

Herald



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Speaking the Truth
Mr. Brian Kuiper, Administrator

*“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things,
which is the head, even Christ”
Ephesians 4:15*

Recently, due to the death of my grandmother, I was remembering the good days gone by with some relatives. Memories came quickly of gatherings at the Kuiper home when Grandpa Kuiper and Grandpa Lotterman spoke of the school and church. There was a certain healthy “pride” as they spoke of school projects they had participated in, of church proposals debated and voted on, and of the early days of our churches and schools. Rarely, if ever, in public was a negative word spoken. These men knew the blessing that we had in our churches and schools, and wanted nothing bad to be said publicly that little ears could hear and repeat. Even more, they wanted to give no occasion to the world which could be used against our churches and schools.

Many of us share that pride today when speaking of our churches and schools. “The Lord has done great things, whereof we are glad” (Psalm 126). In our gladness, we tell others! Letting our light shine means telling others about these great things that He has done. The world sees these blessings, and learns something about Him. This is for the strengthening of our schools, the encouragement of our staffs, and the glory of the name of the Lord.

My fear is that present day communication about our churches and schools is not always done out of healthy pride. Which of us would speak evil of our own family to others? Tell the men at the coffee shop all of the dirt about your children? Post on facebook the weaknesses of your spouse? For all to see? For the good of whom? We would scarcely do this kind of communicating about our own families, yet, when it comes to our churches and schools, we are quick to criticize, disagree, and do so publicly. One has only to look at the right (or wrong) thread of electronic discussion in social media to find plenty of truth displayed, but not truth usually in love. We use these outlets to air our dirty laundry before the eager world. The result?? Exactly what the naysayers are waiting for. The fuel they need for their fire.

My hope? We can have our healthy disagreements and discussions - for the good of our schools and churches – but have them in the right way. I will not insult the reader by explaining the right way. We know what that way is.

Notice that the passage quoted refers to speaking the truth. Not one of us would have a quarrel with that statement. Wise words of truth will also be spoken or written “in love”. When we speak and write the truth, IN LOVE, our homes will be stronger, our schools will be built up, and our churches will prosper. As they have since the “good old days”.

Federation Committee Report – Mr. Bob Cammenga, Committee Chairman

The annual Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools meeting was held October 8, 2015 at Adams Christian School. The primary goal of this Federation is to promote and advance the unity of our member schools and assist in areas of common interest or need in our member schools. The Federation is an organization comprised of 15 member school societies who together educate 2,039 students. Heritage and other local West Michigan schools were represented in person, while our southern and western member schools joined the meeting via video conference. The Teacher Educational Development Committee (TED Committee) is the primary committee of the Federation tasked with researching and bringing proposals to the Federation. Normal business of the Federation was conducted and included the adoption of the following proposals from the TED committee.

1. Hiring a website director.
2. 2015-2016 budget of \$8,340.
3. Mr. Pete Adams (Eastside administrator & teacher) to replace retiring Jon Mingerink as teacher representative on the TED Committee.

This is also the time to elect new officers to the Federation. These officers make up the TED committee along with the director and teacher representatives. Officer election results were: President – Joel Langerak, Vice President – Bob Cammenga, Treasurer – Jon Hop, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer – Nate VanOverloop.

Some additional reported items of interest and projects that are being worked on are:

1. TED Committee reported “History & Principles” course offered and taught by Prof. Dykstra to NW Iowa this summer was successful and beneficial per contacts in Iowa and Prof. Dykstra.
2. K-12 “Writing Standards and Expectations” is being developed this summer by collaboration of teachers from various parts of the country. The goal of this is for member schools to be able to use this information as a guide for their own school’s curriculum.
3. Production of video lectures to accompany a church history book published by the RFPA is still being targeted, but postponed due to publication of the book being further down the road than originally thought.
4. Conceptual discussions and investigation into teacher training in the application of Biblical truth, our Reformed heritage, and Protestant Reformed distinctives.

Continue to keep not only Heritage Christian School in your prayers, but all of our Christian schools and parents across the globe. May God continue to shower us with His blessing as, by His grace, we strive to be faithful in our calling to raise our children in the fear of the Lord.

Technology Committee Report – Mr. Dan VanBaren, Committee Chairman

The Technology Committee has had a busy year. As we moved to Autumn Drive we took the opportunity to review and evaluate our needs. We evaluated building security, building access, wireless and wired network requirements, computer labs, projectors, and the phone system.

Building security is improved. We expanded the locked door policy carried over from the Beaverdam campus. Electronic locks are released from either the elementary or the main office. These locks control building access at the primary entrances. The other doors remain locked. Cameras assist tracking who is entering and leaving our building. This security has increased the workload of our office staff. Thankfully the technology in place helps reduce the increased workload and enables us to provide significant security improvements.

The new facility at Autumn Drive was expanded a number of times over the past decades. Each expansion included additional phone wiring. It was possible to reuse this wiring and our old phone system. However, much of the wiring and phone system dated back to the last millennium. The board took this opportunity to upgrade the phone system to a Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) system. The VOIP phones use our network wiring. This eliminates the need to trace out all the old phone lines in the building. VOIP allows adding a phone anywhere there is a computer.

The Autumn Drive facility had an obsolete wireless system. We removed the Dell wireless system from 40th street and brought it to Autumn Drive intending to reuse it. We were advised this system is also obsolete. We did not install it in the new building. The wireless is upgraded to a new Unifi wireless system for better support, speed, and coverage. We can expand this system if

required and improve the capability and coverage at a reasonable cost.

The existing network wiring all is now labeled. The ceilings were removed, and we took advantage to trace wires and verify functionality. We cleaned up much of the mystery wiring in the building. The existing wiring panels now include new racks in the closets. This provides better expansion and support. A second network wire is run to each classroom. This provides some future network expansion and redundancy. Each wiring closet was connected to the main server room with fiber optic cables. The main server room was relocated and secured.

Last year Heritage purchased a second laptop cart for the lower grades at Beaverdam. This cart is a duplicate of the existing cart from 40th Ave. The new cart was purchased with funds allocated for computer replacement. Laptops provided the best solution for Beaverdam where there was no computer classroom. This year we consolidated back to a single campus. The new laptops now replace our computer classroom. Our goal is to eliminate classrooms filled with desktops and bring the computers to the children. Our transition plan for Autumn Drive does not include a computer classroom. Although we don’t have a classroom committed to computers, we did bring the obsolete desktops from the computer lab at 40th to Autumn Drive. Six of these desktops are setup in the classroom destined to become classroom 7C. This provides some additional capability without overloading the existing electrical circuits in that room.

