

WINTER 2016

TEACHERS *of VISION*



IMPACT

Ripple Effect
LGBTQ Students
Sticky Situation
Dancing Trees



Direct to You

| **FINN LAURSEN,**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS
ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL

Heroes that powerfully impact our lives do not necessarily have to be found on tattered, old pages of history books. Sometimes, the greatest heroes work right beside us...**heroes like Forrest Turpen.**

During the twenty years Forrest served as Executive Director of CEAI, his support and encouragement impacted thousands of educators, including me. When the National Board of Directors asked me to follow Forrest as the new Executive Director in 2003, I accepted the challenge. As my first official act, I hired Forrest out of retirement to be part of our leadership team. For the past twelve years he continued to impact the educational culture.

Among his many roles, Forrest Turpen served for thirty-two years as Editorial Director of *Teachers of Vision* magazine. But seasons change, and so does leadership. Forrest recently handed over his creative efforts to a new editorial staff.

Let me share some of Forrest's thoughts regarding this transitional season in his life:



I have entered a new season, and life is changing. It has been my pleasure and my blessing to be the Editorial Director for Teachers of Vision magazine, a publication that has also changed greatly in the last thirty-two years.

I want to thank the readers for sharing this great season in my life. I've had the privilege of working with some great editors, copy editors, graphic designers, and authors. In addition to all of these, I also have had the pleasure of working briefly with your new Managing Editor, Dawn Molnar. She has done an impressive job with the Back-to-School issue, as well as this current issue. I am excited for the future of Teachers of Vision. You won't be disappointed!

In this next season of my life, I will serve on the CEAI leadership team on a part-time basis as I continue to live out one of my favorite verses: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!" (King James Version, Philippians 3:14)

I am thankful for the impact Forrest has had in my life and in the lives of countless other Christian educators around the world. Heroes impact through love and service. Forrest embodies a true hero.

Thank you for your service, Forrest.

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ANTICIPATING



Fifteen years of teaching experience have supplied an abundance of “stories” to share around the dinner table: tales of funny mispronounced words, wardrobe malfunctions, cute quips from students, and general mishaps that typify an average school day.

I like to affectionately refer to these funny little incidents as “for REAL” moments! I believe God purposefully places these “for REAL” moments within the realm of tests, quizzes, paperwork, evaluations, les-

About a year ago, one of these “for REAL” moments changed my perspective on God’s divine purpose. I had a group of students struggling with writing. They wrestled with mechanics, spelling, grammar, punctuation, putting a group of related ideas together—altogether a hot mess. Most of the kids worked hard, truly putting forth their best efforts. However, for one of my students, my writing class represented more than a struggle. For him, my class morphed into a chal-

lence...a Battle with a capital “B”. I tried everything in my repertoire, but his attitude grew worse than his writing deficiency. Behavior management took precedence, and something had to change in order for

both of us to survive the class.

After praying and wallowing in self-pity, I determined that a lunch study group was the answer. The following day, four students filed into my classroom with their styrofoam

...something had to change in order for both of us to survive the class.

lunch trays. They sat scattered around the room working. I felt worthy of a martyrdom award after unselfishly giving up MY lunch to help these struggling students. I called them up to my desk one by one to give some individual feedback. When the time came for this young man’s turn, I drew in a quick breath and braced myself for what surprisingly turned into a pivotal moment.

The boy stood at my pull-out table and presented his working draft for my careful review. Not surprisingly, the first sentence lacked indentation, multiple spelling errors tainted his work, and proper nouns required capitalization. His writing certainly fell short of the standards set for sixth grade students. And then I saw it. A small dark fleck toward the middle of the paragraph. A pencil shaving? A small broken piece of lead?

They remind us of a messy, funny, sometimes scary, “for REAL” God with His own “for Real” agenda.

son planning, and the myriads of responsibilities and duties of a classroom teacher. They remind us of a messy, funny, sometimes scary, “for REAL” God with His own “for Real” agenda.

REAL

MOMENTS

| BY CHARLENE MUTH

Or perhaps just a speck of dirt? Without giving it any more thought, I took the side of my right hand and attempted to brush the little brown fleck to the the side of the paper. Only, it didn't slide off the paper. It kind of smeared—and felt a little sticky. I realized in shock and horror that I just smeared my student's nasal mucus secretion (also known as a booger) across his poorly written essay! I barely kept my composure while fighting the urge to run over to the hand sanitizer dispenser attached to the side of my wall.

Employing every ounce of self-control I possessed, I stammered, "You have made a lot of progress. I can tell you worked very hard today. You may go back to the lunch room. Right now."

I dismissed the rest of the children. Following them quickly, and I mean QUICKLY, I hustled to the faculty bathroom to scrub my hands with

scalding hot water for over the recommended time of three to five minutes. Talk about a "for REAL" moment!

