

Herald



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God's Voice In Mathematics
Mr. Brian Kuiper, Administrator

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

Colossians 1:16-17

One of the true blessings of our schools is the fact that all subjects are taught in the light of the Word. This means that the content His children learn in our schools teaches them to see the world as His because instruction is infused with the Word. As a former mathematics instructor, I can attest that this did not always seem to be the case in my classroom. I would readily and enviously charge my colleagues in all other academic areas that their work in this matter was easy and mine rarely possible. Regular and repetitive use of the words *order* and *patterns* and *truth* could only be done so many times before the students would become bored with my spiritual integrations. At that time, it also seemed that little work in our schools had been publicly done to develop this spiritual emphasis in mathematics. The formative public work in this area was done by Mr. Vern Huber in 1989 when he wrote an overview of mathematics from a Christian perspective (published on the Federation website www.prcs.org). The desire of mathematics teachers to do better in this area gives me great joy and formed the basis for my sectional at this past Teachers Convention.

When mathematics is taught in a distinctly Christian manner, the basis of mathematics must be clear to the instructor and to the students. Throughout history the concept of mathematics has been understood in several ways. One was promoted by the philosopher Plato who taught that mathematics exists independent of the human mind. Thus, all known mathematics must be found or discovered because it exists “out there”. Another approach was taught only a few years later by Aristotle, a student of Plato’s, who believed that mathematics is a product of the human mind. That is, mathematics is created by the human mind. It could be shown that both of these philosophies were rooted in humanism. Either the human must be honored because of what he discovers, or the human must be praised for the mathematics he creates. One more view that must be considered is that God created a world that IS mathematical. Nearly 2000 years after Plato and Aristotle, Galileo said, “The universe is written in the language of mathematics.” God enables man to see the world, understand that world, and explain His world using mathematics. In his book, Mr. Huber states it this way, “We take the position that mathematics should be viewed as an invention of the mind in response to God’s creation” (45). This might not have an impact on *what* mathematics we teach or *when* we teach certain concepts. It should have some impact on *how* we teach. It will profoundly impact *why* we teach mathematics. For

the purpose of this article, I'll suggest we define mathematics as the way of recording and expressing laws and relationships in God's creation.

This understanding of mathematics is supported by the scriptures. I Corinthians 8:6 refers to our God "of whom" and "by whom" are all things. Romans 1:20 teaches us that the invisible things of God are "clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." And, the well-known Article II of the Belgic Confession states that creation is before our eyes "as a most elegant book". Our God has given us language to speak of His creation, scientific processes to describe His creatures, organisms, and other parts of creation, art and music to use in the enjoyment of that creation, and mathematics to interpret the properties, shapes, and even the size of His universe.

How does the Godly teacher in a Reformed school teach mathematics from this perspective? In my Teachers Convention sectional, I proposed 3 ways. This is only a brief beginning, but if our desire is to grow and do better, we have to set before us practical and possible ways to start.

First of all, we are intentional in our teaching of mathematics history. God created man with a superior intellect to the other creatures. Man has used that intellect in many profound ways. So, there are mathematical ideas to learn from the people of Israel as they found ways to divide their land and institute a system of coins and weights so their economy could run smoothly. The Bible contains at least 35 different types of measures for length, liquids, or money. The Egyptians, Greeks, Babylonians, and other civilizations contributed significant discoveries in the units of time, length and area measurements, circles and portions of circles, and numerical systems of different types. While engineering structures today are great in beauty and stature and built by advanced machinery, consider Noah building the ark, the kings who built tabernacles and temples, the pyramids and sphinx in Egypt, and many other wonders of the world built with only primitive tools, pulleys, ropes, and manpower.

The Reformed school teacher will use some of this history at different times and in varied ways to help students to see that God is allowing man's mind to develop in a logical and purposeful progression. Today we understand and use much more advanced mathematics than was used 500 years ago. Teaching mathematics this way is consistent with teaching in other subject areas as well. Certainly we know more today about diseases and their treatments than we knew in the past. Galaxies and celestial objects have been discovered and more is known today than last year. Thus, teaching in all subject areas must learn from the past and look to continued growth and development in the future.

Secondly, the mathematics classroom IS distinctly Reformed in nature. I refer here to the Reformed worldview that must be in all of our classrooms regardless of the subject matter. The Reformed teacher is Godly in word and deed. There is no question regarding his lifestyle or her conduct. The mathematics teacher who teaches time is timely. That is, on time for class and meets the same deadlines that he gives to his students. The mathematics teacher teaches that there is one right answer, and this is the truth. Is she truthful in all things to her students and parents? He teaches fairness in weights and measures. Is he fair in assessing his teaching? All Reformed teaching must go beyond simply content and prepare students in character and conduct as well.

Bulletin boards will support the mathematics teaching and will integrate spiritual concepts into the subject matter. Examples are unlimited, but could include:

- Luke 14:28 - "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?" This passage can be applied to concepts of money, budgeting, borrowing, or simply financial stewardship.
- Proverbs 11:1 - "A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight". Applications can be made to weights, balances, business practices, time, and other ethical decisions.
- Psalm 90:12 - "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom". Discussions about time, infinity, eternity, and careful use of time will generate from this verse.
- Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 30 - "one of these two things must be true". As mathematics students progress through the years, they encounter truth tables, logic questions, and sets that are inclusive or mutually exclusive.

That leads into the third way in which Reformed teachers integrate spiritual ideas into their teaching. They read the word at times simply to look for applications to their content area. This is good practice no matter what subject one teaches. Then, they actively and intentionally refer to the Word while teaching. Putting these ideas on a bulletin board is a way of showing these integrations of scripture and creeds. However, our teaching needs to be intentional and pointed in this area whenever possible.

Consider the following brief examples that educators could develop much more fully based on the age level they teach.

- Our teaching of numbers can be supported by many examples from scripture of numbers, of counting, and of numbers being significant (1,3,7,10, 12, ...).
- The Bible speaks of adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing (Matthew 6:27, Judges 7, Matthew 18:22, Ezekiel 47).
- The Bible contains examples of fractions and percentages (tithe, portion, the third part of...).
- A sundial went backwards 10 degrees (Isaiah 38).
- Passages address unjust weights and measures (Proverbs 11, 16, 20, HC Q&A 110).
- Usury is forbidden by God (Exodus 22:25).
- The circuits of the heavenly bodies are written of in the Psalms (8,19,147, 148).
- Several passages refer to the height, length, depth, and width of God's universe (Romans 8, Ephesians 3).

The interested reader can reach out to me for a complete list. In preparing for my sectional, I cataloged as best I could the creeds and the scriptures for as many references to mathematical concepts as I could. That being stated, much more work can still be done in this area.

In the classroom, one other means of teaching distinctly can be addressed. Often students ask questions like "why do I have to learn this" or "when am I going to use this?" Careful thought must be given to the answers of these questions. It is true that some learning is for intellectual purposes. Some learning is preparation for future learning. If the question is asked in a meaningful and respectful way, it's possible that we have not shown the students by our life and worldview, by our classroom decorations, and by our spiritual integrations that mathematics is God's creation meant

to be used to know Him and creation better. As meat becomes fully seasoned by sprinkled salt, so the mathematics classroom that is infused with the Word will yield the fruit of Godly students with a proper understanding of mathematics.