Furniture purchased with the Autumn Drive facility is also placed in classroom 7C to allow one cart of laptops to be plugged and charging while in use. This allows the laptops to be used for

extended periods of time. This worked out well for MAP testing. The power requirements are significantly less than desktops so additional air conditioning and dedicated electrical circuits have not been required.

At the end of the 2014/2015 Heritage had 127 computers for staff and students. This number included the 25 laptop computers purchased to replace the lab desktop computers. This year we retired most the lab desktop computers and reduced that number back to approximately the number of computers we had at the beginning 2014/2015 school year. After seeking quotes for computer and network support, we entered a new contract with ITS. ITS is providing a technician on site every other week to maintain the computers.

Technology also provides tools to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of staff. Our teachers have been effective using iPads, desktop computers, and projectors to teach our children. iPads can roam around the room providing interaction beyond what is possible with a desktop computer. The projectors and screens were moved from 40th and installed at Autumn Drive.

We moved our proprietary email system to Google mail. Google provides free 'Google apps for Education' accounts. The accounts

have better filtering, antivirus support, and user experience than what was possible with the previous system. Google is consistent with what's already in use at Covenant Christian. Our upper classes have begun to implement Google classroom. Google classroom provides rapid feedback, organization, and saves time and paper. We now have limited Google accounts for all the 7th and 8th graders. The accounts are limited to allow interaction with staff and other students. These accounts are the students' link to Google classroom. We thank our staff for not just embracing the technology but also driving it forward.

Changes at Heritage continue this year. We are busy reviewing our options, looking for opportunities, and updating technology. We continue to clean up and sort out the inventory of old stuff we have retained over the years. We continue to look for opportunities to use existing and new technology to improve the education our children get at Heritage Christian School.

We have been blessed with a tremendous support base again this year. This support has allowed us to use technology effectively and efficiently.

Foundation Board Report – Mr. John VanUffelen, Board Representative

Incorporated in 1993, the Heritage Foundation exists to receive and administer funds for the education of students at Heritage Christian School. Annual grants determined by the Board of the Foundation over the years have ranged from \$10,000 to \$59,000, and average more than \$30,000 each year. The grant amounts are determined by the investment return from the funds collected by fundraising activities and other donations.

The primary fundraising activities include an annual golf outing, typically held in late summer, and An Evening of Praise, which is traditionally held the Saturday evening following Thanksgiving. Proceeds from the fundraisers are invested and managed by an Investment Manager, who follows an Investment policy established by the Foundation's Board of Directors.

As I write, the fundraising committee of the Foundation Board is busy making final preparations for An Evening of Praise. The preparations include soliciting sponsors for the tables, arranging for musical performers, setting up the catering, and promoting and selling tickets to the event. The event has not only been a successful fundraising activity, but has been a very enjoyable and spiritually uplifting event for many of our supporters. As this article

is likely being read after An Evening of Praise has taken place, we hope you enjoyed it and thank you for attending.

The Foundation was also established to collect donations from supporters of Heritage Christian School aside from the fundraisers. A largely untapped opportunity for additional donations is through planned giving and estate planning. We know from events like Grandparents Day that there is much love for the covenant Protestant Reformed education at Heritage Christian School. To assist with the often difficult task of planned giving and estate planning, the Foundation Board has partnered with the Barnabas Foundation to provide these services at no cost to supporters. The Barnabas Foundation was established to advance God's kingdom by providing quality planned giving and estate planning services to Christian organizations. The Board will continue to look for ways to explain and promote this important opportunity to support Heritage Christian School.

The Foundation Board thanks all sponsors, and those who participate in and support the fundraisers. The Board also thanks all those who are willing to consider Heritage Christian Foundation in their estate planning. Please contact a Foundation Board member if you have any questions.

"A Friend Loveth At All Times" – Miss Courtney Peterson

This September, we had our first annual Peer to Peer Walk. The purpose of this walk is to raise awareness for the Protestant Reformed Special Education Programs in our schools in West Michigan. Almost 500 family members, friends, and supporters came to this event. We walked under the theme "A Friend Loveth at All Times" (Proverbs 17:17). Our committee chose this verse because the Peer to Peer Walk and our Special Education program itself are focused on the relationship between the students in our Special Education programs and their peers. Even though our students have disabilities or other things that make them "different"

from their classmates, they are equally loved and accepted by their peers.

By working in the Special Education program at Heritage Christian, I am able to see many of the blessings this program brings to our school. It not only benefits the students in our program, but the program impacts the students in the general education as well. The students at Heritage have the opportunity every day to work with and learn from students with differences or disabilities. The students learn how to be kind, understanding, patient, and how to be good friends to everyone. From day one in Kindergarten, they

are classmates with students who have special needs, and that's what becomes the norm for them.

These benefits of our Special Education program are evident in the friendships formed between the students in our program and their peers. Our peers in first, second, and seventh grade have many things to share about why they love having these friends in their classroom.

I like having Mallory in my class because I like to play duck duck goss with hor (her).

I like having Gideon in my class because he is nis. I con ploy with Gideon a lot.

I like Gideon in my class because he is niss to me in reading budes. I like Mallory also because she is niss to me.

I like having Mallory in my class because I can play red rover with her.

I like haveing Gideon in my class because I like to play duck duck gass with him.

I like having Mallory in my class because she is nos (nice) to me kuz alwaz go to me exsityd (excited).

I like having Gideon and Mallory in my class because I like to play hands down. I like Mallory because she is nice to me. I like Gideon because he loves God.

I like having Mallory in my class because i play Duck Duck goose with her. I like bothe of them because they teed us who (how) to be nic to other peopol.

I like having Gideon in my class because he help's me build tower's.

I like Bella in my classroom because she is very nice. And it teaches me to be nice to special needs people. And I like playing bowling with her in her room. I like being her helper. And she is fun to play with. I like to be her helper because I get to sit by her. And I like playing in the sand box.