Teaching is messy—sometimes even a little slimy. God used this sticky "for REAL" teaching moment to alter my plans. I wanted to give my troubled student a grammar lesson. God wanted me to encourage this young boy's heart.

The student continued to struggle with writing for the remainder of the year. However, he more readily accepted correction and guidance, and his behavior significantly improved. I realized that even though our lunch session may not have improved his writing, God, in His infinite wisdom, allowed me to speak hope into this boy's life.

Ironically, this "for REAL" moment met his deepest needs. He needed approval. He needed encouragement. He needed to be validated for

his work, even if it didn't measure up to the level of his peers.

Now, I look forward to experiencing more "for REAL" moments in my everyday teaching, excited to see

I wanted to give my troubled student a grammar lesson. God wanted me to encourage this young boy's heart.

God's work despite my own planning. I pray that the Lord will bless you with a "for REAL" moment, even if it requires a sticky situation!

CEAI: IMPACT KENYA

“Kenya? That’s for someone else,” I initially thought when asked to train educators in Kenya. “My mission field is my school!”

However, God continued to stir my spirit, and I couldn’t stop thinking about it.

I clearly felt the Lord inviting me to go to Kenya, and I accepted the invitation. While there, we taught, interacted, and prayed with precious teachers and leaders, all from different schools and regions. We equipped them with the ability to pour God’s love into the future teachers and leaders of Kenya and beyond.

My trip to Kenya allowed me to meet wonderful people, experience new things, and forge lasting friendships. In particular, I now have a Kenyan prayer partner! Kezia shared the following:

I am a teacher. I am so glad I attended the two summits held in Kenya. The summits have really transformed my life and my career as a teacher. I learned some concepts that I hang on to daily, namely:

KNOWING GOD: I understand the importance of being alone with God and listening and inquiring of Him.

GRACE: He has enough to overcome my sins when I confess them.

PATIENCE: He provides what I need to toil until good is accomplished in my life and in the lives of the students I teach.

LOVE: I love each and every child unconditionally.

FAITH: I should have faith to make real the things of God.

HOPE: He gives enough to remove

all my anxious fears.

STRENGTH: I can battle difficulties and overcome them like Nehemiah.

FORGIVENESS: I have a clean and forgiving heart.

In a nutshell, I feel well equipped to spread the gospel to young children and to empower the teachers in my area, which I do for the glory of God!

Now the burden of my teaching profession has become considerably lighter because I no longer do it on my own; I always seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I

thank God for CEAI and the Christian educators who shared with us.



For more information about going to Kenya in July, 2016, contact Carl Mosebach at cmosebach@ceai.org, 415-827-6940.



ING NYA

| BY CHERYL PEREZ AND KEZIA SILU

Our team accepted the invitation to bring another team to train over 1,000 teachers in July of 2016! I believe we must take advantage of this exciting window of opportunity in Africa.

My part seemed very small, but like a ripple effect caused by a tiny pebble tossed in a lake, God used my trip to produce an impact reaching far beyond what I can even imagine!

Photos by Anthony Perez

INSPIRATION TO IMPACT

| BY NORENE SHEPHARD

The five o'clock news headline pierced my heart on that tragic day in September of 2015. "Family of five found dead in their home, an apparent murder-suicide." I soon discovered that three of the deceased children had attended a nearby high school, located in an upscale southwest suburb of Minneapolis. My thoughts wandered to the classmates, friends, and staff just beginning a new school year. I knew they faced many dark days of sorrow. How would they deal with this overwhelming grief?

The Lord, in His great wisdom, began a movement many years prior to this tragedy. He placed a vision in my heart. Then He gathered passionate people together who shared His vision for the area schools. He organized and mobi-



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lized Christian educators and organizations through teaching, encouraging, and networking. This led to a body of Christian educators, prepared and ready for such a time as this.

Vision And Prayer

Inspired by testimonies from *Christian Educators Association International* educators, I prayed earnestly that God would energize and encourage the many followers of Christ working in the schools. God placed a vision in my heart to mobilize Christian educators in my community to transform our schools with God's love and truth. A friend partnered with me in prayer, but we felt puzzled after years of praying without our efforts gaining much traction.

Then, one day an email from my prayer partner lept off the screen. She encountered a mom who shared a similar passion—a desire to mobilize parents, students, and teachers to impact the public schools for Christ. We met. We dreamed. We prayed together.

Foundation and Growth

We strategically began to form an energized, action-oriented team on a mission—transforming our schools with God's love and truth. We brain-

stormed names of parents and area school staff members who might share the vision. Moms and educators came together, and the list grew.

Christian Educators Association International helped us strategize with tools and insightful guidance as we started to build a framework for this new ministry. They cheered us on as we shared the progress.