Why should we teach this way in mathematics classes? Quite simply because we should teach that way in *all* classrooms as a Reformed school. This is who we are. In my preparation for this sectional, I reread sections of a book written in 2001 entitled, *Mathematics: Is God Silent?* James Nickel states it this way, "As

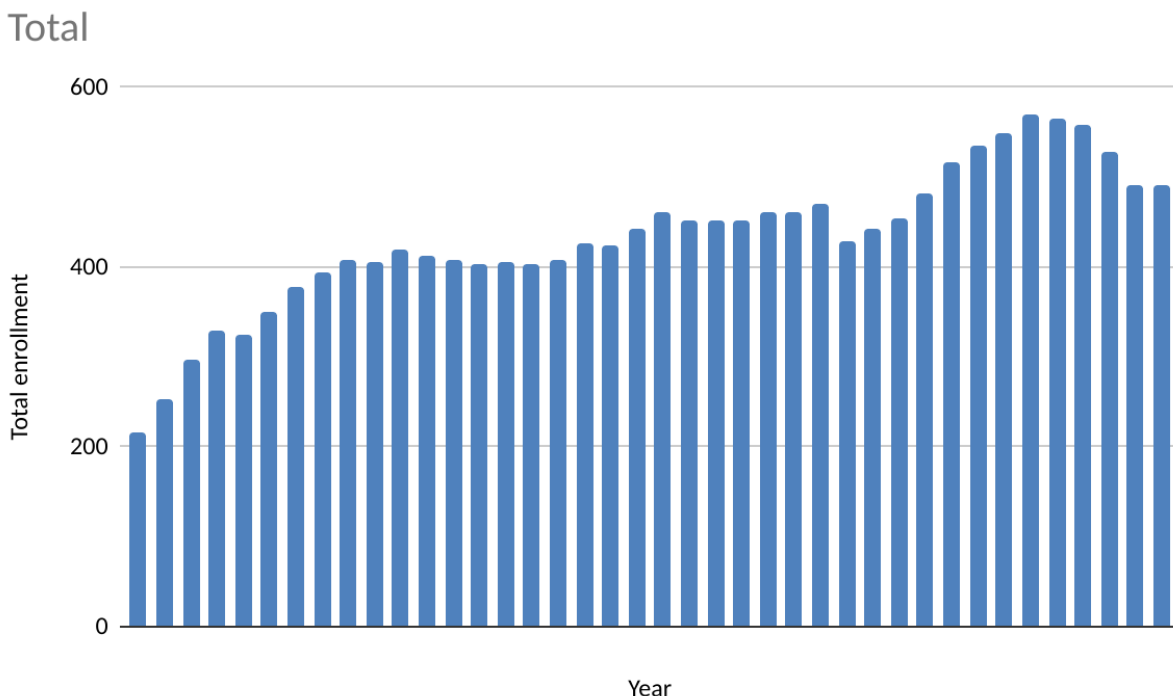
we have surveyed the history of mathematics, we have noticed that what an individual or a culture believes concerning the origin, purpose, and destiny of the cosmos affects the way that mathematics is viewed...Mathematics is not a neutral discipline; it is always linked with presuppositions" (196). Let's teach our students - teach them intentionally - that God is the God of mathematics as He is the God of "all things created" (Colossians 1:16).

Long Range Planning Committee Report

The Long Range Planning Committee continues to monitor the current enrollment of the school and the five year projections for enrollment. The committee is chaired by Brad Dykstra and the other members are Cara Dykstra, Scott Koole, Brian Kuiper, Gary Lubbers, and Brandon VanOverloop. Heritage has now been in our current building for nearly nine years, and it is serving our purposes very well. Space is available including many support rooms for testing and small group instruction. Due to the fact that we were not able to hire a first grade teacher this past year, we even have an open classroom this year!

The enrollment history is included in the chart below. Over the history of Heritage, we have seen periods of growth and

stabilization. During those periods, we have grown to two sections of each class and then three sections of each class. We saw a brief drop in enrollment due to the ninth grade moving to CCHS. And, we recently saw a drop in enrollment due to matters in our church community as well as a first grade that is currently smaller than normal. Thus, for a time the committee can focus attention in other areas. These include looking at the building and grounds for any long term needs that need addressing. The Building Committee works on this regularly, and the Finance Committee projects longer term impacts of these needs. The Long Range Committee is available to assist in these areas as well in times when expansion is not imminent.



Insurance Committee Report – Mr. Tyler Schimmel

The *Herald* report everyone has been waiting for....Insurance! Before we get into the extremely exciting insurance coverage details, I wanted to call out the excellent work that our business manager Cori Hop does for our insurance policies at HCS. Cori manages all the behind-the-scenes insurance paperwork, agency communication, submitting claims, enrolling new staff members, and the annual renewal process for all of our policies. If any of you have ever dealt with insurance paperwork, you can really appreciate the amount of work and attention to detail that goes into all this. Thank you Cori!

At the beginning of the school year, Brian Kuiper, Cori Hop, and I sat down with our Insurance agents to review our policies and to make sure that we have adequate coverage. All of our policies were renewed and our insurance agents do a good job keeping us informed of changes and rates. Our policies include a Package Policy, Auto, Workers Comp, Student Accident, Health, Dental, Vision, and Life/Long Term Disability.

Our Package Policy includes coverage for items such as general liability, property, religious freedom, sexual misconduct, terrorism, cyber liability, and “umbrella” coverage which extends the limits of general, vehicle, and employer liability coverages. The auto policy covers our buses that carry our students to and from school each

day. The state of Michigan requires workman's compensation coverage which provides wage/medical benefits to employees who may be injured while at work. Student accident coverage is in place for injuries to students that occur during school hours or during school sponsored events.

The largest line item expense for HCS is health Insurance. HCS provides Priority Health, Delta Dental, Kansas City Life/Disability. HCS pays 75% of the cost of health insurance and dental insurance, and the teachers are responsible for the remaining 25%. In addition, teachers may also elect to purchase VSP Vision Insurance. HCS has been grandfathered into a “Pre-ACA” (Affordable Care Act) plan, which means that the maximum out of pocket is lower, and the premiums have been lower in comparison to other Affordable Care Act compliant plans. This year HCS health insurance premiums increased 7.5% from last year, while other plans increased nearly twice as much.

We are very grateful we can offer health insurance benefits to our talented teachers and staff here at HCS. We are also thankful for the many ways in which God has blessed us and that we are able to have insurance policies in place in the event we would ever need them.

Building Committee Report – Mr. Travis VanderKolk

We always hope that the work of the Building Committee goes unnoticed. Not unseen, just unnoticed. There are always small changes, repairs behind walls and in closets, roof repairs, building mechanical system alarms that we can't find, and desks and lockers in need of small repairs. This all comes with operating a building so large and with so many additions. Currently we operate about 92,000 square feet with 29 classrooms and 2 gymnasiums. Not every classroom is full, and I am happy to report our current facility serves us well.

This past year we have completed a couple of notable projects. We encompassed the playground with a concrete sidewalk making some of the inaccessible equipment accessible to those who are confined to wheelchairs. This work was done with support finances given by the Special Education Board and Fundraisers who also both saw this as a worthwhile project. A couple of Buddy Ball hoops were put up and are being utilized.

During the Christmas break the Building Committee finished work on improving the security and safety of the school by adding “riot proof” laminated sheeting to all the glass doors and school entrances. This work was done by Safe Haven Defense, LLC and all the school's glass entrances are impenetrable to intruders who desire to enter the building by any creative means. Safety is always a discussion around school grounds and incorporating these small improvements we actually hope goes unnoticed.

There are some larger projects building on the horizon. The elementary gym floor is currently a rubber like material and needs to be replaced. The Building Committee has made work to visit a couple of other schools and look at options for what other local schools have done in their facilities. While this may not be the

place for a complete wood floor there are many options available but we always look for durability, life expectancy, and maintenance aspects of the floor. The junior high gym floor also will need to be resurfaced this summer.

The parking lot is getting to the end of its useful life. While we have not had to repair any large holes at this point, my saying that probably made some form with the freeze and thaw cycles this spring. This project will have to incorporate some drainage issues to the north side of the school and handling water underground instead of across sidewalks as it currently does. We will also need to think about expanding the parking lot further east as the gravel and underlayment already exists just under the grass there.

