

Herald



The Board and Staff Newsletter ~ November, 2025

2025-26 Board Members: Jason Butler, Jared Dykstra, Joel Kooienga,
Brian Koole, John Pipe, Chad Rus, Corey Terpstra - Secretary,
Jim VanBaren, Brandon VanOverloop - Vice President,
Kevin VanOverloop - President, Mike VanTil - Treasurer, Ross Zuverink

Inside this Issue

Dwelling in Unity	1
Mr. Brian Kuiper	
Federation Comm. Report... 2	
Mr. Ross Zuverink	
Technology Comm. Report.. 2	
Mr. Jason Butler	
Foundation Comm. Report .. 3	
Mr. Andy Peterson	
Foundation Letter	4
Blessing Worth Attending ... 5	
Mrs. Nicki Westra	
Cumbered About?	5
Mrs. Jodee VanOverloop	
Patience & Kindness	6
Mr. Dan VanDyke	
7-7-7	7
Mrs. Kelly Ensink	
Positivity.....	8
Mrs. Denise Uittenbogaard	
ACTS.....	9
Mrs. Sandy Glashower	
Reflections.....	10
Mrs. Rhonda Holstege	
Unity	10
Mr. Rick Gritters	
Affirmation	11
Mrs. Cathie Koole	
Lessons Learned	12
Mr. Benji Kuiper	
2025-26 Calendar	14
2026-27 Calendar	14

FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR, MR. BRIAN KUIPER

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Ephesians 4:1-3

"DWELLING TOGETHER IN UNITY IN THE SCHOOL"

Regular readers of the Herald will remember that I usually take this space of the November issue to summarize the keynote address of the Teachers' Convention held annually in October. Professor Griess was the speaker this past year, and he exhorted us to keep the unity of the Spirit. Naturally, he did this in application to the work being done in christian schools.

Professor Griess began by addressing the challenges to unity. One challenge is that there is a concern about maintaining the school as an organization. The other challenge is to be sure to serve individuals within the school. When these are not in balance, there is often a threat to unity. This balance is written about in scripture. Numerous Old Testament passages called for the leaders to shepherd the whole flock. Yet, in John 10:16, there are many sheep of one fold. And, Luke 15 refers to one who left the ninety-nine sheep to find the one that was missing.

To preserve unity, we need a firm foundation. We have the truth. We know the truth. It is the Word, and it is further explained in the creeds. Those creeds, while not inspired, bind us in unity and in a firm foundation of the truth. However, due to sin, unity of expression is sometimes difficult. The foundation of unity in our schools is this unity of doctrine. May we continue to know and love that truth and teach it to His children in our schools and in our homes.

However, the expression of that unity often is impacted by the weighing of organizational needs and individual needs. Notice both have needs, and both deserve to have their needs considered.

Professor Griess developed those two needs by spending time talking about both. The individual has a right to be heard and given value in the

organization, but should not tend to individualism. That means that sometimes the good of the organization must outweigh the needs or wants of the individual. On the other hand, the school as an organization has a rightful place. It must be maintained. Yet, it must be warned to not be tyrannical.

Griess concluded this section with 2 statements that he asked us to consider: "The institution must seek to minimize the sacrifice of the well-being of the individual for the sake of the whole, and never sacrifice the being of the individual for the sake of the whole"... "The parents and children must understand, 'I have to sacrifice something of the well-being of the child (perceived) for the sake of the whole, never all, and never the child's

being." Both were stated for the listener as food for thought. The PRTI Board gave the attendees a full session following the speech to develop that unity in different areas within our schools.

In the passage, the apostle outlines what qualities a person must have if they are committed to promoting unity. These include lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearing one another. These characteristics are developed in other places of scripture as well and thus should not surprise us. If one is going to serve another, he must be willing to put himself in the right frame of mind, and seek for the good of the other. May we be strengthened by these words as we also grow in our service to one another!

FEDERATION COMMITTEE REPORT – MR. ROSS ZUVERINK

Our annual meeting for the Federation of Protestant Reformed Schools was held on October 2. We elected and welcome Jeremy Monsma (Eastside Christian-Grand Rapids MI) to the board, and say farewell to Ryan Worries as his three-year term has ended. We thank Ryan for his work on the board, especially as chairman this past year. Derek VanOverloop was approved for another three-year term as our technology director. We thank him for his willingness to continue this work.

Randy Kuiper has completed his first year as managing director of the Teacher Training Committee. He capably continued the work begun in the past, made improvements to the organizational structure of the TTC, and kept diligently to the calendar. We are grateful for his faithful efforts this past year.

Teacher training continues to be the main work of the Federation. The Second Tier and Third Tier Mentoring programs have been running smoothly since they were launched in 2018. This past year, 9 first-year teachers were mentored in the Second Tier program, and 13 teachers were involved in the Third Tier program. This coming year, 11 teachers will begin the Second Tier program with an assigned mentor. Furthermore, 7 mentor/mentee pairs finished up their Third Tier work in 2025. We continued to be thankful for this means to provide spiritual, professional development for both mentors and mentees of our schools.

The First Tier of the mentoring program, designed to help prospective teachers, continues to gain traction. Because this program is designed for busy college students, the intent is to create a more informal

program setting where mentors can be involved with multiple prospective teachers. The title of this tier is "Developing a Worldview Filter," and the desire of the Federation is that experienced teachers can help prospective teachers make sense of what they are learning in college, private or public, and be prepared to move into teaching in the Protestant Reformed Schools.

There is continued work to develop material for a Doctrines Applied to Education course. Various writers have developed doctrines on sovereignty, creation, revelation and scriptural authority, antithesis, image of God, sanctification, providence, and grace. The peer review process continued this past summer so that the papers are of excellence. The intent with this material is to offer a summer workshop on the material produced, and going forward, regularly offer a course on Doctrines Applied to Education, similar to the History & Principles course. In the future, we hope these papers will be published by the RFPA.

