift. **It is a true treasure because once we can read, we can read through the Bible, God's own word.** At school we work on learning how to use the gifts God has given to us.

Teaching students the beginnings of how to read has been researched and debated much over the past years. Sometimes it seems to be a bit of a mystery as to how students suddenly are able to read. To me it is a symbol of how God has intricately knit us together in our mother's womb. God has given us a brain which researchers have not even begun to understand. God is in control of everything, even the minute details of how our brain works.

Late November, I had the pleasure of attending a wonderful two day workshop presented by Jim Stone. Stone is the author of a literacy program for the early grades, an animated alphabet approach to learning the sounds of the English language. This was a program that I had heard about and wanted to investigate because it sounded like an interesting way to learn how to read.

Stone has researched many recent studies about the brain and how the brain learns and gave us a handout with about seventy references to different studies about the brain, memory and learning! He was an inspiring speaker and was well-versed with the material he presented. He had so much to share with us, we hardly had any time for breaks..



As a summary Stone said the following: "Helping young students learn to read and write has become both an art and a science. Recent advances in brain, language, and reading research have provided a **better understanding** of how the brain learns, retains, and processes information, of the universal sequence of stages and milestones that children and adults must pass through when learning a new language, and of the critical elements needed to ensure success in reading and writing. Brain and language research validates what effective teachers and parents have known for a long time. The brain learns most easily when **new information is connected to prior knowledge** and when **skills and concepts are presented in an interactive environment that is rich in emotion, context, vocabulary, movement, novelty, contrast and repetition.** The scientific study of reading has revealed that phonological awareness, listening comprehension, a large listening vocabulary, and the rapid recognition of letters and letter patterns are necessary elements for fluency, comprehension, and independence in reading and writing."(handout page 7)



In *Animated Literacy* each letter is given a character and a sign or gesture. For example the character for the letter P is **Polly Panda**, and the sign or gesture is that she **paints**. There is a story and a little song connected to each character which helps the student remember the sound and the letter. **Research has proven that using signs and movement helps the brain to remember things.** By learning to perform a specific gesture for each sound, the students activate their “muscle memory” systems.

When using *Animated Literacy* the students are introduced to vowels as well as consonants early on, and that way they can immediately begin to learn how to sound out and make up words. The letters are taught in context, with silly sounds or songs and much repetition. The letters are used and substituted for words in familiar songs. One of the first songs used is the song “**Are you Sleeping**”. This is a song with repetition and rhyme. The students first learn to sing the song and then they begin to substitute words and sounds. Stone suggested using the names of the children in your class to begin learning about the letters and sounds. A sample verse would be :

Are you sleeping? (2x)
Sister Rachel? (2x)
Rachel's bells are saying (2x)
Ring, ring, rong, (2x)



I tried this activity with my class. After making a new verse for every student in the class, we made a class book with one page for each student. Now the students can sing through the book, working on word, name and sound recognition. The Kindergarten class really enjoyed this activity!

Stone’s workshop answered many questions that I had about the sequence of teaching letters. He stressed **the importance of movement, emotion, and linking concepts back to prior knowledge.** I was so excited about what I learned that



we started learning about the alphabet characters the next week. The students are excited and eager to learn the names and the characters for each letter of the alphabet. We are enjoying the characters such as Uncle Upton who umpires games while hanging upside down from an umbrella tree, and Dr. Ollie Ostrich who makes special olive omelets for her patients. If you interested in more of the characters see the *Animated-Alphabet Character and Actions* page in this *Beacon*.

Stone also stressed the **importance of reading to children.** When we read to children we are building their comprehension level for the words they will one day be reading. Therefore, it is very important that we read to children from a variety of books. Oral language proficiency takes approximately 2 to 3 years to develop. These are usually the preschool years. Context independent, book language takes approximately 5 to 8

years to develop. (Marian Diamond, 1998, p.133) For language to develop we need to speak and read. Golinkoff in his research found that “A typical middle-class child enters first grade with 1000 to 1700 hours of one-on-one picture book reading....” (1990, P.113) Are we exposing our children to enough language in the younger years? Are we building up their listening comprehension level so that the children will have a context for the words they will later learn to read?