I love Bella in my classroom because I can read to her. She helps me lern to be quiet because it hurt her ears. It teaches me how to treat students with special needs. She does good at saying words. I like being her helper. She allsoo helps me be kind to others. And I like Bella in my classroom because she sit acrooss from me.

I like to have Bella in my class because I can read and play with Bella. Bella teaches me to be nice to students with special needs. I like to have Bella in my class because she teaches me to be quiet in the classroom. Bella is nice to me. I like to have Bella in my class because she is fun to play whith her playdoh.

I love to read to Bella. Bella is fun to play with! She is good at answering questions! She helps us with lessons. She is a very good student. She is a very good example to us.

I love Bella in our classroom because she loves to have someone read to her. And she is fun to play with. And she teaches us to pay attention. And she teaches us to be quiet.

I love having Bella in my classroom because she is fun to read to. I also love having ella in my room because it is so fun to play with her in the Special Education room. She teaches me to be quiet

during class. She also teaches me to be nice to kids with special needs. She also teaches me to help everyone. She also teaches me to be kind to everyone.

I like Bella in our room because I like to read to her. I like to play with Bella. And I like to help Bella. Bella teaches us to be quiet. I like to be Bellas buddy. Bella is a very good student. I am glad she is in my class.

I like to play with Bella in the special ed room. And I love to read whith Bella. She is very nice. And I love her prity dresses. And I love her in my classroom. And she is a very good at wrcing (working).

I like Bella becaus she like people read to her and she teaches us that no one is the saim.

Having Will in my grade helps me with a lot of things. First, it helps me realize that we are fearfully and wonderfully made and that although we may look different and act different, we are all the same in God's eyes.

Will also teaches me that a good friend doesn't have to be popular, loud, noticeable, and stand-outish. It can be a quiet, not popular person. It doesn't just have to be a boy or girl. It can be anyone.

Will also teaches me that God is in control. He planned all things and although we don't know the future, God knows what's going to happen. So we don't have to fear or be angry that we don't know or be angry of what has happened. We have to thank God for good and bad.

Another thing Will or any other special needs person teaches not only be but all people that we need to love one another and be patient just like God is to us. We have to love and be kind with everyone even if they aren't "our kind" of people. We also need be patient because everyone is different.

I'm thankful to have special needs people in our school because they teach us so many things.

Having Will in my class has really taught me a lot. Will has taught me to be thankful for everything God has given us. We have to appreciate every big and small blessing. He teaches us to be humble and to have compassion. Scientist say that special needs are a mistake, but God tells us in his word that they are all part of His perfect plan. There are no mistakes in God's work. Psalm 139 verse 14: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." Will has taught me to be patient and to put others first. We often think of ourselves as number one, and we want to do everything to please ourselves. I'm thankful for God's Word and the Holy Spirit to show us that others are more important than ourselves.

Will is a wonderful classmate. He teaches me and others to be happy and look past the bad thing in our lives. Will is fearfully and wonderfully made and a wonderful gift from God. He teaches us that there might be bad in our lives but to look at the bright side and past the bad. I thank God for Will.

Name Change? – Mr. Doug DeBoer

Several 9th graders were gathered near my desk, and others were sitting on top of desks around the room. It was the fall of 1985 and an informal meeting was taking place in order to choose a nickname or mascot for Heritage. The decision was necessary in connection with the first yearbook that we were trying to put together. After a short discussion a consensus was reached among the thirteen classmates of the first graduating class - it was to be "Panthers". Thus for the next thirty years we have gone forth into interscholastic competition as this fierce feline. More than one class desired to have their class gift be a painting of a panther on the gym wall. This was not considered a wise use of class funds by the Gift Advisory Committee of one, thus no black cat ever graced the walls of the gymnasium; however, on more than one occasion a panther has adorned our uniforms. In recent years the use of the panther has spread as the robotics team took the name "RoboPanthers".

Thirty years later we dwell in a different building and the panther is in jeopardy. Rising high over the court on the gym's east wall as well as resting at center court is a FALCON. Naturally this has led to the question of what we really are. Have we lost our identity? The question caused me to ponder as to what is the significance of this cat and bird. I tried to think of what name or mascot went with the other twelve schools in the Allegan-Ottawa-Kent (AOK) Christian Middle School League. Even though we have been a part of this league since 1989, I was unable to recall each school's nickname. Therefore I sent out an e-mail asking each school for their mascot and what significance it held for them.

In no particular order this is what I found:

- Byron Center Bobcats – I thought it was the Comets, but then I realized that was Cutlerville's name before they combined with Kelloggsville to become Legacy.

- Moline Mustangs – Their A.D. added, "No, we are not the "Milkers" as some call us."
- Zeeland Rams
- Allendale Chargers
- West Side Vikings
- Calvin Squires
- Hudsonville Vikings
- Hope Royals
- Legacy Lightning
- Jenison Eagles – Their A.D. said that they only used their name once a year for a fund drive, but now they dropped it for that also.
- Adams Knights
- Dutton Defenders

The significance of the names is not very great based on the responses I received. It varied from no use of the name to having the name appear on some of a school's uniforms. At least a couple responses were that the students liked to use their school's nickname when they yelled cheers during games. The most permanent use of the name was that one school did have it painted on the wall and one or two others had theirs on the gym floor.

All of the schools in our league would agree that we are not Vikings, Rams, Mustangs, or Bobcats. We are followers of Christ. Our name is Christian. We must encourage all who participate to let their light shine. When others leave our school after a game it doesn't matter whether we won or lost or if we are Falcons or Panthers – it only matters that we served our Father. Our identity is in Christ. Thus you can call me a Panther or a Falcon.

The kids always did want the mascot painted on the wall.

Matters of Spelling Because Spelling Matters – Mrs. Deb Bleyenbergh

One of the recurring themes in many of my parent-teacher conferences has been how to help children who are struggling with learning to spell. So often I've been told by parents, "I make my kid practice their words every night. They finally are getting the words correct by Thursday, but seem to completely forget them on Friday's test." Or, "I never was a good speller and still am not, so my child gets it from me!"

When I asked my second graders if they enjoyed practicing their spelling words at home, many of them wrote to me expressing similar sentiments:

"I practice spelling six days. I take forever. Mom says a word and I try to spell it, but I can't. I have to erase it and do a different word. At the end, I practice all the ones I got wrong. It makes my stomach feel hungry and yucky and like a stomach ache."