Prof. Dykstra has once again agreed to teach the History and Principles of Reformed Education course. This course is held every three years and is taught at the Protestant Reformed seminary. There are 12 sessions from November through April. Live-streaming is available for those outside of West Michigan. This course is beneficial for anyone with a conviction for Reformed education: teachers, prospective teachers, parents, grandparents, and board members.

May the Lord bless the ongoing work of the Federation and use it for the good of our schools.

TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE REPORT ~ MR. JASON BUTLER & MR. CHAD RUS

In a world of computers that continue to improve in power, efficiency, and knowledge, the Technology Committee of Heritage continues to monitor the landscape and address the challenges. We are grateful for the support given from the School Board, teachers,

and administrator in many ways as we approach the changes happening around us. This has allowed things to flow smoothly with minor hiccups which are taken care of in a timely fashion.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) seems to be the subject that continues to drive the aforementioned changes and challenges. The Technology Committee, along with those previously mentioned, has been working to create policies on the use of AI that apply to not only students, but to teachers as well. This is an ongoing process and will be for the foreseeable future as AI continues to grow. In the meantime, we will continue to monitor this and do our best to keep our school in the appropriate lanes related to AI and its' use. This is not just done at the board level, so if you have the chance to encourage the teachers and thank them, please do.

Greg Johnson & IT Systems

Like the prior 9 years, we continue to work with Greg Johnson and his team from IT Systems. They continue to be an integral part of our technology systems at Heritage. Greg and his team can regularly be seen around Heritage each week and are a very important part of our structure at Heritage. Without them as the "boots on the ground" the Technology Committee would struggle to maintain the computer systems. We are thankful for the work they continue to put in, and also for the monitoring they do throughout the year.

GoGuardian

GoGuardian is an application used to help teacher's monitor students activity while the students work on computers at their desks. This kind of attention to student safety when online is very important. We continue under contract with them for this school year and even next school year as you were informed in the 2024 Herald report from the Technology Committee. The familiarity of their systems to our teachers is important so students can be effectively monitored.

Chromebooks

The students at Heritage continue to use Chromebook computers on a daily basis to assist with digital learning activities and also to advance their skills in their use of computers. These are skills that they use as they continue through Heritage and beyond.

We currently have seven carts of Chromebooks at the school, and we do not have any immediate plans to add an eighth cart. The current Chromebooks continue to

work, but are showing their age. For that reason we have plans to replace the computers from at least one of these carts and possibly two after this school year concludes. The Technology Committee has reached out to local businesses to see if any of them would be willing to assist in covering some or all of the costs associated with replacing the computers. In return, we will place a decal from these businesses on our carts for all to see as they are wheeled around the school. If your business was not contacted, and you are interested in helping out with these costs, please contact the Technology Committee.

Looking Ahead

With how quickly the landscape changes in the technology world, we continue to work with what we have and make improvements where we can. Technology is something that we are allowed to be excited about because of how it may improve our everyday lives. It is a vital component in many of our lives and will continue to be that way as it does not seem to be going away anytime. This comes with great responsibility for all who use it, and it is important that this is monitored. That is what Heritage will continue to do. We ask that you continue to pray for wisdom for our school as we wade through the pool of AI.

We feel obligated, in case some parents may not realize how far this has come, to mention that it is important to stay in touch with your children about the use of AI. Earlier this year, a news outlet reported one student treating AI like a friend, confiding in that AI to help make life decisions. Unfortunately, this child ended his own life after the AI chatbot suggested to do so. This happened outside of our Christian circles, but this is proof in the importance of the job that we have as parents and as a school to educate our children on artificial intelligence. We are not trying to prevent the use of AI within our school because it is a very important and powerful tool. We must adapt to the changes that we are presented with for the profit of our school and students, while at the same time understand the potential for sin to climb into our lives through AI.

Thank you for your support of our school and School Board.

FOUNDATION COMMITTEE REPORT ~ MR. ANDY PETERSON

The Heritage Christian School Foundation (the "Foundation") was created in 1993 in order to provide additional financial support to Heritage Christian School through grants. The purpose of the Foundation is to help lower the cost of tuition. The Foundation's main revenue sources continue to come from individual donations, bequests, fund-raising activities, and investment income. Annually, the Foundation Board determines the grant amount based on an average investment return realized on its invested assets.

There was one main fundraising activity planned for this year, the annual golf outing which takes place in July of each year at The Meadows Golf Course. We are happy to announce that this Fundraiser brought in around \$36,000 for the year. The Evening of Praise was discussed, but was ultimately replaced this year with a Generational Matching Campaign. The matching campaign is currently running and any funds donated will be matched up to \$40,000. So if we can collect \$40,000 in donations during this campaign, that will

provide a total of \$80,000 of funding for the Foundation. Please prayerfully consider this in your giving this year, especially as we approach the end of the calendar year. We have included the letter that the Foundation sent out to their constituents on the next page.

One big update that we want to share is that the Foundation Board has made a decision to move their funds from The Barnabas Foundation to NorthCoast Wealth Advisors. The reason for this move is that we were not utilizing the benefits of having money with The Barnabas Foundation, but we were paying for the services. This cost savings can be used to help support Heritage Christian School. The Foundation believes the relationship with NorthCoast will grow each year, and

we are confident with the strategy and tactical oversight presented.

Grandparent's Day continues to be a witness to the love that exists for the education that is being provided at Heritage Christian School. The continued support that the Foundation receives each and every year is also a testament to the support our school is receiving from all of our constituents. We are thankful to our Father in Heaven for the support that has continued come from donors each and every year. We also want to express our thanks to you as a supporter of the Foundation. Please contact a Foundation Board member if you have any questions.

Heritage Christian School

~ Foundation ~

6340 Autumn Drive, Hudsonville, MI 49426

Dear Heritage Christian School Supporters,

As you are aware, the Heritage Christian School Foundation was founded with the purpose of providing financial support to Heritage Christian School and keeping the cost of Christian education affordable through annual grants that offset operating expenses. The Foundation has existed for over 30 years and during that time has been privileged to provide grants to our school of over \$1,200,000 with the generous support of many.