Some projects are hardly worth noting and will hopefully go unnoticed: tile in bathrooms, carpet in various spots, ball field rework, floor polishing, pump replacements, drain basin placement, gutter drain tile, and all the other exciting things to keep the school operation seamless. There are plenty of honey-do projects around the school and we are always looking for volunteers.

I would be remiss to not take a moment to thank our current Facilities Manager Leon Kamps for his many hours spent in and around the school. He is the first person to school every morning, arriving with a smile on his face. Some have dubbed him “Mr. Clean” for his similarity to a brand mascot. He has never turned down a project and knows when one is larger than he can take on. We have taught him the value of bribery with Gatorade to get junior high students to do simple projects during study hall. If you see Leon in the hallways, please express your appreciation for his excellent work.

From the Transportation Committee

The HCS transportation committee is extremely grateful for those who dedicate their time and energy to safely transporting students to and from their homes to the classroom. Route planning, bus maintenance, cleaning, and many other details go into the work of making this department run smoothly. For a large majority of this work, Jessica VanderKolk oversees the day to day and does a fantastic job coordinating everything!

Drivers are the backbone. If we didn't have those who choose to help with this important work, we couldn't have this program in place. For that, we are thankful! You may have noticed for the past year that the HCS transportation committee has been looking for additional drivers to help. Because of the shortage of drivers this school year, we've had to adjust routes to compensate. Group stops, longer routes, and removing outlier stops are some of the results of this shortage. Maybe some of you have considered driving but aren't quite sure if it would be a good fit. If you have any questions, please reach out!

We would like to share what goes into the life of a bus driver, so you have a better understanding of what it's like. One of our own drivers has written about what their typical day as a bus driver looks like –

Day in My Life as Bus Driver

Have you ever really thought of driving a school bus? Most of us say quickly no way I could never do that! But also, don't give it real thought. I was the same way too until I tried it, and now I absolutely love it! Here are some things to think about as I take you along my bus for the day. I usually am out the door with my two kids and a cup of coffee at 6:30am. When I arrive at my bus, I begin by completing my morning safety inspections before we leave to go and pick up and greet the students. Many are excited to board the bus because they are ready and waiting for me to arrive. With a series of good mornings to them they respond with a pleasant hello or a polite grunt, either is acceptable. I go about my regular route and gather all my students then we head to school. Many of my mornings are quiet and I have enjoyed greeting the kids and sipping coffee. Upon arrival at school, I wish them a happy day as they file off, they all respond with a polite thank you. By this time they are all more awake and ready to be productive. Then again, so am I and its only 7:45AM! My

day awaits and it's time to get things accomplished. I have about six hours to spend as I choose.

A little before 2pm I head back to school to do it again! After another bus safety check I patiently wait for the arrival of the afternoon riders. I really enjoy greeting each student by name, this helps me get to know the kids and remember who has boarded the bus and who needs to come yet. We also get some time to chat with each other. I get to hear about their day and what awaits them when they return home. The relationships that I build with the kids really is the best part, they share with such a passion what was special about their day. For example, they tell me who lost a tooth which is usually followed up with their own tooth losing experience. Or they will show you what they received as a birthday treat then tell you it's only 10 sleeps until their birthday! The best part is when I get a birthday treat. Folks, this is when you know you have made it to their special persons list! Then there are the older kids, they will tell you about how terrible it is that they have so much homework or they will tell you about the current poster project they have going. They tell stories about their friends or just something that happened in their day. Makes me feel great that they want to talk to their bus driver. My afternoon route is a little different than my morning route but I am often home before 4pm.

There is also the fun and special things that I get to do. Sometimes I will wear a fun hat or join in pajama day or we will host a coloring contest, and don't forget the field trips! Our teachers plan some really great field trips and I love tagging along with the classes and experiencing new things too.

Driving a bus can be an everyday adventure. I love driving my bus and I am happy to tell you about it. If you have any interest or just want to ask some questions please don't hesitate to reach out. Want to see what it's like yourself, we can arrange a ride-along. Our schools and families desperately need bus drivers. Are you that next driver? Give it some real consideration.

Our hope is that with a better understanding of the position and recognizing the need for more drivers, you might give this important work additional consideration!

How Do I Help My Child? – Mrs. Erika Aalsma

How often have you asked yourself this question? It is a difficult feeling to sit alongside a student and watch them struggle. We often feel helpless, not sure of the best way to help them. We love them. We want to help them and we want to do what is best for them. So, the question is valid. HOW do we help them? Often this question comes off of the heels of weeks, months, or even years of working with a struggling student.

It has always been a challenge for me to answer this question. In part, this is because it takes some thought. As a teacher, you have

to first consider the specific struggles that the student faces. Then, you have to dive into your arsenal of worksheets, manipulatives, activities, and ideas to find what is best for the student and their particular needs. Once you find something that you believe will benefit the student, you have to consider the ease with which it can be used at home, and the amount of time it will take for parents to do the activity with them. All of these things have to be considered in order to make sure that the activity, and the time spent doing it is worthwhile.

BUT, this isn't the real reason that it is difficult to answer this question. The main reason is because the answer that I want to give sounds like I'm avoiding the question. Because, in all truthfulness, when I am asked this question, this would be my answer.

- Sit next to them while they work.
- Show them where to find the answer in the book.
- Tell them that you will do the paper together
- Show them how to write a strong sentence to answer the question.
- Show them how you would solve the math problem.
- Celebrate a hard-earned grade (no matter what it is).

Every single one of these things is certainly something you are already doing, or have already done. You are saying, "I know this" or "I'm already doing this, I need better ideas". There is certainly a time and a need for specific intervention and researched methods. I am not downplaying that at all! My goal is simply to encourage you. Keep doing what you are doing. You do not need to be a math whiz to help your child with a math paper. You simply need to be there. It is what they will remember. It's what I remember. I remember my mom making practice tests for me on a clean, white piece of paper with her neat, precise handwriting. I remember my dad helping with an art project that I couldn't quite figure out how to do. It's what "our" kids need to feel encouraged and to have the motivation to press on. They just need us.

Fourth Grade Reflections on Psalm 103 – Mrs. Jane Woudenberg's 4th grade class

The fourth graders are studying and memorizing Psalm 103 throughout January and February. Here are their reflections on this passage of Scripture:

Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. *God, who doesn't forget about me, gently leads me. He rules over all because He is God, our Father.* Tate VanOverloop

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. *I remember all God's lovely benefits. God, who forgave all my sins, also crowns me with lovingkindness and tender mercies. I know that when my grandpa died, he went to heaven.* Eli VanBaren

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities. *God forgives all my sins, which are very wicked. I am weak, and rely on myself, but God has forgiven me.* Emmett VanDyke

Who healeth all thy diseases; *When my great-grandpa died, I had never felt so lonely. But I had comfort in knowing that my great-grandpa is in heaven. Although I was sad, the Lord was with me.* Elsie Booth

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction. *I love God because He is loving and kind. God comforts me when I go through hard times. I love God because He loves me, and saved me from my sin.* Riley Pastoor

Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies. *God crowns me because I am one of His child. God shows me lovingkindness and tender mercies when He forgives me. Throughout my life I will use the lovingkindness and tender mercies that He has crowned me with.* Annika Kooienga

Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things. *God provides me with my daily needs so I never need to worry. He does all this very tenderly. He will not let me fall from Him.* Gwennan Noorman

So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. *Sometimes I feel weak, but God is mighty, and He strengthens me. God is with me and makes me strong like the male eagle.* Blake Gritters

The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. *I thank God for being just and right. Those who worship idol gods are afraid of their gods. We know that our God loves us very much.* Owen Boer

He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. *God told Moses and the children of Israel the stories in the Bible. He gave me the Bible too. I love Him so much.* Margaret Rus

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. *God knows that we are weak, and He always loves us. He is always kind and just, and fair. When we are scared and sad, God is with us.* Sylvie Kooienga