"It wastes all of my screen time, and I get mad."

"I don't like spelling because I have to write [my words] at least every day."

"I do not like practicing spelling because I prefer to go outside. And because I like to build. If I get [a word] wrong, I have to do it 10 times more."

"I was born to not like [spelling]. I sit and write on a piece of paper."

"I have to write one word and then other after other after other after other. If I get any wrong, I get to write them 5 or 10 or 15 or 20 or 25 or 30. That is the thing that I don't like."

"All I want is an A+."

I'll take the liberty of assuming that Reformed Christians don't need to be persuaded that spelling is an important skill to work on. After all, spelling is a foundational skill for reading and writing, which are both abilities that allow us to learn and communicate more about our God. But with that being said, we also recognize that some brains naturally seem to learn correct spelling while other brains just need SO. MUCH. PRACTICE. to pass the Friday test.

Below you will find what I believe to be the four most important guidelines to remember when you are helping a child learn how to spell better:

1. RELEVANCE: First of all, you need to find ways to make spelling relevant to the age and interests of your child. For example, telling a 2nd grade child that they better focus and learn these words because someday they will need to spell correctly on a job application is completely irrelevant to the experience of a 7-year-old and will not magically make them care about learning to spell. Likewise, telling your child, "Oh well, you got a C on your test without much studying, but I never was good at spelling either," also will not motivate them to care.

Kids care about learning when it feels good to them and when it matters to their life. So use what you know about your child and his or her interests to make their spelling words relevant. Does your kid love Legos? Then use Lego bricks to shape the words on the floor; or set a paper on a Lego base and write words with a crayon over the bumpy texture; or write a letter to the Lego company using several spelling words! There are so many other ideas if you just start thinking about it...write an email to Grandpa or a card to someone in church and highlight the spelling words used. Or, if your child does a good job practicing their words for a few nights, then maybe you allow them to write a text to auntie using their three most challenging words each week. Remember: when learning matters to a child, it will help him or her transition that learning from short to long-term memory storage areas of the brain for retrieval later.

2. MOVEMENT: When you have your child practice spelling words, the most effective thing you can do is incorporate physical movement and muscle memory. By itself, just the act of standing up increases blood flow to the brain by 10%, which in turn increases the brain's ability to attend and focus. This means that physical movement causes your brain to process information twice as fast as it does when you are just sitting! Any way you find to practice spelling words by moving around, competing, or using muscle memory will be much easier for your child's brain to remember. Here are a few examples to get you started: write spelling words on a person's back and have them guess the word; write words on an unfamiliar substance like a plate of sugar or shaving cream; spell words out loud as you do jumping jacks or pass a ball; spell a word out loud by standing when you say a consonant and squatting when you say a vowel; write words on cards and create a relay race; write words on cards, cut apart, and match them back together like puzzles. The ideas are endless, FUN, and far more effective than just sitting and writing out the words every week!

3. LIMIT WORK TIME: It is well-researched in neuroscience that the age of a child is a good guideline for how long the child's brain is able to maintain attention. So, for example, a 7-year-old 2nd grader should only be expected to work for about seven minutes before the activity is slightly changed or before some quick break or movement is given. This is especially the case if your 2nd grader is sitting and writing out words. After seven minutes of working hard, their brain will not be focused enough for long-term learning, so a quick drink, a run up and down the steps, or any small change of task will help refocus their mind. If you want your 1st or 2nd grader to practice their words for fifteen minutes a night, you could even create three five-minute work sessions such as: write as many words as you can on a marker board (5 min), spell your words with your finger on the carpet (5 min), and use a highlighter or something fun to write your words in alphabetical order (5 min). Get creative and let your child help think of new ideas that they want to try!

4. IDENTIFY AND CORRECT MISTAKES: If you notice your child struggle with a few words that follow a phonetic rule (and therefore are not sight words that have to be memorized), take the time to help them identify and correct their mistakes. When a child understands WHY something is incorrect, their learning will transition from just trying to memorize a word to mastering it. If your child has already mastered 9 of their 15 spelling words, then focus their study time just on the 6 difficult words. There are also fun ways of doing this if you use your imagination! For example, if your child keeps forgetting that IR is often found in number-related words, have them spell "bIRth" and "thIRteen" using one color marker, but have them write the IR in bright orange! Or help them turn a word into a picture that they can visualize! Tape these challenge words to the wall by their bed or to the bathroom mirror so they can subconsciously read them before they fall asleep or as they brush their teeth.

If you've read this far and think, "I don't have time to do these things with my children," please remember this one thought: If you have a struggling speller, any time you provide them learning that involves movement, muscle memory, and hearing, they will be far more likely to remember what they've practiced than if they just sit and write every evening.

Finally, I will make a few suggestions for ways to incorporate technology into spelling practice, but do not rely on these for study time every night. Get your kid MOVING as they learn their words, then reward them with screen time for further practice. Here are just a few apps to look into, and I'd be happy to give you more information at your request:

- SpellingCity – This is both a website and an app that you can input your child's spelling list each week.
- Word Wizard – A simple app that also lets you create your own word lists or use pre-made lists. This app is good for younger students and can even isolate just the letters needed to spell their word.
- Spelling Bee – This app would also be good for older students. It lets you create and record your child's word list, and then they can choose to unscramble words, listen and type them, or a couple other games.
- SpellingStar1.1.5 – A very basic app in which you create your child's list by spelling and recording their words. They have to spell each word correctly 3 times with no hints to become a spelling star.
- Sand Draw and Glow Paint are not specifically spelling apps, but are examples of apps that let children write on fun surfaces.
- If you have further suggestions of worthwhile and effective apps that you like for spelling, please share them with me at debbley4@gmail.com. I'm always learning too!

Write With Your Child – Mrs. Erika Aalsma

No, you didn't misread the title. It does say WRITE with your child. Many of my conversations with parents have contained some form of the statement "read with your child". I've encouraged out loud reading, reading to your child, reading with a tape, listening to a book being read, reading to a younger sibling and talking about what you've read. But, in 16 years of teaching I've never spoken the words "write with your child" to a parent. And why not? As

students reach their middle school, high school and college years, a large portion of the work that they do will involve writing. It will be critical for them to learn how to clearly and effectively communicate their ideas, opinions and knowledge through their writing.