As the costs of Christian education continue to increase, the Foundation's goal has remained to provide grants annually that maintain a steady, proportionate level of support for HCS. For continued growth to be possible, the Foundation needs to grow its base of assets through fund raising activities or investment income. To date the Foundation has primarily relied upon two fund raising activities, which have provided between \$40,000 and \$50,000, for the major portion of annual grants given to HCS. However, the Foundation needs continued, significant growth to generate the levels of investment earnings required for HCS and our enrolled families to consistently benefit.

Backed by the generous support of several anonymous donors last year, the Foundation had a very successful matching campaign which brought in very significant income in 2024. We are excited to announce that we have again received support from multiple donors to conduct what we are now calling the **Generations Matching Campaign**. *Any donation made to our Foundation during the remainder of 2025 will again be matched dollar-for-dollar, up to the donor pledge threshold of \$40,000. This is an incredible opportunity to double the impact of any donations to HCS. Giving to this campaign truly enables benefit for both current and future generations.*

We hasten to express our gratitude to these generous donors for their support and then turn to you as a supporter of Heritage Christian School to urge you to consider giving to this cause. A donation to this campaign will help us take advantage of the available matching funds, and share the burden required to sustain the resource needs of this Christian school to future generations. As the Proverbs state, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6) A Reformed education such as HCS offers is the ideal path to prepare children for a life of service in God's kingdom.

Thank you for your consideration in this worthy matter; should you have any questions, feel free to contact Andy Peterson (616-260-5830 or apeterson@deanboiler.com). If you are able to lend your support to this campaign, please send your check payable to "Heritage Christian School Foundation" to the address noted in the letterhead above before December 31, 2025. Alternatively, if desired you can also use the online donation option at <https://www.heritagepschool.com/foundation/> with a comment designating the gift to the Generations Matching Campaign.

In His Service,
The HCS Foundation Board

Parent Teacher Conferences: A Blessing Worth Attending ~ MRS. NICKI WESTRA

It is the time of year again when we come across a parenting struggle. We go back and forth about if we should attend parent teacher conferences or not. It is a common topic of conversation amongst our friends; maybe you struggle with this decision too. One side of the argument says, *"We should go to hear about any problems little Susie might be having."* The other side says, *"We know Susie is doing fine; I don't want to waste the teacher's time."* Sound familiar?

Let me help you with that decision by explaining conferences from a teacher's perspective. I will be honest; conferences do take extra effort and long evenings. BUT, please hear me when I say God is using that work to bless each of us, teacher, student, and parent.

When the parents sit in those extra comfy student seats across from the teacher, we want you to know that we are partners with you in raising your child. We have gotten to know them over the past weeks, and we truly care about them. And not just about their grades. We care about how they are growing in their faith, growing in their relationships, and doing emotionally with all that's required of them. We also want to hear your perspective on how you feel little Susie is doing. You see her at home where she is maybe more comfortable and will open up about how things are really going and what she is struggling with. At conferences, we can fit those puzzle pieces together so we can both help Susie grow. Parents and teachers working side by side to raise up the next generation of believers is a blessing.

Another blessing that comes as a result of conferences is a chance to pause and reflect on each student individually. It forces us to make the time to look at the unique strengths God has given to little Susie, and we then think about how we can encourage her to use those gifts to serve and glorify Him. It also forces us to look at one or two areas Susie needs some encouragement or

guidance in and together we can come up with a plan to help her grow through that.

The encouragement we receive as teachers is the third blessing I want to mention. I don't think I'd be remiss in saying that EVERY conference ends with a sincere thank you from the parents. That is so encouraging to hear, and we are thankful you express that to us. Another conversation that comes up often is "please let us know if an issue comes up." This shows your desire to be involved and reminds us to continue communicating with you even after conferences are done.

As teachers, our prayer is that you leave conferences also feeling encouraged. Parenting is hard. Very hard. We want you to leave that conference knowing we truly care for your child and will do what we can, by the grace of God, to help them continue to grow. We pray for you and your child daily.

Parents, I strongly urge you to go to the conferences. You will be an encouragement to the teachers, and our prayer is it will also be a time of encouragement to you and your children.

I will end this article by circling back to being a parent asking that difficult question: to go to conferences or not? After attending one of our daughters' conferences last night, my husband was re-capping the meeting while I was watching her eyes light up and her smile come and go as she heard the encouragement and things to work on. It solidified to me the necessity of attending conferences as a parent. These conversations probably would not have happened without attending that conference. Thank you teachers for investing the time and working beside us to help raise our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

CUMBERED ABOUT? ~ MRS. JODEE VANOVERLOOP

Do you ever feel like you're being pulled in many directions? The challenge of navigating work and life is real. With work, family, relationships, and self-care, the hours of the day can fade before all the tasks are completed. Consequently, our relationships with God, colleagues, home, church, and friends can be impacted.

In preparation for a roundtable discussion at the recent Teachers Convention, my husband and I polled teachers on where and why they find it most difficult to maintain balance. Some responses included: "Easier to prioritize the immediately demanding things like work and family than the long-term important things like faith and rest.", "So many things are 'calling for my attention'" and "It's hard to fit everything in, and get proper rest".

What about us? As a mother? You, as a father? As a Christian? What is all jammed into our lives? What are

our responsibilities? How are our relationships? Can we find time to volunteer and help out? How do we care for ourselves?

The question we all face is, how do we fill our days? What matters most? How much time, money, and energy is this costing us? The challenges we face can dominate our decision-making and time if we're not careful. They take from our priorities. With 24 hours in a day, time cannot be stolen. We can only borrow. What is gained from one priority is lost to another. So, what are our priorities in life?

In Genesis, and specifically in the Ten Commandments, God instructed His people, "six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work." God commanded man to subdue the earth as stewards. Work is the means by which we sustain life and make discoveries about God's world.