My church operated a vibrant missions program, bringing the Gospel “across the street and around the world.” I couldn't think of anything more “across the street” than the local schoolhouse. The pastoral staff agreed. This church provided a strong, supportive base from which to build our ministry. Before the start of the next school year, they arranged for a church service to commission the approximately two hundred local Christian educators grasping the vision God had planted in my heart years ago. This transformative moment consecrated the educators for their mission field—their schools.

The Saturday before Thanksgiving, we gathered educators representing twenty-three school districts for a breakfast. The executive director of *CEAI* Finn Laursen and other educators spoke, providing encouragement and affirmation for the mission

ahead. The attendees hungered for something more than just scrambled eggs. They wanted to be a part of a move of God - to see His love impacting their schools.

God was up to something.

While sitting among the teachers at the breakfast, a *CEAI* board member and founder of *Tentmakers* suggested we organize a Daniel Weekend.

Mobilize and Empower

The Daniel Weekend following this breakfast amounted to a spiritual and professional milestone for many educators. Schoolwide and districtwide cohorts formed that weekend, including the group Tonka Staff for Christ—a dynamic group of Christian educators committed to representing the love of Jesus in their schools. They worked together to create teacher prayer groups in each of the schools in the district and *Good News Clubs* in each elementary school. They supported each other while reaching out to their students.

Just nine days before the funeral for that family of five, I watched as educators gathered in the stands overlooking the high school baseball stadium at sunrise. Accompanied by



a soft guitar and drum, they worshiped and praised the Lord, committing the new school year to Him. Little did those teachers know how soon they would be called to action, serving as the arms of Christ to an entire hurting community.

Equipped and Ready

When the tragedy hit the news that day, waves of shock rippled through the community. Since the affected family lacked a church home, and my church could accommodate the large crowds expected, it hosted the funeral. The church's hospitality team suggested enlisting the educators in our ministry to serve as greeters at this difficult funeral. When I invited my fellow educators, they answered the call. Beloved educators in strategic places, well prepared to deal with the needy students. Men and women of God, part of a cohort 150 strong. Devoted missionaries, passionate about transforming their schools with God's love and truth.

When devastated kids arrived at the church that day, the familiar faces of their educators, filled with the love and compassion of God, greeted them at the doors. I knew God orchestrated our ministry for such a time as this.