He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. *God will always forgive me, which makes me feel glad. God does not keep his anger always.* Weston Kamps

He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. *God pardons my sins, which are great. I will go to heaven because Jesus died on the cross to save me from my sins.* Skylar Dekkinga

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. *God's mercy means that He is not mad at us. Our Heavenly Father, who crowns us with tender mercy, is kind to us. God cares for me because He loves me.* Lena DeVries

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. *God, who never stops loving me, removes all my sins. I sin every single day, but God removes all my transgressions. He takes all my sins away from me, every one.* Decklan Gritters

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. *God loves me like my dad loves me. I love my father just like he loves me, and same with God my heavenly Father.* Bennett Cnossen

For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. *We are weak, but God saves us. We are like dust. God, who is great, will bring me to heaven. God created me.* Jase Lubbers

The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him. *The Lord cares for and loves his people. Even when I sin, God forgives me. God is my helper. He is always near to me.* Jazelle Kuiper

Worldview: a Tool for Teaching Distinctively Christian – Mrs. Katie VanOverloop

Heritage is a Christian School. That's no secret; after all, we teach Bible class in every grade, there are bi-weekly chapels, and the day is interspersed with devotions. You certainly also know that being a Christian school is so much more than the presence of a Bible class, devotions, and chapel. At Heritage, a truly Christian School, all classes are taught in the light of God's Word. God's Word is not just a mere add-on at the end of a unit, with the words, "Here is a verse that speaks to this topic," but God's Word illuminates every area we study.

In sixth grade science, we are studying life science, with a special focus on the human body. The textbook we are using wisely began our studies with a section on worldview, which I really appreciated. Whether or not you can define worldview, you have a worldview. Everyone has a worldview. Worldview is the lens through which we interpret all of our experiences, and through which we make our decisions. Worldview helps us answer, amongst other things, the following questions: Who/whose am I? Why am I here? What is my relationship/response to God, my neighbor, and creation? As a Christian, the lens through which I endeavor to teach all my subjects is a Christian worldview lens; informed by the Word of God. The Word of God is our authority. Being taught the Bible in the home, at church, and in school is vitally important so that we have a solid foundation through which we can view all of life!

Worldview is not just a buzzword; it is a very helpful tool in directing my teaching. I love learning and love to see my students love learning, but I have to remind myself and my students often that we never learn solely for the sake of learning; so that we can feel really smart, pat ourselves on the back, and give glory to ourselves. I Corinthians 8:1 warns us that knowledge can puff up. As the Westminster Catechism Q&A states, the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. In all of our learning, the glory of God is our goal. We must use our knowledge to point us to our Creator, to stand in awe of our Creator, and to look at our calling before God with the knowledge he has given us.

At the beginning of the school year, my students tried on glasses with lenses of various colors (green, red, purple, yellow, brown, and clear.) They tried several colors to compare how differently they might view things with different colored lenses. The color of the lens impacted their view of the classroom. In the same way, our foundational principles shape the way we view information, the purpose of learning, purpose of life, and the way we view others.

As we study each organ system of the human body, we acknowledge that we view these systems through a Christian worldview lens. This organ system did not evolve; the intricacies of the system are not by chance, but rather designed by our perfect, all-wise, Creator. What is created must always point us to the Creator and we must marvel at what an all-wise and loving Creator we have. We discuss that as we learn about the perfect design of a system, our response is to stand in awe of God and praise Him for what a good God he is. Second, we often talk about how God calls us to use this organ system for his glory, and not for our own glory or purposes.

In December we studied the muscular system. We marveled at God's design of our muscles as we studied how actin and myosin work in muscle fibers; how they all work together to enable our muscles to contract and relax. We marveled at how many of our muscles are involuntary; meaning that God, in His wisdom, designed many of our muscles to function without us even

consciously signaling for them to move. As a class, we then discuss the so what? We reiterate that our muscles are created by God and for His glory. How then can we glorify God with those muscles? We do not strengthen our muscles just to look good, but to serve Him and His Kingdom.

On the muscular system test, students were asked, "What is something specific you learned from the muscular system that caused you to marvel at God's creativity and design?"

There were so many good answers on this test. I wish I could share all of them. Here are just a few.

- "I am amazed that our heart can beat without us telling it to." - Sadie Karsemeyer
- "I just don't understand how some people believe it all happens by chance. I especially was stunned when we learned about how actin and myosin work together to cause our muscles to contract." - Libby Dykstra
- "God is amazing! He is not only an artist, but an engineer! The cool thing I learned is how the muscles contract and relax to help us move." - Addalyn Doezema
- "All of our muscles have been created to work perfectly in pairs so that we can move around." - Josh Boven

The students were also asked, "As a Christian, what is your view of our muscles and the strength we receive from them?" Here are some responses.

- "In learning about the muscular system, we stand in awe of His perfect creativity and power. We don't trust in our own strength. We trust in God to give us strength. The Bible tells us to trust God and give all the glory to him. We use our muscles to serve him and love Him." - Troy Koole
- "We see that God has all power and authority. God gave us strength to serve other people, like our neighbors around us and to care for creation. But in Isaiah 41:10 God tells us not to put our trust in our own strength, but in Him. God has strength to help us through anything we face in the Christian life. In response we should give God our praise and worship and thank Him for what we can do." - Addalyn Doezema
- "Our God is an amazing and powerful creator. We must stand in awe of his handiwork. In Psalm 46:1 it says that God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. That is a wonderful thought to have. We must NOT trust in our own strength, but we must trust in God's strength. He will see us through all of life's problems." - Libby Dykstra
- "God is creative and wise and he created our bodies organized. He gave us muscles as a picture of his strength. Psalm 46:1 tells that God is powerful. We shouldn't rely on our own strength. We should rely on God because without him, we are nothing." - Isaac Heyboer

In directing our children to think distinctly as Christians, informed by His Word, I do not believe we can "beat a dead horse." The devil is working overtime to flood us and our children with alternate worldviews, sometimes subtle and other times not-so-subtle. In all things, let's flood our children with a Christian worldview; allowing God's Word to inform them about who they are, whose they are, and how they can live for His glory; serving His Kingdom. Then, let's take comfort. Our God is sovereign and all things are in His control. As the students pointed out in their test answers, we should not trust in our own strength, but in God, who is our "refuge and strength." Psalm 46

The Fruit of the Spirit – Miss Becca Gritters

This year for our morning devotions in third grade we have been learning about the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22 & 23. We based our devotions off of the book *The Fruit of the Spirit of Jesus Christ* by Rev. Smit. The chapters of this book are divided by each aspect of the fruit of the Spirit, and we spent a couple weeks on each one. We have talked about the gifts of the Spirit that God has given us and the command that we have been given in Matthew 22 to love the Lord our God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. What a blessing the fruit of the Spirit is, and how thankful we are for the gift that Jesus Christ has freely purchased for us!