But, isn't this your job you say? Shouldn't writing instruction happen at school? Reading at home is a reinforcement of what is

taught at school and provides practice with this essential skill. But writing, can we practice writing at home? Absolutely! The type of writing that can be done at home does not involve practicing correct sentence structure or working to write a paragraph with a clear main idea and supporting details. At-home writing does not even need to concern itself with capital letters and punctuation, although as opportunity arises certainly grasp those teachable moments. Rather, writing with your child can be a way to evoke the writer within your child.

First, begin with yourself. Step back and think about your personal writing life. What did you write today? Writing, just like reading is evident in many different genres. From letters, emails, lists, recipes, Bible study sheets, prayer lists and more, we write more often than we think. Think about ways to share those writing experiences with your child. Ask them to add items to the grocery list. Have them write a list of people that you pray for in your family devotions. Make smoothies, hand them a recipe card and ask them to record the steps and ingredients.

Secondly, help them connect what they read to the writing that takes place within that text. As they are reading a *Geronimo Stilton* book ask them what they notice about the author's craft of using bold, colorful onomatopoeia words to engage the reader in the story. In the *My America* or *Dear America* series point out the use of a journal. Talk about how the author uses this genre to help the reader connect to the character's emotions and feelings.

And thirdly, make their writing meaningful. Encourage journaling or story telling, but then provide opportunities for them to share what they've written. On the drive home from a family vacation, write stories recapping everyone's favorite moment of the trip. Then, after the bags are unpacked and the laundry is finished, sit down and share that writing. These authentic opportunities are critical, partly for giving children the opportunity to express their ideas in writing, but also to allow them to develop and grow as a writer.

Earlier this year I shared with the students Cynthia Rylant's autobiographical picture book *When I Was Young in the Mountains*. After reading the story I read them a version of the story that I had written, *When I Was Young in Small Town*

Wisconsin. After I read, I invited them to write their own *When I Was Young* story. The classroom was still and everyone begin to write and write. Some continued into recess and others finished the next day. And when they shared them with the class?

Well, read for yourself...

*When I was young in Hudsonville...
I played on our rope swing and went next door
and looked at the sheep and swam in the pool.
I moved and now I play on our horse swing and
play on our neighbor's swing set
and walk to school every single day.*

Kathleen Korhorn

*When I was young in Hudsonville...
We lived close to the fair. The tornado siren
was across the street from us.
When we were naughty there was something across
the street that looked like a switch on the siren.
So my dad would go over to it and stand by it.
We would say, Please, I will never do it again!
And we would take rides to the fair on our bikes.
It was funny and awesome.
Once the tornado siren rang and my brothers and sisters
went in the barn and forgot me.*

Laura Gunnink

*When I was young at Wabasis...
I split my chin open and everybody stared at me.
I got seven stitches
and my cousin Emily took them out at home.
We used to climb trees,
we started to not do it when somebody fell down.
We would have fishing competitions.
Usually the girls win, because we have my dad.
We splash in the lake and go to the park.
A few of the uncles bring their boats.*

Ashlyn VanOverloop

Back Again – Mrs. Rhonda Holstege

Having returned to teaching after a seventeen year break, I have been asked many things. People want to know how it is going: am I busy, do I enjoy it, and what does the family think of all of this? They really want to know, either out of concern or maybe out of curiosity as well.

Things are going well! It might have taken a bit, but we are working things out. I am not at home all day to organize things, make appointments, run errands, do laundry, make meals, or spend time with family and friends, so I have to arrange time after school. Work often comes home with me now. I try to get things accomplished at recess, but there are shoes that need to be tied, zippers that are stuck, and snacks that have to be opened. These are not bad things; they are just things that occupy more of my time now.

I do enjoy teaching the children entrusted to me for the school year. I even enjoy seeing children of the parents that I have taught some twenty years ago. They remind me of the covenant that God has established with us and our future generations.

Some things have stayed the same since I last taught. The staff is still wonderful to work with. We have weekly teacher devotions and

monthly meetings with all the teachers. We have chapels regularly and hot lunches are once a week. We have aides who help out in the classroom or wherever needed and all participate in outside recess duty.

Some things, though, have changed. There are some different teachers from when I taught. I know a lot more people than when I first moved out from Iowa. We have lockdown drills that were never a part of my routine, and because of the times, school has to be locked at all times. We have more office help, more students, a different building, and a new facilities manager. We have Monday morning devotions with the whole school, which was not done when I taught. The use of technology has increased dramatically. Technology has made things so much easier on the one hand, but many discussions on its uses have to be acknowledged as well.

No matter what changes, the love of God still abides and is being taught here at Heritage. We have godly teachers, aides, secretaries, students, parents, and school board. We begin and end our day with a prayer to God to watch over His children in all that they say, do, and think. I end with the doxology, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow!"

Giving Thanks In First Grade – Mrs. Kaitlin Bylsma

The week of Thanksgiving, we did a series of journal entries about what we are thankful to God for. We talked about how everything we have comes from God, so He is really the only One we can be thankful to! I'm sure there are many, many things that we are thankful for, but in first grade, we focus on one or two things that really stand out. It was great seeing the varying topics that the students came up with. I didn't give too much guidance when it came to what they should choose to write about. It always astounds me how much insight first graders can bring to their assignments. Many students wrote about being thankful for things I would never have expected them to choose! It just shows how much I am constantly learning from my students.

Now, when they write in their journals, I never tell them how to spell anything. I encourage them to hear the sounds in words and will often slowly say the sounds of a word so they can try to spell it. At this point in first grade, we've really only learned how to spell words with short vowels and single-letter sounds. On the rest, they just have to do their best! We also have been talking a lot about using correct punctuation and capitalization in our sentences; those are skills we are really just starting to develop at the beginning of first grade. What I'm trying to say is these journal entries will not be perfect, but we definitely did our best on them! Here are the unedited journal entries, and I hope you enjoy them!