a teacher's prayer

thirty young people
i'm leading today

oh God
help me

show me the way
through facts

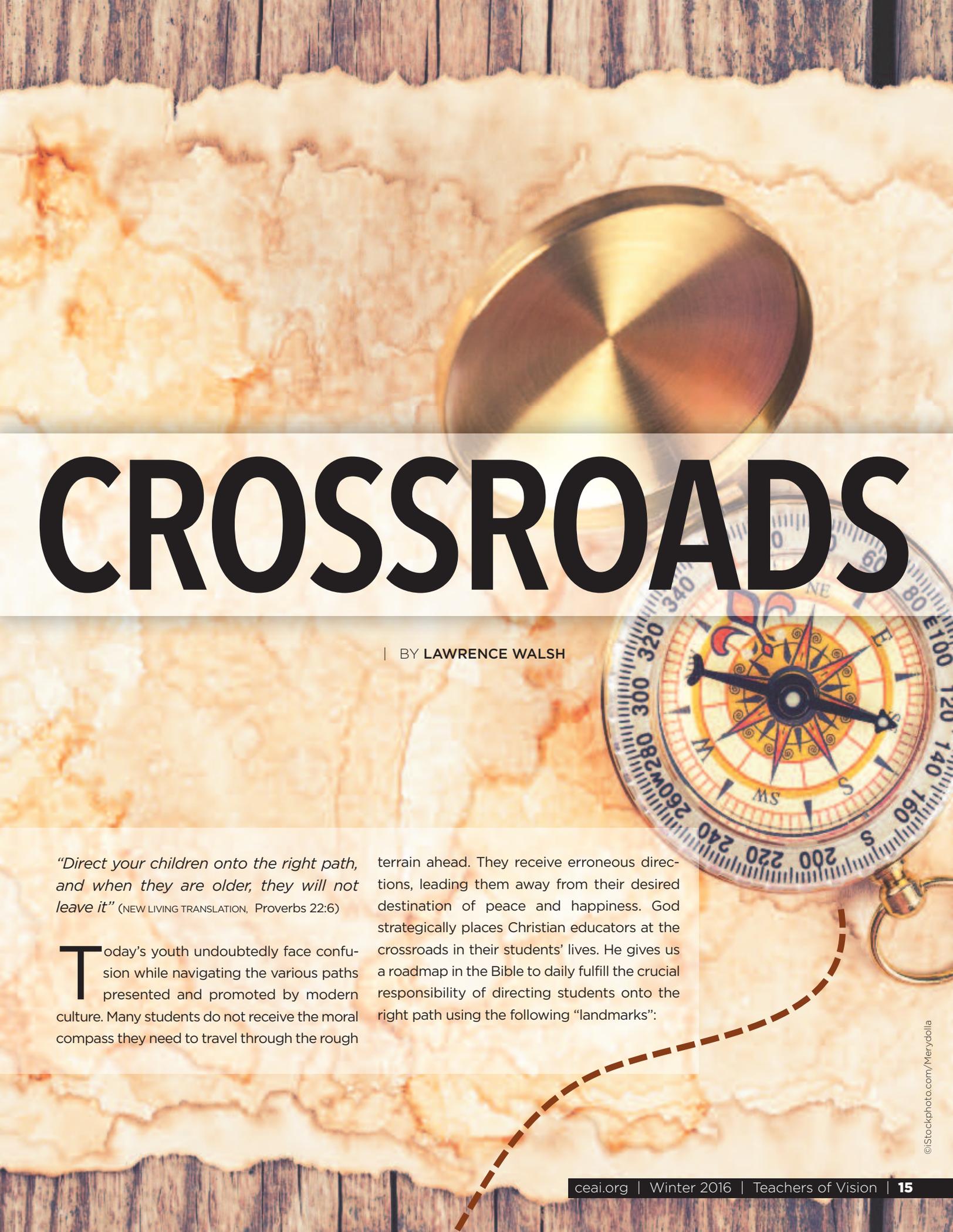
and through frictions
help us to grow

then above all
help them to know

i care

-Ruth Naylor

Previously published:
The Mennonite, March 22, 1977



CROSSROADS

| BY LAWRENCE WALSH

“Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it” (NEW LIVING TRANSLATION, Proverbs 22:6)

Today’s youth undoubtedly face confusion while navigating the various paths presented and promoted by modern culture. Many students do not receive the moral compass they need to travel through the rough

terrain ahead. They receive erroneous directions, leading them away from their desired destination of peace and happiness. God strategically places Christian educators at the crossroads in their students’ lives. He gives us a roadmap in the Bible to daily fulfill the crucial responsibility of directing students onto the right path using the following “landmarks”:



Identify with them.

“Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15). First and foremost, listen. Make an honest effort to hear and understand the heart of your student. Resist the urge to fix the problem, but let the student know that you share in their joy, and in their pain. Children never outgrow the need for affirmation.

Accept them.

“Therefore, accept each other, just as Christ has accepted you...” (Romans 15:7). We don’t have to approve of everything our students do, but they require our unconditional support even when they mess up. Although we still need to correct poor behaviors, the basis for acceptance lies in their God-given identity—a human being made in God’s image, with dignity and value.



Appreciate them.

“This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.” (Matthew 3:17). If God took time to appreciate His Son in front of throngs of people, we certainly can show appreciation to our students in our classrooms. The more you praise your students for doing right, the less you have to discipline them later for doing wrong.

Hold them accountable.

“...do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Holding students accountable requires a delicate balance of love and limits. Young people need responsibility and parameters, adding stability and authority to their lives.

Love them.

“Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.” (John 13:34b). People were drawn to Jesus because of His compassion, not because of His commandments. We all sin, but God loves us nonetheless. Our students misbehave in class, bully other students, and avoid work, but we love them nonetheless.



LIGE

Diler

| BY DAVI

After fifteen years of educating teenagers, I know this: many adolescents struggle with confusion regarding their identities. This comes as no surprise. In fact, in some ways, I continue to learn more about my identity every day. However, to engage seriously in educating our students from a Biblical worldview, we must help them discover their identity in Christ.

Look at the story of Gideon. As Gideon fearfully hid from his enemies while threshing wheat in a winepress, God ironically, but prophetically, called him a “mighty warrior” (New International Version, Judges 6:12). Also consider Michelangelo who reportedly wrote, “I saw an angel in the marble and carved until I set him free.” When confused, broken teenagers entered my classroom, I would recall these stories and ask God to reveal His design for their identity so that I

BTOQ

mma

D SCHMUS

might play some small part in releasing them into their destinies.

Throughout my teaching career, I have humbly witnessed students respond to God's unconditional love over and over again, especially those struggling with sexual and gender confusion. Sadly, the *Obergefell* case legalizing same-sex marriage and the recent cultural attention to transgenderism have left many Christian educators confused and fearful of living out their faith in public schools.¹

Thirteen states and the District of Columbia have now passed specific laws banning discrimination based on gender identity. These laws, including California's famous AB 1266, the "Transgender Bathroom Bill," generally require that students be allowed full participation in school activities and access to facilities based on their chosen gender identity, regardless of their biological gender.² In other states, school districts like



Jefferson County, Kentucky and Fairfax County, Virginia are implementing these policies on their own, feeling pressured by new Federal Government guidelines.