God has given us a great gift of language. As we learn to read, write, listen and speak, let us all use this gift to God’s honor and glory. The ability to read God’s word is a goal that we all strive for. As we read in Psalm 119: 105 : “*Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.*” I’ve seen and experienced the excitement of a child who has reached the goal of being able to read the Bible for themselves. It is truly a privilege to be able to guide students in learning how to read.

ANIMATED LITERACY SOUND FRIENDS

Do you have any Ty Beanie Babies, or small stuffed animals that you are no longer attached to in your home? The Kindergarten room is looking for the following sound friends, animals who can help make the alphabet letter sounds come alive for the students. Please consider helping us collect these animals. Thank you for your help!

Examples:

girl dressed like princess (Actress Annie), Camel, Elf, Elephant, Goose, Ichthyosaurus (Dolphin), Kangaroo, Mermaid, Ostrich, Quail, Seal, Umpire (Baseball Player), Walrus, Yak, Sheriff, Thick Thorny Thing, Girl with a cape (Leaping Eve), Crow, Moose, Turtle, Aardvark, Doll (Joy), Baby doll for Baby Barnaby, Dragon, Fox, Hippo, Jaguar, Lamb, Newt, Panda, Raccoon, Rhino, Tiger, T-Rex, Vulture, Ox,, Zebra (2), Chipmunk, Gray Hare, Boy with cape & Bike (Ike), Mule & doll with blue shoes, Woodchuck, Orangutan, Owl & Brown Mouse.



“Book Review” – Reflections on the Opening Pages of Teaching Redemptively

by Nick Gunnink

One of the legacies of last fall's CRTA – West Teachers' Convention was a book recommendation. Our keynote speaker, Gary Duthler, recommended and referred to a book called, Teaching Redemptively: Bringing Grace and Truth Into Your Classroom. Between Gary's speaking sessions an enthralled DCS administrator ordered multiple copies of the book for DCS staff, with the intent of studying the book further.

Teaching Redemptively is studied chapter by chapter at our combined staff meetings and I thought it might be an idea to introduce the book.

Of all the books I have read so far, this one seems well poised to explain a question I've been thinking about: "Is there a Biblical way to teach?" The educational literature is full of suggestions on how to teach, but is there a distinctly biblical manner of teaching? I have not read the whole book but it seems the author, Donovan Graham, has some refreshing insights.

Graham opens his book with the provocative chapter title: "All that claims to be Christian may not be". His intent is to prepare the reader to ask hard questions about his/her educational institution. He makes an interesting distinction between our professed beliefs and our controlling beliefs. Professed beliefs are those things we say we believe and controlling beliefs are the ones we actually live by. By God's grace, the two are the same and we walk the talk instead of just talking the talk.

This has huge implications in any educational enterprise and Graham challenges the reader to consider what is taught by how we teach. He argues that how we teach (ie. process) influences heavily what (ie. content) students learn. The following loosely summarized example drove this point home for me. God is a creative being. He created the universe and everything in it and creation continues to unfold with each passing moment as God works through mankind to develop his creation. We are God's image bearers which means that we, too, are creative because God is creative. Here's where the rubber hits the road. Do we, as teachers, give our students opportunity to be creative? They are God's image bearers, and if God is creative, we need to provide them with opportunity to be creative. Otherwise our talk (God is the Creator) is inconsistent with our walk (but you are all only going to answer questions from the textbook because that's the only way to learn).

Rest assured, Graham understands the importance of knowledge. In order to encourage consistency in our talk and walk, the professed beliefs and the controlling beliefs, the content and the process he suggests three questions to guide us in our educational endeavours: What? So what? and Now what? I find this a handy guide in preparing my lessons because it encourages me to cover all the bases in my lesson preparation. And all this came up in the first chapter!