Using our God-given gifts, we work to provide and bless others and ourselves.

"But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God". God made resting on the Sabbath a requirement of the Law, too. Not just six days to work. God commanded life to have a cycle of work, rest, and worship. Rest, however, does not come naturally to us. Thus, the Sabbath was made for man. Not man for the Sabbath. In Ezekiel, we are reminded that God sanctifies us in rest. We are finite creatures. We need rest. We learn to trust God to take care of all of our needs. To rest is to have to trust that God will take care of all things for us. After all, He has the whole world in His hands. He has you and me!

The book of Romans reminds us that our daily activities are acts of devotion to our Father, including the time we spend. Our actions, words, and thoughts serve God and others. Additionally, we are stewards of time and our bodies, temples of the Holy Spirit, fearfully and wonderfully made.

Our relationship with God is more important than our service for Him. Mary's choice to sit and listen illustrates the value of prayer, reflection, and quiet time with God. It provides the peace and spiritual nourishment needed to serve without becoming overwhelmed or cumbered about. Are we filling our time with things that are necessary and life-giving? Or are we stuffing it with

unhealthy relationships, expectations, guilt, or unnecessary possessions that weigh us down and consume our energy? Our busyness can be a source of distress and anxiety.

What are some healthy boundaries we can give ourselves so that the noisy tasks of the day don't get all of the attention? Kevin DeYoung, in his book *Crazy Busy*, reminds us of two truths. First, we must set priorities because we can't do it all. And second, we must set priorities if we are to serve others most effectively. How well are we serving those who need us most? What should we not do in this minute or hour, because it takes away from our priorities?

In the middle of all the busyness, the stress, and the messes, God sees us. Because He lives, we can face tomorrow. Often, He stretches us beyond what we can handle to make us know that it's not by our strength or might, but by His. God is in control of every aspect of our lives. He doesn't intend for us to carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. Remember? He's got it! We are His and He is ours. DeYoung sums it up well. "It's not wrong to be tired. It's not wrong to feel overwhelmed. It's not wrong to go through seasons of complete chaos. What is wrong - and heartbreakingly foolish and wonderfully available - is to live a life with more craziness than we want because we have less Jesus than we need."

THE BEAUTY OF PATIENCE AND KINDNESS ~ MR. DAN VANDYKE

Familiarity breeds contempt... unless God ordains otherwise, for often He uses the familiar things to prick our hearts the most -- spouses, parents, teachers, and Bible verses. These familiar encounters often are taken for granted in our daily work and fellowship until God uses them to touch us in an attention-grabbing way. It's one of the greatest blessings of being a teacher. We teach the same material year after year until it can grow increasingly mundane, and then a student notices something, "Wait... so do you mean..." And suddenly we see an angle or idea that we'd never considered before. Or a parent asks a question for clarification, and we pause long enough to reconsider a too-familiar practice or belief.

Even Bible verses can be read so often and referred to in so many circumstances that we stop reflecting carefully on them. Recently, I was reading through the Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps, & Time Lines, and I ran across one of those familiar passages that had escaped my careful consideration for far too long - I Corinthians 13, that well-read chapter on Charity (159). On this page, the authors had taken each attribute of Love and expanded it into a few instructional statements on how to love in that particular way along with a few supporting Bible verses. In this way, the chapter on Love was transformed. A list of descriptions of love was changed to a related list of commandments -

commandments how to love in each of these specific ways.

The moment that really pricked my heart was when I realized that I witness these attributes of love in people who surround me daily, in those familiar family members, colleagues, friends, students, etc. God works in ALL of His people, so when you want to see love in action, all you really need to do is look around. You will see patient love, kind love, contented love, humble love, courteous love, selfless love, unoffendable love, forgetful love, etc. As you see your neighbors' Godly example, you will be encouraged to walk in the same way.

Just a few examples... Recently, a few colleagues have shared with me encouraging statements from their students. They didn't need to share these comments, but their hearts were kind and caring, so they shared. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11). This verse reminds of the great treasure that an encouraging word holds. Those who encourage in Godliness are putting "love is... kind" into action.

Parent-Teacher Conferences is another time of great encouragement. One thing that struck me especially this past conference time is how patient almost all of the parents are with my shortcomings, especially those parents who have sent several of their children to my classroom for instruction. Even though English class can

be tricky as we're really learning multiple aspects of language in many overlapping and often confusing ways, they thank me sincerely and mention specific instances of instruction that made an impression. The patience and kindness of parents reminds me that "my" work is really God's work and that we teachers are mere instruments in His hand.

Finally, the students themselves can be so very patient and kind. These young people are the purpose and focus of all the work and resources that are poured into this beautiful Christian school. And what Godly fruit they produce on a daily basis. Although they struggle, as we all do, with their prevailing sins, they daily demonstrate that fruit of love that can only come by the Holy Spirit's power. Even in these first two months of school, we have seen children stepping up to show patience and kindness in many various ways - gathering homework for fellow absent students, helping Mr. Kamps set up for Grandparents' Day or Teachers' Convention, offering to wash desks for a second week in a row, carpet sweeping the hallways after break time, etc. We rejoice

greatly in the evidence of God's work in these young saints. "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:4).

Spend any time at all watching the world around us, and you will see that love which "suffers long and is kind" is a rare commodity - a treasure that can only be a gift from God. Even among fellow believers, we too often are prone to criticize, backbite, accuse, argue, judge, mistrust, and condemn. We frequently believe our perspective is the only correct one instead of "in lowliness of mind, esteem(ing) others as better than (ourselves)" Philippians 2:3. What precious unity we could enjoy if we would follow God's command to love each other with a long-suffering and kind spirit so that our faith is not a "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1). So reread this great chapter today (or at least some time this week) and praise God for sending you fellow saints who are truly leading you in the path of patient kindness, the path of love by their Godly example.

7-7-7- ~ MRS. KELLY ENSINK

If you turned to this article thinking it was going to be about math, I'm sorry, you will be disappointed. If you decide to read it anyway, hopefully you will not be disappointed.