So, how should Christian educators respond to a student who requests the use of a different name and pronoun or asks to join a sports team or use a locker room inconsistent with his or her biological gender?

When facing these situations, Christian educators need the guidance of the Holy Spirit. God promises never to leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5), and also directs us to “lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5-6). As we approach these situations with humility

When facing these situations, Christian educators need the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

and love, we should recognize that the Lord may have a purpose beyond what we can see.

For example, Cheryl, a California CEAI member, made a choice several years ago. One of her openly

gay high school students began to visit her classroom at lunch. He considered it a safe place to talk about his life and the physical, sexual, and verbal abuse he suffered. Could Cheryl take this opportunity to confront him about his homosexuality? Sure, but she believed the Holy Spirit led her to listen to him and pray for him instead.

After his graduation, they remained in contact, and one night over the phone Cheryl led her former student to faith in Christ. Now, years later, Cheryl describes this young man as “on fire for Jesus”—leading a Bible study for LGBTQ-identified friends, rescuing homeless off the streets, and witnessing many friends and family come to Christ, including his abusive mother.

Regarding students struggling with gender and identity confusion, Cheryl comments, “My job is to pray for them and let the Holy Spirit work in His timing.” She called her “Gideon” into his destiny. To borrow Michelangelo’s analogy, she carved away the marble with God’s love and saw the angel set free.

Christian Educators Association International and other ministries like *Cru* recommend the “Prayer, Care, and Share” model. We pray for students, care about them regardless of their beliefs and behaviors, and then earn the right to share—to speak into their lives. As educators we acknowledge the truism, “Students don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” If I

demand that my students conform to my worldview, even in terms of something so foundational as their name in my class, I can create unnecessary barriers to the Gospel.

However, some Christian educators may feel that by calling a male student by a feminine name or pronoun (or vice versa) they reinforce and thereby participate in the identity confusion. They may feel that confronting confused students instead demonstrates love and grace.

I encourage educators with this conviction to look to Daniel. As a young man, Daniel found himself in an impossible position—defile himself at the king’s table by eating unclean food, or face likely execution. Daniel’s options included defying authority or simply complying with requirements that contradicted his beliefs. But, God revealed a third option to Daniel; he wisely appealed to the king’s official, asking for a compromise that would not violate his religion nor offend the king. Subsequently, the king’s official honored Daniel’s appeal.

If the Holy Spirit leads, we can follow Daniel’s example of appealing to administration for a compromise that neither violates our convictions nor offends the students. Does this mean that the administration will always rule in our favor? No, but it does remind us to pray and trust our powerful God, looking to Him for creative solutions.

Now, I find the challenge regarding bathrooms, sports teams, and locker

¹ “Obergefell v. Hodges.” *Oyez*. Chicago-Kent College of Law at Illinois Tech, n.d. Nov 4, 2015. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2014/14-556>

² Pupil Rights: Sex-segregated School Programs and Activities, Assembly Bill 1266 (2013-2014). Retrieved from California Legislative Information Database, Nov. 4, 2015. http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB1266

³ New York City Department of Education, Transgender Student Guidelines

(Online). <http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/TransgenderStudentGuidelines/default.htm> Nov. 4, 2015.

⁴ Fairfax County Public School, Policy 1450. (Online). Revised May 7, 2015. <http://www.fcps.edu/news/policy1450.shtml> Nov. 4, 2015.

As a Christian educator, I feel a moral obligation to protect the privacy and safety of all my students, transgender or not.

rooms more problematic than a name or pronoun. As a Christian educator, I feel a moral obligation to protect the privacy and safety of all my students, transgender or not.

Understandably, non-LGBTQ students have started to verbalize their dissatisfaction over losing their sense of privacy and security. A recent protest in Missouri saw over 100 students walk out of class in protest over a biological male student who had been given permission to use the girls' locker room. Township High School District 211 near Chicago continues to fight a federal government effort requiring them to allow a biological male student who identifies as female to change in the girls' locker room without privacy screens. In California, after initial failure, a second effort persists to submit AB 1266 to the voters in hopes of repeal. It remains to be seen how these poli-

cies will resolve at the state and local levels nationwide.

Still, educators in these situations can often reach reasonable compromises. For example, while transgender activists typically oppose this solution due to possible stigma, many schools have directed transgender students to use single-user faculty restrooms.

Many state or district policies may point to a balanced solution. For instance, the New York City Department of Education's guidelines:

The DOE aims to support transgender students while also ensuring the safety and comfort of all students. The use of restrooms and locker rooms by transgender students requires schools to consider numerous factors, including, but not limited to: the transgender student's preference; protecting student privacy; maximizing social integration of the transgender student; minimizing stigmatization of the student; ensuring equal opportunity to participate; the student's age; and protecting the safety of the students involved.