- My fruit of the Spirit is love. The opposite is hatred. In the Bible God said to love your neighbors as yourself. It means to love one another. God is love, and He loved us, so he sent His Son to save us from our sins. I John 4: 10 says "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." *Joelle Mowery*
- God is love. Love is the opposite of hatred. Do not say mean things to your neighbor. Be kind to your neighbor. I John 4:7 & 8 says "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." This verse tells us to be kind to our friends because God first loved us. *Riley Ondersma*
- Joy is being happy because we have Jesus. Sadness is the opposite of joy. Philippians 4: 4 says "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice." This Bible verse says to rejoice in God always. When God's people have joy, we are thankful, kind, and loving. *Emily Visser*
- Joy means to be happy. The opposite of joy is sadness. Sadness means to be disappointed. Nehemiah 8:10 says ". . . neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength." We sing to God when we have joy. *Keturah Koops*
- My fruit of the spirit is peace. It means to trust in God, and it is a gift from God. A song that goes with it is "There is Peace in Christ." A verse that talks about peace is Romans 5:1 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The opposite of peace is being angry with God. Peace means we are kind. *Aspen Lamar*
- My fruit of the spirit is peace. Peace means trusting in God, and it is the opposite of war. You can find Philippians 4:7 in the Bible. It says "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." It talks about Christ. Songs talk about peace. One of them is "There is Peace in Christ." Peace means to be kind to one another and to not be hateful to one another. *Morgan Boer*
- Longsuffering is patience and being slow to anger. Colossians 1:11 says "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;" Colossians 1:11 means should be longsuffering because God is longsuffering to us. It means that God's people need to have patience. *Jackson Gritters*
- My fruit of the Spirit is goodness. When you have goodness, everything you do is in God's glory. The Bible talks about goodness in Exodus 34:6 "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth," and in Romans 15:14 "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled

with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." We should be kind and helpful to our family. We should help people who are in need, and we do not say bad words. *Everett Doezema*

- My fruit of the Spirit is goodness. Goodness is knowing that God does good for His people. Psalm 107: 1 talks about goodness. Psalm 107:1 talks about how we should give thanks unto the Lord because God is good and His mercy endureth forever. *Brady Corson*
- Are you faithful? You have to be honest to be faithful. You have to be trustworthy and loyal to be faithful. Here are two Bible verses about faithfulness: Matthew 24: 45 "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?" and Lamentations 3:23 "They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." We as God's people have to not only be faithful to God, but unto one another as well. *Morgan Spiensma*
- What is faithfulness? It is when you're loyal to God. In Lamentations 3:23 it talks about faithfulness. It says "They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." We should always be faithful to God. When we are faithful, we are trusting in God. *Jasper VanderKolk*
- One of the fruit of the Spirit is meekness. Meekness means to be humble and gentle. The opposite of meekness is pride. The Bible has the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. One day on the Sabbath, which in the Bible was Saturday, lots of people went to the temple. And a Pharisee started praying out loud and started saying to God, "God you have given me many things, and I am so great." People also thought that too. The publican was humble and he went in a corner and prayed quietly. This parable is about not having pride and being humble like the publican. Matthew 5:5 says "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Matthew 11:29 says ". . . for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." *Ari Dykstra*
- Meekness stands for humbleness. Psalm 37:11 says "But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Meekness also means to be gentle and humble. The opposite of meekness is pride, selfishness, and vainglory. If we are meek, we will not brag about money, winning, or idols. *Jonny Horvat*
- My fruit of the Spirit is self-control. God's people need self-control. God gave us it so that we don't have to hit or be mean to each other, and so that we can do unto others as you would have them do to you. Colossians 3:12 talks about self-control. It says "put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;" *Connor VanBaren*
- My fruit of the Spirit is self-control. The opposite of self-control is no-control and wasting time. So you need to keep yourself. Galatians 5:23 says "Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Galatians 5:23 means that self-control goes with meekness. *Hailey Karsemeyer*
- What is self-control? Self-control is when you are mad, but you still help others. The opposite of self-control is no control. Colossians 3:12 says "put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;" We have self-control because of Jesus. *Graham Koole*

Listen and Learn with Audiobooks - Mrs. Sarah Decker

With the rise of tablets, laptops, and Smartphones, audiobooks have never been more accessible to families. There are some fantastic apps with easy-to-use formats now available. I will recommend a couple at the end of this article. I strongly encourage you as families or as individuals to listen and learn with audiobooks.

Here are a few of the most compelling reasons for using audiobooks with readers of all ages and all levels:

1. **Expands vocabulary:** Students have the chance to hear larger vocabulary words sounded out and how they are used in context. Thus, vocabulary is deepened while reducing the intimidation that can come from reading bigger words in written text. In addition, the more words a student encounters over a day, week, month, or year, the greater the vocabulary base of the student. By listening to a variety of topics, audiobooks help students increase their vocabulary and background knowledge.
2. **Introduces books above their reading level:** Since listening comprehension often exceeds decoding comprehension, audiobooks give students the opportunity to experience books above their own independent reading level. Students will be exposed to harder vocabulary words and also more complex subject matter.
3. **Promotes visualization for comprehension:** Listening to audiobooks gives kids the valuable and enjoyable experience of using their own imaginations to visualize the story. This can lead to greater comprehension and understanding of the book, without the student having to focus so hard on the decoding part of reading.
4. **Models fluent reading:** Audiobooks are a great way for students to hear how a reader gives phrasing to a story. Students learn proper pronunciation and delivery by listening to skilled readers.

Audiobooks are a wonderful shared reading experience which gives everyone in the family something to talk about. In addition to long car rides, try to incorporate audiobooks into everyday life. Download an app and let the learning begin!

Three sources of audiobooks:



Libby by Overdrive

eBooks and audiobooks, fiction and nonfiction! Create a free account with your public library card. Once you have an account, it works best to access your book checkouts using the "Libby" app on your devices.

Hoopla

(an additional free resource for Hudsonville library patrons)

eBooks and audiobooks, fiction and nonfiction! Also has music. Create a free account with your public library card, then use the app for easy listening and reading.



Bookshare

Students with IEPs or 504 plans that recommend audiobooks can get a free Bookshare account. This will connect you with nearly every novel and textbook ever made, in a text-to-speech audio format.

Nearly 10,000 free public domain books that anyone can read using Bookshare's unique features.

Readers can listen to books, follow along with karaoke-style highlighting, and customize font sizes, colors, and backgrounds.

Note: Bookshare also offers over 830,000 titles for free to US students with qualifying reading barriers. Titles include textbooks, popular series, bestsellers, accelerated and Lexile readers, and children's books in easy-to-read formats like audio, audio + highlighted text, braille, and large font.



One Word – Mrs. Nicki Westra

I know there are many of you reading this that have set goals for the year 2024 and are working at them diligently. I also know that many of you think new year goals are not helpful and have the ability to make us feel like a failure so we don't even bother to set

them. I fall somewhere in the middle of these two sides and maybe you do too.

Over the past few years, I have taken a different approach to 'goals' at the start of a year. Instead of setting goals in multiple areas of my life, I focused on one word. I then focused on that one

word in multiple areas of my life. It simplified things for sure, and yet at the end of the year I found I was still thinking about that word and working on my goal. In the past, my new years goals were often failed by March and forgotten by April.

Over the snow days we had in January I spent some time reading One Word That Will Change Your Life by Dan Britton, Jimmy Page, and Jon Gordon before selecting my word for the year. I will briefly summarize the big ideas of this quick read book (45min) below.

1. Look In → Prepare your heart: The first thing the authors suggest is to prepare your heart. Unplug from all noise and business. Ask yourself, what is in the way of change happening? What needs to go to help make that change possible?
2. Look up → Discover your word. The second thing the authors suggest is to look up and listen. After your heart is prepared, search the scriptures, pray that God will reveal to you areas of your life that need change and why. Through studying the scriptures, prayer, and songs, listen to what the spirit is leading you to focus on.
3. Look Out → Live your word: Live that word in your daily life. Write the word down in a prominent area you will be reminded of it (in your bible, bathroom mirror, locker, desk, etc.) As you look out, you will see opportunities all around you for change and growth.

I will leave you with some examples of what some Jr. High students at Heritage will be focusing on in the upcoming year. You may have even seen some of these words taped to their lockers, tucked into their planners, or written on your bathroom mirror.

- *The word that I chose to focus on for the rest of the year is **activity**. Now, this can branch into many directions, like physical activity and mental activity, but the aspect that I wanted to particularly focus on was spiritual activity. I realized that spiritual activity was an essential part of our lives. Even though it is focused on in the morning and night, it is many times neglected during the day. So I decided to focus on this in my day-to-day activities.*
- *My word for the year is **grateful**. In the new year we shouldn't look at others and think of how great they have it or how much better they look. We also shouldn't look down on others and*

think we are better than them. We must be grateful for all God has given us and know we are amazing just the way God has created us to be.