I recently came across an article (I'll admit it was on social media) about the 7-7-7 rule of parenting. I decided to Google it to learn more about it. The information in this article is taken from the one I saw on Instagram by Strategic Parenting and an article from Well Roots Counseling.

There are 2 ways to interpret the 7-7-7 Rule of Parenting: Time based and Age based. I'll briefly describe both.

Time based:

1. 7 minutes in the morning: Begin the day with your child by focusing on building a relationship with them, not "encouraging" them to move faster so they can get to school on time. Maybe this time together happens while they eat breakfast or, if a girl, while you are doing their hair. Maybe you wake your child up 5 minutes earlier and sit in bed with them for a few minutes while they wake up. Find a few minutes to spend with each child so you can build a connection with them and make them feel important to you.
2. 7 minutes in the afternoon: Spend time with your child after school to talk about how his/her day went, the good times and the not-so-good times. Maybe this happens over an afternoon snack, or a brief walk together, or just sitting on the couch together. Just these few minutes with them helps your child see that you value their feelings and experiences.

3. 7 minutes at night/before bed: Spend time with each child talking about their day, sharing feelings about their day, things they were thankful for that day, etc... It is amazing how much more children are prone to talk before bed...even my adult children want to talk more at my bedtime!

Age based:

1. Ages 0-7: Focus on play, discovery, stimulating cognitive development, and reading books to them. No screens, phone calls, or other distractions. You are completely focused on them.
2. Ages 7-14: Use this time to teach your children (either a skill or concept), to help them to become independent, and still to show them they are important to you even though they are getting older. Again, no screens, phone calls or other distractions.
3. Ages 14-21: Have non-judgmental conversations with them. Talk about plans for their future and ask how you can help them. Show them support. Go out for coffee or some other place that allows for conversation. Remember, no screens for you or your child during this time.

While this may sound like an "only-in-an-ideal-world" concept but impossible for you, the point to take away from this is to find time to spend one on one with each child. If the times of day listed above don't work for you, find a time that does and make it a priority to spend time with your child. Make connections with them. Let them talk. Don't use this time for homework, but sitting together reading and talking about a book is beneficial.

Throwing a ball outside, or playing a game inside are both beneficial. The article talked about how this creates consistent time for interaction and creates emotional well-being for your child because they know they can plan on this time with you. Create a time they look forward to, no matter how old they are.

This “rule of parenting” can be applied to Proverbs 22:6 that says, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and

when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Use your time with your child to help them see right from wrong, to see the world from a Christian perspective, and to remind them that they are important and loved. Hopefully you will start something they remember fondly and might do with their own children someday. (This is the utmost compliment, even if it is unspoken!)

THE POWER OF POSITIVITY ~ MRS. DENISE UITTENBOGAARD

Words have power! As adults, our words to one another have great power. As parents, our words to our children have great power. As teachers, working with covenant children, our words have great power. Ephesians 4:29 says, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” This verse is a great reminder to God’s people. The words that we speak must be kind, encouraging, and edifying to those who hear us.

While raising and instructing young people, there are many times where rebuke and correction are necessary. As children grow and begin to make more decisions on their own, they will make mistakes. We all sin in our thoughts, actions, and words. One of our first reactions to sin in our children may be to get upset and raise our voice. “What did you do this time?” “Why would you do that?” “What made you say that?” But this is not how our Heavenly Father deals with us. Psalm 103:8 says, “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy”. God is so patient and merciful toward us. We must show this same patience and mercy when dealing with our children. As parents and teachers, it is our calling to instruct and guide our children in a Christ-like way. We need to pray for a gracious spirit to deal patiently with them.

When interacting with young people, the power of a positive attitude can go a long way. Encouragement to behave in a God-fearing way, and to think confidently about themselves, will bring many benefits. Proverbs 18:21 says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue...” Our tongues have strong power! If we are always speaking down to our youth or making them feel that they are failing or not measuring up, those words can be deadly to them. They will only become discouraged and feel negative thoughts towards their parents, teachers, friends, or even themselves. On a positive note, the power of the tongue can shape a sense of belonging and encouragement in our homes and classrooms. We can use positive speech to encourage and to uplift those who are down. When struggling students are greeted with a smile, they learn to smile back! When they do well on a test and get a high five, they are encouraged! These small acts can build children up and give them the confidence to keep working hard and act in a way that is pleasing to God.

With a positive attitude, they will grow to feel more confident in the work that they are doing.

In 2018, researchers at the Stanford University School of Medicine conducted a study with 240 children. They used MRI scans to map the effects of positivity on the brain. Through these tests they found that a positive attitude improved the functions of the brain responsible for memory. They also found that being positive toward children improved their ability to answer math problems, increased their memory, and enhanced their problem-solving abilities. When teachers and parents showed a positive attitude about learning, the students reflected that attitude and their scores increased.

While working with young people, I have had many circumstances which support this evidence. I have encountered some students who were very discouraged. I will hear them say “I am going to fail”, or “I can’t do this!”, or “I probably got the worst grade in the class.” I have had to put a stop to negative talk about oneself, their abilities, or their classmates. Instead, I try to create an environment of encouragement and positivity. When the students are greeted with a smile and “how are you today?” they are more willing to engage in conversation. When a struggling student does well on a paper, quiz, or test, I make sure to commend them on their hard work and encourage them to keep it up. I have noticed that even struggling students show improvement when they are being encouraged in their work.

How are we able to stay positive when life is hard? First of all, we must remember the greatest gift that we have been given - the gift of salvation! When we focus on what God has done for us and the gift he has given us, we cannot help but be positive. Secondly, we must be an example to our children by living a life that reflects the work of Christ in our hearts. We must speak respectfully about our pastors, elders, teachers, and other students. We must pray for our children and pray for patience as we raise them and for strength to encourage them often. We are able to encourage and show positivity only by the grace and mercy of our Heavenly Father. Philippians 4:4 says, “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.” In every situation, we are called to rejoice in the Lord. God has called us to be parents and teachers and is using us to raise His covenant children. What a huge responsibility and what a great gift He has given to us. Let us encourage one another and build each other up!