A transgender student who expresses a need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements [like the use of a private area, or a separate changing schedule, or use of a single stall restroom].³ (underline emphasis added by author)

Many of the policies require that gender identity be, for example, "consistently and uniformly asserted at school" and not simply a momentary feeling.⁴ When Fairfax County schools in Virginia adopted a transgender non-discrimination policy, it included a vetting process for students in order to claim transgender

...we know when the darkness becomes darker, our light will shine even brighter.

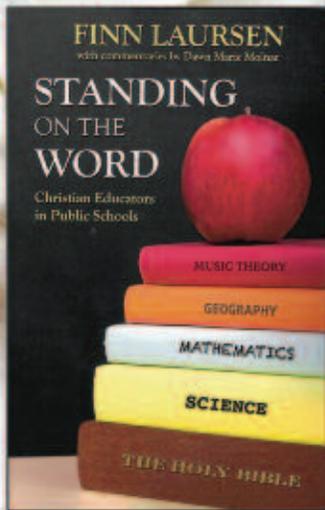
status. Guidelines like these suggest finding a balance between the needs of a transgender student population and all other student populations.

Christian educators in public schools may face difficult days, but we know when the darkness becomes darker, our light will shine even brighter. Every day, "Gideons", confused about their identity, walk into our classrooms. We hold the high privilege of partnering with the Holy Spirit to carve away the marble and set them free to become all that God intended.

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Standing on the Word

Christian Educators in Public Schools
by Finn Laursen, CEAI Executive Director

A GOOD READ

| BY LARA BUSOLD

POSSIBLE: A BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGING HOW WE CHANGE THE WORLD

Can we really change the world? Some may consider this idea improbable, naïve, foolish, or even arrogant. Others may cynically deem this idea of changing the world impossible. But Stephan Bauman considers a seismic reformation absolutely possible. Will it be an easy task? No. But, as he explains in his book, *Possible: A Blueprint for Changing How We Change the World*, true change can begin when we shift our focus from the problem, to a vision of hope.

This book appeals to individuals who long to overcome complacency and produce significant change in a world that so desperately needs it. Bauman provides an engaging mix of inspiration and practical direction to combat the overwhelming fears that prevent so many from ever taking a leap of faith. I encourage you to invest your time reading this book if you long for deep, meaningful, and intellectual insight regarding the anatomy

of change.

Possible challenges readers to shift their thinking and start believing that everyone—even the poor and oppressed—can change the world, because God invites *all* of us! He explains this paradigm will work when we empower struggling communities through identifying, engaging, and mobilizing the strengths of every individual. I love the way Bauman beautifully connects this idea to the message of hope demonstrated through the life of Jesus.

Bauman encourages readers to never underestimate the ripple effect produced by their actions. He believes change begins in the hearts and daily actions of ordinary people who: dare to think differently, boldly take risks, recognize injustice and suffering, and refuse to ignore it. Or simply, people who choose to care and will not give up. He wisely points out that people who produce lasting and sustainable impact all have a common trait—humil-

ity. They recognize they cannot change the world through their own power, but steadfastly believe God can.

“Unprecedented times call for exceptional people to do uncommon things.”

The author’s vulnerability, biblical insight, and life-experience, told through the countless riveting stories woven throughout the chapters, will motivate many to question whether they have responsibly stewarded their moment in history.

Feeling inspired yet?

Well, Bauman believes, “Unprecedented times call for exceptional people to do uncommon things. Let it begin with us.”



JUST
BE
THE

TREE



| BY JACKIE SMITH PHD.



Often teachers do not fully grasp the level of influence we have on our students. When I met Logan

while teaching dance at a small, private school in Austin, Texas, I realized my impact.

Logan epitomized the model student: motivated, eager to learn, and very outgoing. Red hair adorned her head - not the common orange, nor the loud, bright red, but a beautiful, deep, dark red - the kind women willingly go to exclusive salons and pay top dollar to attain. Her large, brown, expressive eyes captivated her audience, and her hands gracefully moved through the air as she spoke. She was gifted in many ways, extraordinarily so in dance.

At the tender age of five, Logan received an invitation from her dance instructor to join our school's competitive, award-winning dance troupe. Right from the beginning of her membership in the troupe, Logan displayed her talent in tap, jazz, lyrical, and most notably classical ballet. She performed in group dances, duets, and solos, often winning.

Every year, one student from each age group was chosen as the dancer exhibiting the best overall effort, progress, talent, and attitude. These elusive awards were traditionally presented at a large, formal banquet. One year after the awards ceremony, I slipped away from the party in search of the ladies' room. To my surprise, inside the lounge of the restroom I found Logan crying as though her heart might break. Alarmed, I sat down next to her and asked if she wanted to talk.

"Oh, Ms. Jackie, I work so hard! Every year I think I will be selected as dancer of the year for my group and...and...it never happens! Maybe I shouldn't even be in the troupe," she sobbed.