- *I need to work on my **patience**. I struggle with it at home and here at school. It is something I ask God in my personal prayers to help me work on. I can get mad easily with my siblings or friends. So my word of the year is going to be patience.*
- *The word that I chose for this year is **trust**. We often get very worried about what is happening currently or what is going to happen in the future. We need to stop worrying and trust and know that God is in control. He has everything planned and knows what is going to happen. Don't stop trusting in Him ever. We shouldn't place our trust in man, but only in God.*
- *I chose **grow** as my word because I need to grow in many things. I need to grow in fellowship with God and do devotions. I must strive to grow in kindness toward my teachers, friends, and my fellow classmates. I have realized going to high school is very hard so I have to grow in encouraging those who are being bad examples to do the right thing and myself. I must grow to obey my parents and those in authority because that is what God calls me to do. And in this, I must pray to God to help me grow towards a godly life as I am growing up.*
- *For my word I chose to **prioritize**. I want to spend less of my time on electronics and other things and spend more of my time reading, enjoying God's creation, helping around the house, doing devotions, and cleaning my room because wow, it is a mess right now. When choosing a word for this year, I remembered our theme verse from art class last year which said, "redeem the time because the days are evil"-Ephesians 5:16. This year I want to spend more time with God and grow closer to him by doing devotions. Another way I need to prioritize is with my daily schedule. When I wake up I should think what is the most important thing I NEED, not want, to do today. I really enjoyed choosing a word this year because even now before this challenge started, I woke up and did things that were actually important to do.*

Kindergartenisms – Miss Joyce Holstege

When people find out that I'm a teacher, the first question is always what do you teach. When I answer kindergarten, their answer is almost "Oh", but the inflection of the "oh" varies, and is generally followed up by one of these phrases: Oh, they're so sweet (or cute) at that age. Oh, how fun. Oh, that sounds exhausting. Oh, you must be very patient. Or, Oh, you must be a very special person. (I'm never sure if the last one is a positive or negative thing, but they generally sound somewhat sympathetic.)

To all of these I just smile, but I can truly say all of these are true. Kindergartners **are** sweet and cute, most of the time. It **is** fun, but also challenging, and exhausting. I **can** be patient, but yes, I have my limits (so thankful for aides). And I guess I am kind of special, and I have some pretty special skills. I can tie a shoe and tell a Bible story at the same time. I can unstick the stuckest zipper. I can keep a straight face (almost always) when being told some of the

most amazing stories (some of which are true). I am also getting quite skilled at interpreting the language of five-year-olds.

Truth be told, I don't always say what I mean and sometimes what I say doesn't come out the way I want it too. So, I'm not surprised or alarmed when five-year-olds get some things a bit mixed up. For example, I'm not surprised when a little boy tells me "**He** has a pink dress." or "**She** was in the boy's bathroom." Kindergartners often get their gender pronouns mixed up and with correction they generally begin to use them correctly. I roll with the flow when a little girl says, "May you zip my coat?" and when someone asks, "Can you put on my glove?" my answer is generally, "I don't think it'll fit me, but I'll help you put it on."

Some of the most challenging kindergartenisms are words or phrases they use when they say their memory verse or pick songs to sing. When they say the Apostle's Creed, it's not unusual to hear

chameleon instead of communion or forgotten instead of begotten and its very common to have ascended and descended reversed.

When they pick songs for singing I may need to have them repeat their request a few times; I might say I'm not sure I know that one, let me think about it for a while; or I may ask them to sing it and hope I recognize the tune. Sometimes, I recognize the phrase as a line in the middle of a song and then I sing it all the way through to the end to figure out what song it is. Other times, the rest of the class will say, "You know that song it goes like this!" and I stand amazed that that they understand each other's secret language so well.

To give you a little test of what my days are like, I created a little list of phrases I hear in kindergarten. See if you can name that song or Bible verse. The answers are at the end. Enjoy!

1. Peace on Earth and Mercy Aisles
2. When We All Get Together
3. The Little Firefly Under the Bush
4. A Brand New Song

5. Bat Man
6. Who O Lord
7. The Bird Song
8. Sit Thou At Thy Right Hand
9. For His Arm is Strong
10. Ye Who
11. The Bad Fruit and Lily Pad Song
12. Come Before Him with Presents and Singing
13. Close Beside Me All the Way
14. Here Thy Children When They Pray
15. My Hope is Found

1. Hark the Herald Angels Sing
2. When We All Get to Heaven
3. This Little Light of Mine
4. Psalter #392
5. Psalter #1
6. Psalter #24
7. Psalter #20
8. Psalter #303
9. Psalter #263
10. Psalter #408
11. Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory (Grapes of Wrath ...the beauty of the lilies)
12. Psalm 100:2
13. Jesus Loves Me
14. Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us
15. The Solid Rock

One Hundred Word Stories for 100 Day – Mr. Randy Kuiper

The days are often slow, but the weeks pass quickly. It's hard to believe how fast this school year is progressing, but I know this is how time works. Now, more than halfway through this year, we have finally surpassed the 100th day of school, with our January snow days setting this milestone back a week later than originally planned.

The 100th day of school is an important accomplishment in any classroom, as it signals a time to reflect on growth and memories from the past, while still eagerly anticipating the things to come. I like to use this event to reflect on the growth within the classroom-physical growth, academic growth, and spiritual growth. This growth is often difficult to see from day to day; however, growth is much more noticeable when looking back to the beginning of the school year five months ago and recognizing where we began. Procedures are now set in place (hopefully), much learning has occurred, new friendships have formed, and old relationships have strengthened. Students are now more confident in their abilities and have shown improvements in their classwork, handwriting, and independence.

It is nice to plan new, fun learning activities to celebrate 100 day. In this way, we learn while also reviewing concepts and skills that have already been taught. An activity that my class completed this year was a creative writing piece, during which students paired up to write a story using 100 words. This activity was harder than students initially expected, as they had to be sure to wrap up the story before the word limit was up. Then, I realized that it is hard for students to actually count to 100 words, which provided opportunities for editing and revising, as well as more counting! We hope you enjoy our stories.

- Once upon a time, there were three dogs named Cooper, Nova, and Blaze. Cooper is a gold puppy who was born on November 11 in 2023. Nova is one year old, and she was born in 2022. Blaze was born in 2016. Nova and Blaze are both girls, but Cooper is a boy. Cooper's favorite things to do were play outside and nibble. Blaze liked to follow people

around. Nova's favorite thing to do was play fight with her mom. Maybe someday Cooper will breed Nova. These dogs were always playing and having fun, and they lived happily ever after.
Kate VanPutten and Tannor Zwak

- Boon was a normal dog at day and a super puppy at night. He fought bad guys and got ice cream after defeating them. One time a bad guy robbed a bank. Boon stopped him before he got to his hideout. Boon got ice cream and went to bed, but more bad guys came and stole money. Boon woke up to defeat them. Then, Boon slept on a cloud. While sleeping, the bad guys put him in a cage. Boon was able to escape and stopped them from stealing a rare diamond. Then, Boon went to bed and slept soundly.

Blake Lubbers and Lillian VanderSchaaf

- Once on a summer day, there lived a unicorn and a boy named Cody. When Cody was riding the unicorn, he saw a fire breathing dragon. Cody tried to stop the unicorn, but they ran into a mountain. Then, the unicorn fell and hurt his leg. Cody ran to the dragon and the dragon gave them a ride. They rode through the fields and oceans, and they saw all the dolphins and the fish. Then they flew through the air and rode through the white clouds. Afterwards, the dragon drove straight to Cody's house. He saved Cody and his unicorn.