ACTS: A SIMPLE WAY TO PRAY ~ MRS. SANDY GLASHOWER

Our first graders are learning to pray to God using the **ACTS** acronym, which helps guide their conversations with Him. They are learning that **A** stands for *Adoration*—taking time to praise God for who He is and for His greatness. **C** stands for *Confession*, when they quietly tell God they are sorry for their sins and ask for forgiveness. **T** reminds them to give *Thanksgiving*, expressing gratitude for all that God has done and given. Finally, **S** stands for *Supplication*, when they bring their *requests* to God—praying for themselves and for others in need. Through this simple and meaningful pattern, students are growing in their understanding of prayer and developing a closer relationship with God. (ChatGPT, response to "ACTS: A Simple Way to Pray", OpenAI)

In the end, there's really no wrong way to pray. Just open your mind and your mouth and speak to your Father in Heaven. He's listening. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus". (Philippians 4:6-7)

Student

A - You are KING of KINGS!
C - I am sorry for lying to my parents.
T - Thank you for a house to live in.
S - Help me to be kind to others and help others to play nice too.

Student

A - You are GLORIOUS!
C - Forgive me for lying.
T - Thank you for the food.
S - Help me to help my mother more and for my grandmother's voice to fully return.

Student

A - You are FAITHFUL!
C - I'm sorry for stealing.
T - Thank you for
S - Help me to be kind.

Student

A - Lord, You are GREAT!
C - I am sorry for cheating
T - Thank you for happiness.
S - Help me to be caring and help others to be kind.

Student

A - You are the MAGNIFICENT One!
C - I'm sorry for being unkind.
T - Thank you for the plants.
S - Help my grandmother's foot to feel better.

Student

A - You are MIGHTY!
C - I am sorry for hitting.
T - Thank you for my parents.
S - Help my dad to get better from the flu.

Student

A - You are STRONG!
C - I'm sorry for lying.
T - Thank you for my mom and dad.
S - Help me to be obedient and help baby Madeline's teeth to not hurt so much.

Student

A - You are PERFECT!
C - Forgive me for punching others.
T - Thank you for my family.
S - Help me to fight sin and for baby Zeke to heal completely.

Student

A - You are a GOOD God!
C - I'm sorry for hitting others.
T - Thank you for the air we can breathe.
S - Help me to be more loving.

Student

A - You are SOVEREIGN.
C - I'm sorry for fighting.
T - Thank you for my grandparents.
S - Help me to be helpful to my mother and heal my papa's foot from surgery.

Student

A - You are HOLY!
C - I'm sorry for hitting.
T - Thank you for the Bible.
S - Comfort those who lost a child.

Student

A - You are HOLY!
C - I'm sorry for mocking others.
T - Thank you for the trees.
S - Help me to be caring and for others to love you more.

Student

A - You are GLORIOUS!
C - I'm sorry for kicking my brother.
T - Thank you for your word, the Bible.
S - Help my grandpa get better from his appendix.

Student

A - You are POWERFUL!
C - I'm sorry for punching.
T - Thank you for friends.
S - Comfort the widows and widowers.

Student

A - You are ALMIGHTY!
C - Forgive me for lying.
T - Thank you for being our God.
S - Help me to be more loving and for my classmates to heal from their sickness.

Student

A - You are my SAVIOR!
C - I'm sorry for cheating.
T - Thank you for shelter.
S - Make me more helpful and heal my grandma.

REFLECTIONS ~ MRS. RHONDA HOLSTEGE

Schools, teachers, students, books and supplies, lunches and clothes. Many things have changed while some have stayed the same. Schools - I have taught in both the 'old' and the 'new' Heritage schools. The old was before I had my children while the new was after having children. Teachers - I have taught with a few, but know a lot of them. My family tends to choose education as their major, so we always try to take a Gritters picture at the end of each teacher's convention with the ones who are still available. This year we had 17 of the Gritters attending. Students - I am teaching kids of former students. My students now love to point out that I taught their mom or dad. There are also new families, families I never had the privilege to teach before. The rest of the books, supplies, lunches and clothes have changed as the styles have changed. But one thing that has always been special is Grandparent's Day. It is a special day because of the bond between the generations, and I can see the important role that grandparents have. The morning starts early as some grandparents come before the allotted start time. There are smiles and laughter as they try to find the right rooms. As teachers, we try to create a welcoming

atmosphere, hanging up artwork, making special presentations, and having a break time with refreshments. The grandparents get to see what the child is learning, while the kids can see who is related to their peers. Grandparents are able to share memories and stories, while also helping out on an assignment or coloring page.

Since this day is about sharing, my students have shared with me their favorite parts of that day. The number one reason is they receive candy, and sometimes a lot of it. The second main reason was that they get to spend time with their grandparents. The third reason was the singing that we do each year in the gym on the elementary side. The last main reason was that this day was so much fun, and they enjoyed doing it with their grandparents because they love them so much!

I will miss this time, but I do get to look forward to my time at being a grandparent in the school myself, Lord willing. We are thankful for the parents and grandparents who take their time to show concern and love for our christian schools. Thank you!

DWELLING TOGETHER IN UNITY ~ MR. RICK GRITTERS

For almost seventy years now, teachers from the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools have been attending the annual teachers' convention held each fall. The PRTI, (Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute) the organization which sponsors and plans the convention, was formed in 1956, and there has been a conference or convention each year since then, with the exception of 2020, during the dreaded Covid lockdowns. And for thirty-two of those seventy years, I have been privileged to attend these conventions with friends and fellow colleagues from schools all over the country. (There was one exception. In 2016, I made the easy choice of walking my daughter down the wedding aisle instead of going to the convention.) Currently there are nineteen schools and over 170 teachers that are involved in this annual gathering!