I pulled the twelve-year-old, svelte young lady onto my lap, hugged her, and told her my own story.

"Logan, I also dearly loved dance when I was your age. Every year I auditioned for the annual recital solo. Despite my effort, I was never chosen. So one day, after hearing I once again didn't win the solo part, I told my father I wanted to quit dance. When he asked me why, I told him that no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't win the solo part. To make it even worse and more disappointing this particular year, I was cast as a dancing *tree* in the chorus. I felt very degraded and humiliated. I considered myself a much better dancer than one who would wear ugly green leaves, unrecognizable to the audience. To this day, I can still hear my father's words: 'No, Jackie, you are *not* going to quit...You *will* go up on that stage and be the very *best* dancing *tree* anyone has ever seen! Keep dancing because you love it, not because you want to be center stage.'"

"Did you ever get to do the solo?" Logan asked with tears in her big, brown eyes.

I laughed and said, "Yes, as a matter of fact, I did, many times. And because I loved dance so much, I decided I wanted to teach dance. I thank God I didn't quit that day, and you won't regret continuing either. Not only should you keep dancing because you have talent, but most importantly, you should dance because

you love it. Great performers don't demand the center of attention. Sometimes the trees make the dance special!"

Following our heart-to-heart conversation that evening, Logan continued to excel on the stage, and she did win that coveted award before she left our school.

I lost track of Logan after her family moved to another state. However, many years later, she stopped by our school for a visit. We enjoyed our time together. She shared stories from her college and National Guard Reserve experiences. I shared my continuing passion for teaching dance.

Then she asked me, "Ms. Jackie, remember the tree story?"

I nodded, and she continued, "I took that story to heart. If something bothered me, my mom would say, 'Remember what Ms. Jackie said? Be the best tree ever!' We would laugh, and I'd conquer it."

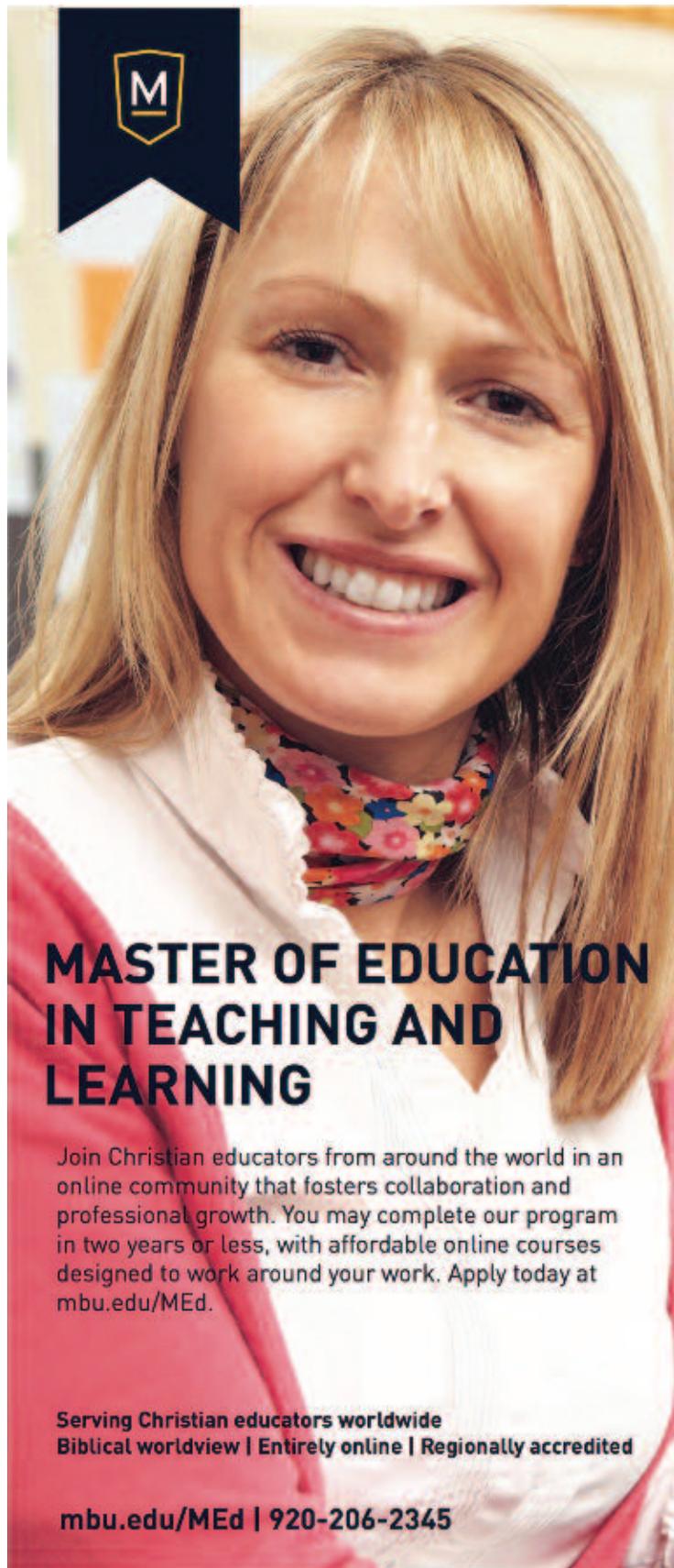
Logan and I laughed together.