Graham continues his book with 200 pages devoted to discerning the Biblical beliefs which are foundational for redemptive teaching. The final 70 pages are nuts and bolts pages where I expect to find suggestions for distinctly biblical methods of teaching. Why don't you read along with us? While the book is an engaging read, reading it will

also give you some insights into what challenges we grapple with as teachers. In fact, as a parent and a teacher, I'm finding the book helpful to me in both of my tasks.

Most Memorable Moments

By Anje Jager

As a first year teacher I have learned an abundant amount of information, mainly from my wonderful students☺. Going to school for four years, no matter how 'faithfully' you attend classes, is just not the same as teaching in the classroom. School can only prepare you so much; and then there is the real world. The real reason I'm writing this report is because I would like to share some of my most memorable experiences in DCS [which the students have helped me compile], whether they were learning curves, positive impacts, or very humorous occurrences.

On the first day I was introduced to my class; twenty students who were, basically, bouncing off the walls. I learned their names and remembered back to when I was in Grade Seven; I was in for a run for my money. No, not really. They really aren't that bad. Besides the fact of being called 'Mom' a few times, the students are a great bunch and they brighten my each and every day. Of course, there are times when I wonder why I am here, but each time God sends me a little reminder. My students aid me in realizing what life is about. It's not about being easy, but about understanding, learning, growing, and remembering your purpose and task here on earth.

Life: good times, bad times, funny times- things that God has given us, whether we understand it or not.

One day, early on in the year, the students decided we needed a class pet. We had finally come to the decision of a rabbit, but were later informed that there were rabbit allergies in the school. So back to the whiteboard we went; literally. We finally came to the conclusion that we would have to make a trip on a Saturday to Petland in Winnipeg. Off we went! We narrowed it down to furry or slimy, then took a vote and decided upon a furry creature. Needless to say we have a Dwarf Hamster, who has gained an excessive amount of weight. Hmmm?!

A short while ago, the class and I were in quite a hyper mood. I had just calmed the students down [like a good teacher], when one of my students looked at me, tilted his head, and started to go cross-eyed. I couldn't retain myself, and soon, once again, the whole class was in an uproar. I had done it again-kept them calm and stayed on topic.

Two weeks ago, the students formed two debate teams in Science. We were discussing the wetlands and ideas that were for preserving them, and ideas for building a mall on the land. Each side had to come up with supporting evidence for each statement. One student was for keeping the wetlands and she said, "Don't you want to

see the animals around there? If you built a mall you wouldn't see the bears, birds, or WHALES! That would be sad." A wetland is a grassy, swamp area.

Another, very calm day, I was reading the students a book. The woman in the book was called the 'Brainy One'. As I continued reading about the 'Brainy One', a young man- very calm and loving, kindly blurted out, "Miss Jager is that lady..." As I turned to the student to smile and thank him for the very kind compliment, he continued, "She's the brainless one! Oh 'Brainless One'". Soon the whole class was hysterical. I'm pretty sure I will never live that one down.

As I continue on with teaching, I realize every day is a blessing from the LORD. Each day is a new memory and an exciting moment that students and I get to share. The students teach me so much and everyday there is a positive experience and I understand, at that moment, why I am here. I hope and pray Christ continues to bless me and give me the strength I need to be a blessing to these students.

Have a wonderful Christmas Season.

Yearbooks are coming soon.....



We are on the verge of completion, and as we are wrapping things up we will need to know how many yearbooks need to be printed. The 2008-2009 yearbooks (last year) will be **\$12.00 each** and we hope to have them out in the early spring. Order forms were attached to the last newsletter. If you would like to order yearbooks and do not have an order form, **please write your name, and how many yearbooks you would like on a piece of paper, along with payment (cheque payable to DCS Yearbook or cash) and send it to school by January 12, 2010.** Thank-you!

Kimberly Grant, for the Yearbook Committee