From a certain respect, it's pretty easy to describe what goes on at a convention: a keynote address Thursday morning by an area minister or professor, about fifteen sectionals divided into three different blocks for the remainder of the day, a business meeting Friday morning followed by two more blocks of sectionals, and of course great food, fellowship and singing. But from another point of view, it's hard to put into words the experience that many teachers walk away with that Friday afternoon. I suppose you just have to be there to understand.

The theme for this year's convention was "Dwelling Together in Unity: based on Ephesians 4:1-3. Professor

Griess gave the keynote address and instructed us on two main points: Concern for the Individual vs Concern for the Whole/Institution. As parents and teachers, we work to preserve the school institution as well as the individual student without idolizing either. His conclusion was two-fold: 1) The Institution must seek to minimize the sacrifice of the well being of the individual for the sake of the whole, and never sacrifice the being of the individual for the sake of the whole. Failure to do this is tyranny. Tyranny can express itself in different ways: hiding the sins of a leader to preserve the institution, not listening to the concerns of parents, giving more privileges and opportunities to those with much money. 2) The parents and children must understand, I have to sacrifice something of the well-being of the child (perceived) for the sake of the whole, but never all of my child's well being, and never the child's being. Failure to do this is individualism. Individualism can express itself in different ways: showing favoritism to one student while neglecting another, parents caring too much for only their child leading to a disrespect of the teacher or school, a parent looking at himself simply as a consumer with purely a transactional relationship with the school.

At its deepest, unity is God's work. Without the Holy Spirit, unity is impossible. And without the Scriptures and the Confessions, there can be no unity in doctrine and life. We all must wear the same "belt of truth." At the same time, sin prevents perfect unity and causes divisions. And this is why Paul instructs us in Ephesians

4 to “endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit.” And how do we do this? By being lowly and humble, by being meek, which is gentle and mild, by being willing to suffer for the sake of others, and by enduring others’ weaknesses and sins.

This is my prayer for the students, teachers, parents, and board members in the 41st year of covenant education at Heritage. I pray that God continues to give us unity through His Spirit, that we as His people diligently strive to keep this unity, and that our selfish

pride will not prevent or ruin the unity that we have. As parents, let’s make sure we’re humble in all our relationships with each other, setting an example for our children. As teachers, let’s be gentle with our students so that they see the mind of Christ in us. As members of the church, let’s be patient with fellow saints, especially the ones whom we may not always agree with. And finally, pray that God will give each one of us grace to forbear in love the shortcomings and flaws of others knowing that is exactly what Jesus does for us.

THE AFFIRMATION CHALLENGE ~ MRS. CATHIE KOOLE

As teachers, one overarching goal is that our students feel valued. The irony here is that elementary students have an uncanny ability to make their teachers feel important and valuable. Cards, letters, stories, words and pictures are weekly reminders that we are not overlooked or unappreciated. I cannot overstate how affirming these gestures are and how they make a teacher’s heart smile. Students are revealing the merit of affirmation and indirectly teaching their teachers its worth.

Affirmation is a term that is kicked around quite a bit lately. Its root word, “affirm,” means to state something that is true. Turn that word into “affirmation,” and it morphs into a positive approach of encouragement and support. A hallmark of child psychology, the term “affirmation” takes on a life of its own emphasizing positive thinking and self-empowerment.

The recent gender debate hijacks this word and contradicts its very definition. The liberal left demands we “affirm” a person’s identity based strictly on feelings over biology. Therefore, society is manipulated into affirming lies posing as truths.

In light of gender affirmations, it is understandable that we hesitate to endorse certain aspects of secular psychology. When we see new flags, we assume they’re red. Although we are called to be vigilant, we can’t boycott all “modern” thinking. Testing with the biblical standard should always be our practice. Maybe modern psychology is discovering and developing what God intended for the human race since the beginning: the blessing of affirmation.

Most of us were raised on the biblical mantra of “spare the rod, spoil the child,” and, of course, we see the wisdom of discipline. I propose that Christian discipline and affirmation aren’t mutually exclusive. We sometimes tend to validate that which is counter-cultural and devalue any supposed trendy innovation. However, the concept of affirmation is not new. Many of us also grew up knowing we were loved and valued. Many of us were encouraged to use the gifts and talents God entrusted to us. Many of us were affirmed in our identity as children

of God. But maybe some of us weren’t, and maybe some of our children aren’t.

While listening to a sermon a couple of years ago by Prof. Huizinga, he highlighted the baptism of Christ and the affirmation of God the Father for His Son. Maybe you recall the words spoken from heaven, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased”. This was the topic of Huizinga’s sermon. What I didn’t know, and what Prof. Huizinga highlighted, was that one gospel account mentions “This is my beloved Son” (Matthew 3:17) and another one mentions “Thou art my beloved Son” (Mark 1:11). God was not only affirming His approval to His Son but also to His people about His Son. God is modeling how parents should interact with children. Can the same be said for how we talk to our children and about our children? What about how we talk to others and about others?

We all recognize the potential danger of promoting pride among the youth. But we can shift the narrative from “I’m so proud of you” to “God blessed you with the gift of _____. Please be thankful for this talent and use it wisely for His Kingdom.” With this perspective on affirmation, we pray that the child shifts from a me-centered focus to a God-centered one. We shift from pride to thankfulness. We validate that God worked something valuable and precious in each of His children.

This has been an intentional and ongoing practice in my classroom this year. While we are just in the beginning stages, the students are encouraged to see the value in who God created them to be, but also to strive to see the positives in others. This not only builds community in the classroom but also unveils our need for each other. This can be modeled by the teacher, “I am so glad that God gave our piano player, Mrs. Tara Koole, the gift of music because that is not something I am able to do. I am so glad she is using this gift in our classroom.” Or “God enabled me to figure out math concepts since I was young, but I wasn’t gifted with the ability to spell. So, if any of my good spellers see any errors, please help me out.” Students are guided to understand that it is a blessing to use our gifts to help a classmate while also

realizing that it is also a blessing to need help from a gifted peer. This allows everyone to use their talents for the good of the whole. Affirming someone else's character and/or gifts is a valuable aspect of being a member of the body of Christ.