I'm so thankful to God for food cuse sume pepol dont have food. - Graeson Decker

I'm so thankful to God for Jesus died on the cros be cus he luvz us. - Piper Holstege

I'm so thankful to God for my techer because she is nice. I'm also thankful for my parents because they love me. - Callie Dykstra

I'm so thankful to God for Elsie because she funny. - Mallory VanderKolk

I'm so thankful to God for Jesus doyen on the cross. - Colin Corson

I'm so thankful to God for my food becus some pepl dont have ene. - Kailyn DeBoode

I'm so thankful to God for my skl becus we wrship God. - Davis Dykstra

I'm so thankful to God for the creation becuase it is good. - Liam Heyboer

I'm so thankful to God for his son dying on the cus. - Beka Bylsma

I'm so thankful to God for food and jrink because some peopel do not have eanuf food and jrink. - Natalie VanUffelen

I'm so thankful to God for my home because I live in it and I love it. - Easton Schimmel

I'm so thankful to God for teachers and Ms emily. - Gideon VanderWaal

I'm so thankful to God for Jesus becus he died on the cross to save us from all are many wicid sin's. - Landon Kuperus

I'm so thankful to God for Skylar because she is cuot. - Hattie Karsemeyer

I'm so thankful to God for the snow in the wrld because its fun playing in the snow. - Kent Kuiper

I'm so thankful to God for my howse bekus my howse is nis. - Austin Griffioen

I'm so thankful to God for his son Jesus diyen on the kos bcuse Jesus is Gods onle son. - Allison Wassink

I'm so thankful to God for Conrr be cuss he is so ket And be cus I luv him. - Maraya VanOverloop

I'm so thankful to God for Jesus dien on the kros. He savd us form r sins. - Madalyn Karsemeyer

I'm so thankful to God for my family becuase they are niss to me. - Brady Holstege

I'm so thankful to God for my tollur sistr tabtha. she is nuys. An my famlyl becos I love dem. - Gerrit Bol

Self-Assessment in Self-Control – Mr. Karl Dykstra

An assessment is a measurement of student learning. The two most widely used types of assessment are formative and summative. Formative assessments are used by the *teacher* throughout the lesson and unit plan to check the level of students' understanding and also plan subsequent instruction. Examples of formative assessments might be asking questions, daily work, and quizzes. A summative (final) assessment is used by the *teacher* to evaluate students' learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it to some standard or benchmark. Examples of summative assessment might be a final test or project.

Another form of assessment that is getting a lot of face time in the world of education is *student* self-assessment. By self-assessment we mean the process by which *students* monitor and evaluate their own learning and identify ways that they can improve their understanding. To put it another way, self-assessment is *students*, on an individual basis, determining how much progress they have made through a learning goal and how much they still need to learn.

The process of self-assessment means that students must be provided by the teacher clear, measurable learning goals at the beginning of a unit of instruction. Students need benchmarks to assess their progress. In the classroom, it might look like this. On day one of a science unit on the muscular system, the teacher introduces the unit of study by telling the class *exactly* what they will be expected to master by the end of the 3 week unit. These are called "learning goals." Perhaps one of these learning goals would state, "Students will be able to provide 3 characteristics for skeletal, cardiac, and smooth muscles." As the class moves forward through the unit, the *teacher* will use various formative assessments prior to the final test to make sure the students are progressing through that goal.

However, it also falls on the students to check their own level of understanding. This is done by providing the students the opportunity to assess whether they have attained that clear goal. One way that an opportunity for self-assessment can be provided is by using "ticket-to-leave" form. At the end of class, each student

is to fill out the form wherein they assess their own personal level of understanding. The student is asked to internalize this question: "How well do I know each type of muscle?" If a student realizes that they can give 3 characteristics of only skeletal and cardiac muscle, but he or she has very little knowledge of *smooth* muscles, the student must take it upon him or herself to understand the material that isn't fully comprehended.

As I mentioned, self-assessment has become a hot topic in the world of education. If implemented properly, it seems like a sure-fire way to get students to be more responsible in their learning. Yet, as Christian teachers and parents, it falls on us to question every wind of change to see if it holds up to the test of Scripture. Is self-assessment something that we should be implementing in our schools?

The simple answer to the question is, yes, self-assessment can and should be implemented in our schools. Students who are taught and who use self-evaluation skills are applying the last fruit of the Spirit spoken of by Paul in Galatians 5, i.e., *temperance*. By temperance, we mean the gift of God's grace whereby the child of God is willingly governed by Christ and his word. Temperance is more commonly known as self-control or self-discipline. By applying this fruit of the Spirit, the child of God governs every aspect of his or her life according to the demands of God's word. To summarize, temperance, or self-control, is living the Christian life in every aspect of life.

Typically, when we speak of temperance and self-control, we do so in connection with student behavior. Students are taught and are expected to display self-control in their behavior. This means that when in the restroom, they are expected to refrain from swinging on the bars of the stalls. When in the halls they are expected to refrain from kicking soccer balls down the length of the hallway. When taking tests, they are expected not to look through their

notes for the correct test answers. In the classroom, students are expected not to blurt out interruptions while teaching is happening. Any infraction of self-control in regards to behavior must be corrected.

But self-control must not be applied only to the behavior of a student. Self-control must be a fruit applied to every aspect of our lives – not only in behavior but especially in *learning*. In the same way that we want our students to internalize the question, "Am I living the life of godliness and gratitude to God by showing proper behavior?" we also want them to internalize this question, "Am I living the life of godliness and gratitude by learning more about my God?" In *this* context, when the students take on the responsibility to govern their own learning by living up the learning goals, they are not merely self-assessing. They are exercising the spiritual fruit of self-control. And so, simply stated, self-assessment is self-control.

The goal of self-assessment is to encourage students to take on greater responsibility in their learning. Consider again the student who realized she was not able to provide 3 characteristics for *every* type of muscle. On her own time, the student finds and studies the main characteristics of smooth muscles. Doing so, she has met the goal and learning has occurred – which is exactly what we want. Additionally, not only has the student taken on greater responsibility, but she has also grown in confidence of her ability as she heads toward the final test – a secondary goal of self-assessment.

Student self-assessment has as its goal the enhancement of learning. But in our schools it can never be learning for its own sake. The goal of self-assessment is not to get the "high grade." Self-assessment, as self-control, aims at the highest prize of loving fellowship with God in the way of knowing more of Him and His work in creation.