Jessa Hassevoort and Easton Noorman

- Once upon a time, Evan and Kayla traveled to space. They saw the planets and stars. Kayla and Evan even saw the gas planets. It was very cold when they arrived. The planets were very cool, and then they saw the moons. When they arrived at Mars, they had fun. Evan's favorite planet to visit was Earth, and Kayla's favorite was Saturn. They loved the time they spent in space. They went to the smaller planets, and they got there by flying on a rocket. They never came back, because they were stuck. Would you like to go to space?

Evan Brands and Kayla Holstege

- Once upon a time, there lived two very good friends. Their names were Trenton and Lydia. They were neighbors who both liked school. They went on a very long hike and got lost in the dark woods. Soon, they found the road. However, they could not find their car. They were scared because someone had stolen their car. Then, they saw their car driving on the road so they called the police. The police found the robbers and the car. They got in the car to go pick up a puppy. Finally, they went home and enjoyed their new puppy.

Lydia DeGram and Trenton Feenstra

- Once upon a time there was a brown dog named Copper and a cat named Leo who went to outer space. They traveled to the moon to play fetch. Then, the dog realized that he was with a cat so the dog started to chase the cat on the moon. The cat then jumped into the rocketship and flew away to Earth without the dog. The cat told all the other cats that she left the dog behind on the moon, so all the cats were happy. The dog was very mad, but another rocketship came and saved the dog.

Andrew Deemter and Alex Vermeer

- Once upon a time, there were 100 puppies and 100 people. It was quite easy until the puppies could figure out how to go on the ceiling. The people could not get the puppies off the ceiling unless they used a flyswatter. The puppies used a chair to get on the ceiling, but then they ran home to eat. Then, they threw pictures on the floor and they threw the clock and microwave on the floor. Finally, the puppies hid in books and it was all quiet. When it was quiet, the people felt good and lived happily ever after.

Henry VanPutten and Kendall Veldman

- One time, Jacob and Mia went fishing and caught a turtle. They began to wonder if turtles lived in outer space, so they visited Mercury and the other planets. They saw a family of aliens on Pluto. They stayed there for 60 years, and finally found a turtle. It was so frozen, they brought it back to Earth.

They gave the turtle a very hot bath so it would unfreeze. After they put the turtle back in water, they traveled back to Pluto. While they were there, they found ten more turtles. They loved animals and wanted to discover more.

Jacob Bleyenbergh and Mia VanOverloop

- Once upon a time, there was a mistake man. One day he woke up. He got out of bed, slipped on a rug, and a trash can fell on his head. He began to get dressed, but he could not find his shirt, so he put on a funky looking blue shirt. He got in his car, drove to work, and slipped on the mat by the doorway. He then got into a crane and lifted up a 4000 pound block. He tried to put it into place, but it cracked. Then, the crane tipped over, so he was fired.

Tedd Feenstra and Reid Wesorick

- There was a Thanksgiving when Turkey woke up and Farmer Corn was in the barn looking for his dinner. Turkey was the main course, but what if Turkey did not look like a turkey. He decided to dress like a horse. His costume wasn't bad. In fact, he looked just like a horse. Almost. "Stop horsing around Turkey!" said Rooster. "How did you know it was me?" said Turkey. "Too short." said Rooster. So Turkey's next idea was to dress like a pizza man. He appeared at the farmer's door and delivered a pizza. The family had pizza for dinner.

Owen Dykstra and Shiloh Engelsma

Then and Now – Mr. Doug DeBoer

The year was 1941. In December of that year there would be a date that would live in infamy. Several months before that in the spring of the year my father graduated from the 8th grade of Moline Christian School. If I remember the graduation picture correctly there were a dozen or so graduates with my dad being the shortest. He didn't play on the baseball, basketball, or soccer teams for maybe more than one reason, but I do know one reason for sure – they didn't have any teams. At that small country school there was not such a thing as interscholastic athletics.

The year was 1985. In September of that year there was the opening of a new school in Hudsonville – Heritage Christian. Our school that year had an enrollment of 216 with a total of thirteen graduates in the 9th grade. We did offer interscholastic sports to those that were interested. Boys could participate in basketball and baseball, and girls could play basketball, softball, and volleyball. There were six teams for the year with a total of four different coaches. Heritage was not a member of any league of schools for sports.

This year is 2024, and Moline and Heritage are both members of the AOK (Allegan/Ottawa/Kent) Christian Middle School League. Our league currently has twelve schools that are members, and a constitution that is twenty pages long. The athletic directors of each school meet together every month during the school year as we oversee the sports of soccer, basketball, volleyball, baseball, softball, and track. Our league also hosts one day events for golf and bowling. Heritage fields between 14 and 20 teams per year depending on the number of multiple teams for a grade. For example, the boys' basketball season saw four teams from our school. The eighth grade boys fielded two teams and the seventh grade boys had two teams. This also frequently happens in girls' volleyball and girls' basketball. In addition our students have the opportunity to participate in cross-country. We have a total of 18-20 different coaches help our athletes in one school year. These coaches are greatly appreciated for the time they put in to give our students the opportunity to participate in athletics. All of this is a large increase in athletics compared to the past. Whether we realize it or not we are influenced by our culture in many ways.

Different sports continue to be added to the list of games in which students can participate. Lacrosse has gained a huge following in high school sports. At the last athletic director meeting I attended I was informed that pickle ball is now being bantered about as another sport for kids in high school. Boys' volleyball is played at many high schools including Covenant, and may soon become an MHSAA sponsored sport. For over a couple of decades our middle school league has sporadically had a one or two day event for boys' volleyball. The 8th, and at one time 9th grade boys, would practice for a day and then would gather with boys from 3 or 4 other schools in our league for some enjoyable games of volleyball, competing in a one day tournament.

Our league is also not exempt from the addition of more sports. Last year a proposal came from a couple of schools in our league

to change our format for boys' volleyball from a one or two day event to a full schedule. The proposal passed and we are now about to implement it this February and March. This year the season will be only for 8th grade boys and not for 7th. If all goes well there will come a proposal in the future to add a season for 7th grade.

It is rather easy to see that the opportunity for students to play more organized sports has greatly increased in the last 83 years. There are certainly both positives and negatives to the changes that have taken place. I will let you be the judge as to what is good and not as good. As the years roll on our prayer is that the Lord may continue to use our athletic program for the instruction of His children and the glory of His name.

The Power of a Story – Miss Annika Brands

There are few things that captivate my students' attention the way that a story does. They love elaborate stories with many details, but they also love short stories—snippets of memories from the past. I have found that storytelling is one of my favorite ways to teach. In many cases, there is no better way to help children grasp a new concept, root an idea into memory, or take a life lesson to heart.

One of the times we use stories in class is during Bible each day. Teaching each lesson as a story helps the kids remember what we talked about. When they are listening to a Bible story they know well, they are eager to chime in with additional details! When they hear a new story, they listen carefully, trying to predict what might happen next. If you asked them, many of my students would tell you that listening to the Bible story is their favorite part of the day.

Stories are also a great tool for teaching life lessons to students. Each year, first graders learn about how to play with their peers,

listen without interrupting, and react appropriately when things don't go their way. There are many story books that I have pulled off the shelf to teach them about life lessons like these.

Stories can also be used to help students grasp new concepts. One example of this is when we learned about the "greater than" and "less than" symbols in math. To prepare the kids for this, we first created a story about an alligator with a never-ending appetite. After we named him Jerry, the kids were excited to delve into the lesson and learn what he had to do with math!

Since August, the first graders at Heritage have both listened to and shared many stories. While they do enjoy stories, I have been blessed to witness their deeper love for their Creator and the people around them. Although they are young, it's clear that they care about their faith and are eager to serve God in their everyday lives. Pray for us as we keep learning this year, that we may all continue to grow together as God's children!