So, the challenge for you this school year is to affirm those members in the body of Christ. Speak highly to them and speak highly about them. Identify their strengths in Christ and affirm their callings. Look for

opportunities to see the good in others. Encourage your children to do the same. Send that note to your church pianist, e-mail a pastor when you appreciated an aspect of his sermon, message your administration and school board that you appreciate all their time and energy, thank your bus driver, text your parents, hug your child, and affirm your neighbor in Christ.

"Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth..." Proverbs 27:2a

LESSONS LEARNED FROM ATHLETICS ~ MR. BENJI KUIPER

This school year, I have taken on the role of athletic director at Heritage. For those of you who know me, sports have always been a big part of my life and my family's life. I grew up in a household of four boys and 2 parents who all share a love for sports. Now I understand that sports, just like many other things in this life, can sometimes take up too much of our time and thoughts, but I believe that there are a whole lot of benefits in participating in athletics, and they can teach us a lot of valuable lessons, especially as children of God. In this Herald article, I'd like to talk about some of these benefits and lessons of playing sports, whether that be for school, college, or even recreationally. Although I could have written about so many different things, I have decided to focus on four valuable lessons that can be learned or encouraged.

First of all, I believe that athletics encourage working together and learning how to be on a team. If your team is full of a bunch of individuals who only care about their own accolades and success over the teams, that team will not be as successful. It's good for our children to learn that it's not all about them. It's good for our children to learn how to work together with others. It's good for our children to learn how to be happy when other people are successful. I believe if our coaches can teach our children this valuable lesson, not only will it lead to a more successful team, but it will also prepare them for their future vocations and roles in their families and in our churches. Philippians 2:3-4 remind us of the importance of putting others before ourselves. These verses say, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." 1 Peter 4:10 says, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." This verse reminds us that we all have different talents and abilities, and it talks about how we can use these talents and abilities to serve and help out others on our teams or in our communities.

Secondly, I believe that athletics can teach our children how to communicate. One phrase that has always stuck with me from my high school basketball days is "a quiet gym is a losing gym." This was one of coach Tyler Schimmel's favorite things to tell us when we weren't properly talking and communicating with each other. It was important for us to know when a screen was going to be set and on which side. It was important for us to know what defense we were supposed to be playing, and it was important for us to just remind each other where we were on the floor and what we were supposed to be doing. Communication is such a huge skill to learn at a young age. These children will have to communicate at school, at church, with their families, and at their jobs and so if they can learn how to do it in an athletic setting, I believe that that will hopefully carry over to some of these other things in life.

Thirdly, I believe that athletics can teach our children how to work hard. When I think of the characteristics of a Christian, there are a lot of things that come to mind, but one of them is that God calls His people to be hard working. I am thankful for my coaches that God has placed in my life because they (as well as my parents) taught me what it means to work hard and do my absolute best everyday. When it came to practice, we could have been doing the most basic passing drill, but if we weren't working hard, we were corrected very quickly. We weren't only corrected because we wanted to get prepared for our next game, but we were corrected because God requires us to give our absolute best, no matter what we are doing. We read of this in Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." If we can teach our children what it means to work hard, not only are we setting them up for success in sports, but we are also preparing them for later in life and it is our hope and prayer that they will apply this good work ethic to all aspects of their life.

Finally, sports are good opportunities for our children to honor God with their bodies and be a witness of their faith. God has created all of his people in their own

unique way and has blessed them all with different talents and abilities. We can bring honor and glory to God when we use these talents and abilities for the right reasons. So often we want to make the big catch or make the big shot so that we look good in front of others. However, what we must remember is that when we play, we are to play for God out of thankfulness for the gifts and abilities that He has given to us. We are reminded of this in Colossians 3:23, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." Along with this, when we are playing sports, we can use athletics and competition as a great opportunity to witness our

faith. People can really learn a lot about us both as players and fans based off of how we act and talk to the refs, the opponents, and even our own teammates. It almost seems like nowadays, showing good sportsmanship is seen as being soft or not cool. However, as people of God, instead of viewing it in this light, I think we should teach our children that sportsmanship is the opposite of that and it is actually how God calls His people to play and act. I'd like to leave you with these words from Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

**2025-2026 Heritage Christian School
Scripture theme:**

**"Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me:
for Thou art the God of my salvation;
on Thee do I wait all the day."**

Psalm 25:5

Remaining 2025-2026 School Year Calendar

November 27-28 - Thanksgiving Break
December 24 - January 3, 2026 - Christmas Break
January 19-23 – MAP Testing (grades 3-8)
January 28-29 – Parent/Teacher Conferences
February 12 – Band & Choir Concert (5th-8th grades)
February 13 – Fearfully & Wonderfully Made Day
February 20 – Mid Winter Break
March 18 – Solo & Ensemble Festival (Band students)
March 19 – English Language Arts Open House
April 3-10 – Spring Break
April 24 – Kindergarten Program
May 4-8 – MAP Testing (grades 3-8)
May 6 – Elementary Music Program (in the afternoon with 1st – 3rd grades)
May 7 – Band & Choir Concert (5th-8th grades)
May 25 – Memorial Day (no school)
May 28 – Last day of school (1/2 day)
May 28 – Graduation

Preliminary 2026-2027 School Year Calendar

August 31 – Open House (9AM to Noon)
September 1, 2026 – School begins
September 4 & 7, 2026 – Labor Day break
October 15, 16, 2026 – Teachers Convention
November 26, 27, 2026 – Thanksgiving
December 24 - January 3, 2027 – Holiday Break
February 19, 2027 – Mid Winter Break
April 2 - 9, 2027 – Spring Break
May 31, 2027 – Memorial Day
June 2, 2027 – Final Day of School (1/2 day) and Graduation