Popularity In Our Christian Schools – Mr. Matt Kuiper

One of the joys of teaching is the opportunity a teacher has to interact with so many different traits in students each day. One of the challenges of teaching is the opportunity to interact with so many different traits in students each day. Some traits shown are outgoing, shy, outspoken, soft spoken, friendly, studious, fun, lazy, and sometimes even mean. Many of these traits lead to what we would refer to as "popularity". What does popularity mean to you? What does popularity mean to our students? What is the Biblical view of popularity? I will briefly write about these three things. Some of the information I will present is from actual student writings in my Bible class when asked about popularity.

"If I am popular, I will have it made!! Everyone will like me and everyone will want to be just like me." These are words that come to mind when people think of being popular. Don't we see popular people every time we turn on the television to watch a show or a sporting event? The world glamorizes everything the good-looking people do and especially everything the athletes do. Isn't this what popularity is? Who wouldn't want that? Who wouldn't want all that attention every day? Everyone wants to be your friend because you are so likable. It is the glorious life of people fawning over you every day. Amazing!! This is the life we all strive for, right?

According to many of our students, this is not the life they want. Are they crazy? I may have forgotten that trait earlier. What is popularity in our students' minds? There are mixed reviews. Most

say that they have no desire for popularity, because popular people seem to be mean, conceited, always looking to take advantage of others, arrogant, proud, and overall not very enjoyable to be around. Are we really supposed to have a desire for popularity? Some say not necessarily. Here are quotes from a few of my students:

"It [popularity] is not very important to me because your friends like you for who you are. They don't like it when you try to be someone else. More importantly, God loves you for who you are." Ashley Spronk

"I think that it doesn't matter how many friends you have as long as they are good Christian friends. It's also good to be a friend to others. Jesus was a perfect friend on earth to the sick, the widows, and his own disciples. He is the example that we should follow." Megan DeVries

"I think being popular is very unimportant to me because being popular should not mean that one person is better than the other person. God says that we should not look on the outside of others but what is on the inside. We should not brag about who is the best because in God's eyes He sees us all equal with each other." Troy Kalsbeek

"Being popular is building yourself up and not others. You're making a statement that there are people below you and

you're higher than them when you're not. If you continue to do this in life I think no one will want to be around you." Rylee Engelsma

"I have some good friends who are nice to me and like me and I have good self esteem. I don't really have a desire to be popular." Lynnae Looyenga

"Most of the time when I think of being popular, I think of people being popular by being mean or being really good at sports, and then they think they're better than anyone else." Andrew Moelker

"I also don't want to be looked down on so I try not to be that person who picks on someone just because I think I'm popular and better than anyone else." Kate Eriks

Some of my students looked at popularity in a different light, although they agreed on the negatives of popularity. Some students said popularity is simply having friends. Friends are important and if you have friends, you are popular. Is it necessary to look at popularity as a negative thing? According to dictionary.com, popularity is "the favor of the general public or of a particular group of people". Some people are easy to get along with and people like them. There is nothing wrong with this, is there? Here are a few more quotes of students who see popularity this way:

"Being popular in school may help you for a while, but in the long run, it won't matter much. But I chose this over being organized because if you are popular you'll have lots of friends, and friends in school are like syrup on a pancake." Tyler VanderMeulen

"Being popular to me means having friends. Good friends are very important because they can help me stay out of trouble and they can help me if I do something wrong to not do it again." Joshua Engelsma

"Another one of my important things is popularity. You could take this two ways. One, being someone well known and liked and maybe a showoff. Or two, instead of being known and liked as a showoff, maybe being known and liked as a Christian. It is good that we are popular Christians. We need to be well known for our love in God and his word." Sable Maas

"It shows that I have good friends who can help me. They help me in school and life. Being popular to me means, not that everyone thinks you're cool and awesome, but rather that you have friends that have your back and will always be there for you." Trenton Mowery

"Being popular can be good or bad. I would not want to be popular just by the clothes I wore or by how athletic I am, but by being kind to everybody and bringing someone up, not by making them feel lower than anybody. Being popular can be a good thing as well if you were someone that was admired and if you are a good role model by your actions, your attitude and by choosing good friends that will also be role models." Sydney Zolen

Popularity can be viewed as a bad thing, if we allow our sin of pride to get in the way. I do see that far too often. I hope parents talk to their children about humility and pride. It is so easy for kids to get caught up in the sin of pride which leads to the negative view of popularity. Popularity can also be viewed as a good thing if it is about having good, Christian friends and being a popular example to those around us.

What does the Bible say about popularity? Proverbs 29:23 states, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." This obviously refers to the need to be humble and brings down the idea of popularity making one better than another. Proverbs 29:25 refers to the fear of man bringing a snare. When we adore others, we are making them an idol rather than adoring God. Psalm 139:14 says, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are my works; and that my soul knoweth right well." All of us are made equally and it is important that we all know that. Mark 12:30-31 says it best. "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." Loving the neighbor is impossible with pride and a lack of a humble spirit. Parents, talk to your children about this. Teachers, talk to your students. Help them see the importance of seeing popularity as being good, in the way of being kind and showing to the world how Christians ought to act, loving one another.

Popularity to some means all the glamour in the world and people looking up to them and making them better than others. Hopefully this is a worldly idea that stays away from our schools. Others know that popularity is simply having good Christian friends, helping them make good decisions in life and enjoying one another's company. The Bible says that pride is wrong. Humbleness of spirit is what we should strive for. That is popularity in God's eyes. We are all the same in His eyes, made in His likeness. Parents, talk to your children about being popular in the right way. Students, listen to your parents, and more importantly, hear what word of God has to say.

Library Fines and Phonemes – Mr. Mike Noorman

My kids came back from the library this afternoon with 48 books and 10 books-on-tape; it was a very quiet house for a few hours. Because that many books are hard to keep track of, there may be a library fine in our future, but the enjoyment that my kids will get from reading will be worth it. We don't have video games, and TV plays a very small role in their day. They probably will not read this since my Herald article will not sit high on their list of exciting reads, so I can tell you that they will get a few books as gifts this year. As I write this article, my wife is reading

another chapter of "On the Banks of Plum Creek" by Laura Ingalls Wilder while they all sit around her in the living room chair. My children enjoy books. I don't know all of the reasons for this, but some of them are due to the fact that we have read to them ever since they were young enough to look at pictures and hear stories.