Failing to Learn – Mrs. Elizabeth VanPutten

On a snowy morning in January, I watched 23 students make a mistake in front of their peers, teachers, and many parents. They approached the microphone, heard a word they were supposed to spell, scrunched their eyebrows or looked down as they tried to figure it out, and then stumbled over a letter or two. It was the annual spelling bee, and every student who stood in front of the school had already demonstrated excellence in spelling abilities, and yet all but one of them had to "fail" in front of the school because that is how spelling bees work. This got me thinking, how do we view failure?

A professor of learning science, Manu Kapur, has performed research that suggests that failure is actually a key to learning. He says, "If schoolwork is curated to ensure that kids never feel confused, frustrated, or lost, then they'll never learn to deal with

emotions and feelings that are part and parcel of everyday work. Being frustrated and struggling are normal things. In fact, if you're not feeling those things, that means you're probably not learning" (quoted in Terada). In other words, effective learning should be a little messy and challenging.

Teachers and parents are tempted to measure success by a line of straight "A"s on gradelink, but according to Kapur, that sometimes reveals a problem. If students always get an "A" because the work is easy for them, then maybe they aren't being challenged enough. In fact some of the best learning occurs through what he calls "productive failure" – putting students in a situation where they are pushed just beyond their current abilities. Instead of just hearing a lecture, students learn best when they periodically have to work out the answers themselves. They are then motivated to listen when

teachers review and teach the right answers and concepts. This not only makes learning stick, but it also teaches how to persist through challenges and uncertainty, a key life skill (Terada).

I also think this has implications for how we view some “bad” grades. Low scores on a test often indicate a learning challenge or lack of effort, but when it comes to daily work, sometimes low scores are a part of the learning process. Further, I suspect that some of the students who get excellent grades on every single assignment and test are also dealing with anxiety and unrealistic expectations for themselves. This problem may come out more clearly in junior high when the workload increases, but it can also be seen in the young student who freezes when faced with a new concept on a worksheet or who is in tears when he or she accidentally colors something the wrong way. For students who struggle with a need to be perfect, we can provide opportunities to fail in safe spaces where the stakes are low. We need to adopt the mindset that if you get something wrong, you’ve created an opportunity to learn from your mistakes and do better next time. If you are doing your best and failing (or getting a lower grade than you had hoped), then you are being appropriately challenged. Normalizing mistakes and mess-ups can help free students from anxiety and help them grow.

Failure also points us to our limitations so that we go to Christ. God created us to work hard and equipped us to do so, but it is physically impossible for us to do this 24/7. He ordains times of rest (and worship) in the very order of creation. We also know that we

are far from perfect. In fact, even our best works are tainted with sin and can earn us nothing before God. So when we are tired or feel unable to do something, it reminds us of our God-ordained limits and points us to our eternal, all-powerful God. When we fall short on an assignment or task, it can remind us that we are always in need of God’s grace, which never fails.

So congratulations to the winners of the spelling bee, and also congratulations to every competitor who was willing to try something hard and learn from their mistakes. Congratulations to the students who are working diligently to get a “B” or “C” and learning how to be frustrated and challenged in healthy ways. And as always, whether you are a student or an adult feeling pushed beyond your capabilities, let’s remember to “[cast] all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7). All of our mistakes are ordained under God’s providential care. He knows our strengths and our weaknesses, and when we lean on him in prayer, we will learn to love him more – even (maybe especially) through our failures.

Work Cited

Terada, Youki. “If You’re Not Failing, You’re Not Learning.” *Edutopia*, 16 September 2022,

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Heritage Christian, Fundraising & The Hudsonville Fair – Mrs. Lori Duthler

How “healthy” is our Heritage school community? What does it mean to have a strong sense of community? Has the independent spirit of our society’s culture crept into the Heritage community culture? All of these are questions we face as we begin preparing for another year of our Fair Restaurant Fundraiser.

As parents, we have made the decision to send our children to Heritage Christian; believing we are fulfilling our parental responsibilities to send them to a good, Christian school. But is dropping our kids off at school every day the extent of our involvement? Should it be? Because we care about the education our kids receive at school, we are eager to find ways to be involved and serve. It’s essential for our children to know we support and care, it’s important and encouraging for the school staff and administration to know that parents are engaged, and it’s necessary for the success of the school’s future. A positive attitude by active, engaged parents is healthy. Collaboration between all members of the Heritage community is a good sign of unity around this important calling of Christian parents.

Every single week in our school newsletters and in our church bulletins we read of fundraisers of all kinds; fundraisers for schools, for Young People’s Societies and for special events. Finding successful fundraisers is challenging! Mostly due to the success of the fair restaurant, the number of fundraisers that Heritage puts on has decreased dramatically, so that we are down to just 4 fundraisers this school year: Fair Restaurant & Grandstand, 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament, Fall Family Supper, and TRIP. (We held our last clothing sale in the fall.) Remember selling wrapping paper

or candy, organizing the auction, and the rock-a-thons? Gone! Do we appreciate the fact that we have such a successful fundraiser that for most of us requires just a few hours of time one week a year? Let’s not forget where we came from and lose appreciation for where we are today.

Besides the fact that the Fair Restaurant Fundraiser is successful financially, having a positive presence in our broader community is a rare and amazing opportunity for us. The fair board commented that they “have noticed over the years and comment on every year is the willingness of our entire community to step up and help. We [the fair board] know you have brought hundreds of new people to the fairgrounds just because they want to support you and eat in your restaurant, and we also see how many different people are in here working and helping every day, everyone from kids to grandmas.” He said “everyone is hustling but also having fun and taking the time to chat with customers and be nice to ‘us old guys’.” Hearing this feedback after last year’s fair was so encouraging; what an amazing opportunity for us to be a witness and blessing to our broader community.

To provide a little background, the fair restaurant started in 2013 when we purchased half of the current building from Beaver Dam Christian. Over the next 10 years dedicated committee members worked tirelessly to streamline our systems and processes. And literally hundreds of volunteers served and cooked through an invariably hot August week every year. Two years ago, in 2022, we purchased Hudsonville Christian’s half of the restaurant – doubling our kitchen and dining room space. Along with that came

a grandstand food booth. We are still using processes and systems we've had in place for years. However, having all the additional space gives us so many new options that we have just begun to explore! It's an exciting time to be working here!

Our fair committee is comprised of 7 or 8 women; really couples as there is significant involvement and support from our husbands, too! Every other year, there is a co-chair which accounts for the 8th member. We each serve on the committee for 3 years. Watch for an email coming soon sharing our structure and other details about this fundraiser.

Our Restaurant & Grandstand Fundraiser this year is August 19-24, so make sure to mark your calendars to come out and support in any way you can. Our school has been blessed by fundraisers since it began almost 40 years ago and has been specifically blessed by the Fair Restaurant Fundraiser for over 10 years now. Let's work together and continue to stay active and engaged in OUR Heritage community. In a culture of independence and division, we have something important and positive to unite around. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Psalm 133:1

REMAINING 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

February 28, 2024 – Band & Choir Concert

March 7, 2024 - Protect Young Eyes – “How to Create a Tech-Ready Home”

March 29 – April 5, 2024 – Spring Break

April 26, 2024 – Kindergarten Program

May 8, 2024 – Elementary Program (in the afternoon)

May 13-17, 2024 – MAP Testing

May 16, 2024 – Band & Choir Concert

May 20, 2024 – All Schools Band Concert

May 27, 2024 – Memorial Day (no school)

May 30, 2024 – Last day of school (1/2 day)

May 30, 2024 - Graduation

2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

August 26, 2024 – Staff in school day – AM open house (time TBD)

August 27, 2024 – School begins

August 30 – September 2, 2024 – Labor Day Break

October 17-18, 2024 – Teacher's Convention

November 28 and 29, 2024 - Thanksgiving Break

December 21, 2024 and January 5, 2025 - Christmas Break

February 21, 2025 – Mid Winter Break

April 4-11, 2025 – Spring Break

May 26, 2025 – Memorial Day (no school)

May 28, 2025 – Last day of school (1/2 day)

May 28, 2025 - Graduation