Those of you who do these things probably feel the same as I do. If you make books a big part of your children's lives, they will be more likely to enjoy reading. They will also have been exposed

to many different types of literature and will have learned a lot in the process. This exposure and appreciation of literature will reap benefits in their educational futures since reading plays such a large role in their learning in school.

What if they don't enjoy reading? You have done your due diligence and surrounded them with books, read to them every night, took them to the library weekly, kept technology and TV time at a minimum, and put a great deal of effort into showing them that reading time is time well spent, but this child of yours refuses to show any desire to read. I would say that you have an outlier, an exception to the rule.

You might be the parents that have laid all the groundwork for your child to read, but there is more to the story. Your child may have a problem learning how to read. They enjoy listening to you read books, or looking at picture books on the living room floor, but they don't run to the book shelf the first chance they get with some free time because reading is difficult for them. These reading difficulties become more apparent as they progress through school.

On a positive note, no one can deny that exposing your children to literature throughout their life is a very good thing. You don't need research to tell you that (although it will). Even if they struggle with reading, it is still very important to do what you can to present reading as important because reading has more purposes than only for enjoyment. Reading is also done to gather information, to bring meaning, to add depth to our thinking and stretch our imagination, to inspire creativity, and to get around town.

Because reading plays such an important part of our lives, there is a huge focus on it in school. When our children learn how to read, they can begin to explore God's world in a whole new way. Because it is a gateway to learning, and it makes up most of our curriculum from kindergarten to 8th grade at Heritage Christian School, learning will be hindered if reading is not a student's strength.

There are so many details involved in learning how to read. If you are a parent or a teacher of a K-3rd grader, you know this. The more I study reading, the more I realize how complicated learning how to read can be. It has been helpful to me to keep all of the facets of learning how to read categorized into five main groups or ideas. When working with students on their reading, I use these five big ideas to provide a focus and a guided approach for instructing children to develop their reading skills.

In the following paragraphs, I will briefly present the five big ideas that make a skilled reader. The approach, strategies, and programs behind the teaching of these skills may evolve over time, but these five areas remain the same.

The five big ideas of reading are phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle or phonics, accuracy/fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. It is these five areas that have proved to be predictive of later reading achievement and therefore a focus of the reading instruction at Heritage Christian School.

Phonemic awareness is auditory and does not involve words in print. It is a difficult skill that requires children to notice how letters represent sounds. There are 26 different letters, and 40 different sound units called phonemes that represent over 250 different spellings. If a child cannot hear that "man" and "moon" begin with the same sounds or cannot blend sounds together, they will have a difficult time applying sounds to words.

Competent readers and writers can identify and generate rhymes, scan through words and sequence the sounds made by letters or chunks of letters (cat=/c/,/a/,/t/), hear sounds in sequence in words and reproduce them in print.

Alphabetic principle or phonics is the ability to associate sounds with letters and use these sounds to form words. This is the unlocking of the English language code, referred to as decoding, which flows from sounding out individual letters all the way to reading whole words. The skill of reading sight words and automatic word reading develop out of this big idea.

Accuracy and fluency are not the same thing, but they are related to the effortless, automatic ability to read words in connected text. Reading accurately means children can identify letter-sound connections, spelling patterns, blended phonemes (sound units), and isolated words quickly, efficiently, and correctly. Fluency is a gateway to reading comprehension because it allows the reader to put less focus on decoding and more focus on making meaning of the text as they read.

Vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to making meaning of words in order to learn something new, and it is very connected to reading comprehension. Children's vocabulary size approximately doubles between grades 3 and 7 at a rate of about 3,000-5,000 words per year.

The fifth big idea of reading is **comprehension**, and it is the purpose of learning how to read. It is purposeful thinking in which meaning is made through interaction between the text and the reader. Adequate reading comprehension is the most important result of reading instruction.

At this point, you can see that all five big ideas of reading are related and some of them are foundational to the others. By identifying these five things, teachers can pinpoint areas of strength and weakness in individual students abilities and instruct them appropriately. Reading instruction has a large base of knowledge to pull from, more than any other part of learning. Each big idea is research-based and programs have been developed that relate to these five areas.

There are preventative efforts in place at school that are designed to provide growth in the five big ideas during the early elementary grades. It is important to put much effort and resources into early identification and prevention of reading problems. As parents, you can do your part by filling your child's lives with reading at the earliest age. Even before they can understand what you are saying, read to them. After that, do everything you can to encourage these habits to continue. Here are some ideas: 1. Give them books to read on their own that are at their reading level or below, 2. Get audio books for them to listen to, 3. Read to them, and 4. Set aside time for them to read to you. When choosing books, pick a wide range of fiction and non-fiction and always choose books with your child's reading ability in mind. Books that are slightly above their reading level can be used for listening to the audio versions or a read-aloud. If you are not sure about your child's reading level, talk to their teacher.

The effort we can make to ensure that learning how to read is a priority will be worth it. There may be rough patches but stay the course. You might not see the fruit of your labors for many years to come, but that next library visit, and possible library fine, will be worth it. If you have any questions about your child's reading, talk to your child's teacher or to me. See you at the library!

Upcoming Dates for this School Year

December 24-January 1, 2016 – Christmas Break
Feb. 3 and 11, 2016 – P/T Conferences
Feb. 19, 2016 – Mid-Winter Break
Feb. 25, 2016 – HCS Math Night
March 12, 2016 – Spring Children's Clothing and Toy Sale
April 1-8, 2016 – Spring Break
May 5, 2016 – Kindergarten Round-Up
May 20, 2016 – Kindergarten Program
May 30, 2016 – No School (Memorial Day)
May 31, 2016 – Graduation, last day for students (1/2 day)

2016-2017 School Year Calendar (Next year's calendar!!!!)

August 30, 2016 – School begins
September 2 and 5, 2016 – No school (Labor Day)
October 20-21, 2016 – No school (Teachers Convention)
November 24-25, 2016 – Thanksgiving Break
December 26, 2016 – January 3, 2017 – Christmas Break
February 17, 2017 – Mid-winter Break
March 31 - April 7, 2017 – Spring Break
May 29, 2017 – No school (Memorial Day)
May 31, 2017 – Last day of school and graduation