"So," I asked, "it became your motto?"

She nodded and said, "It still is, look..."

She revealed a tattoo of a beautiful tree adorning her side. The words below the tree declared her motto: "be the *best* damn tree..."

True Story.



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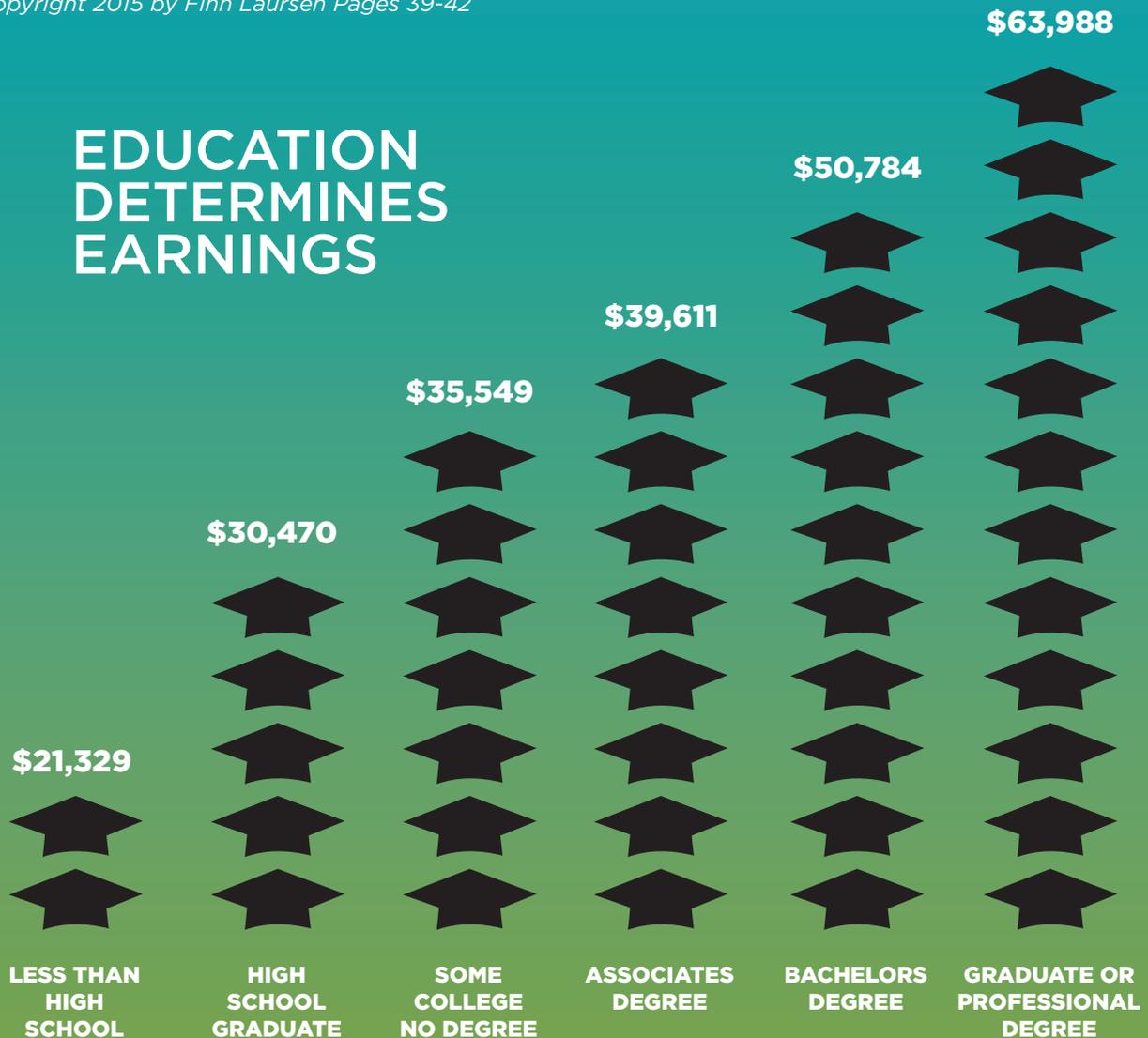
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MEASURABLE E

Educators impact students in many ways: this cannot be denied. But did you ever consider the generational impact of an educator?

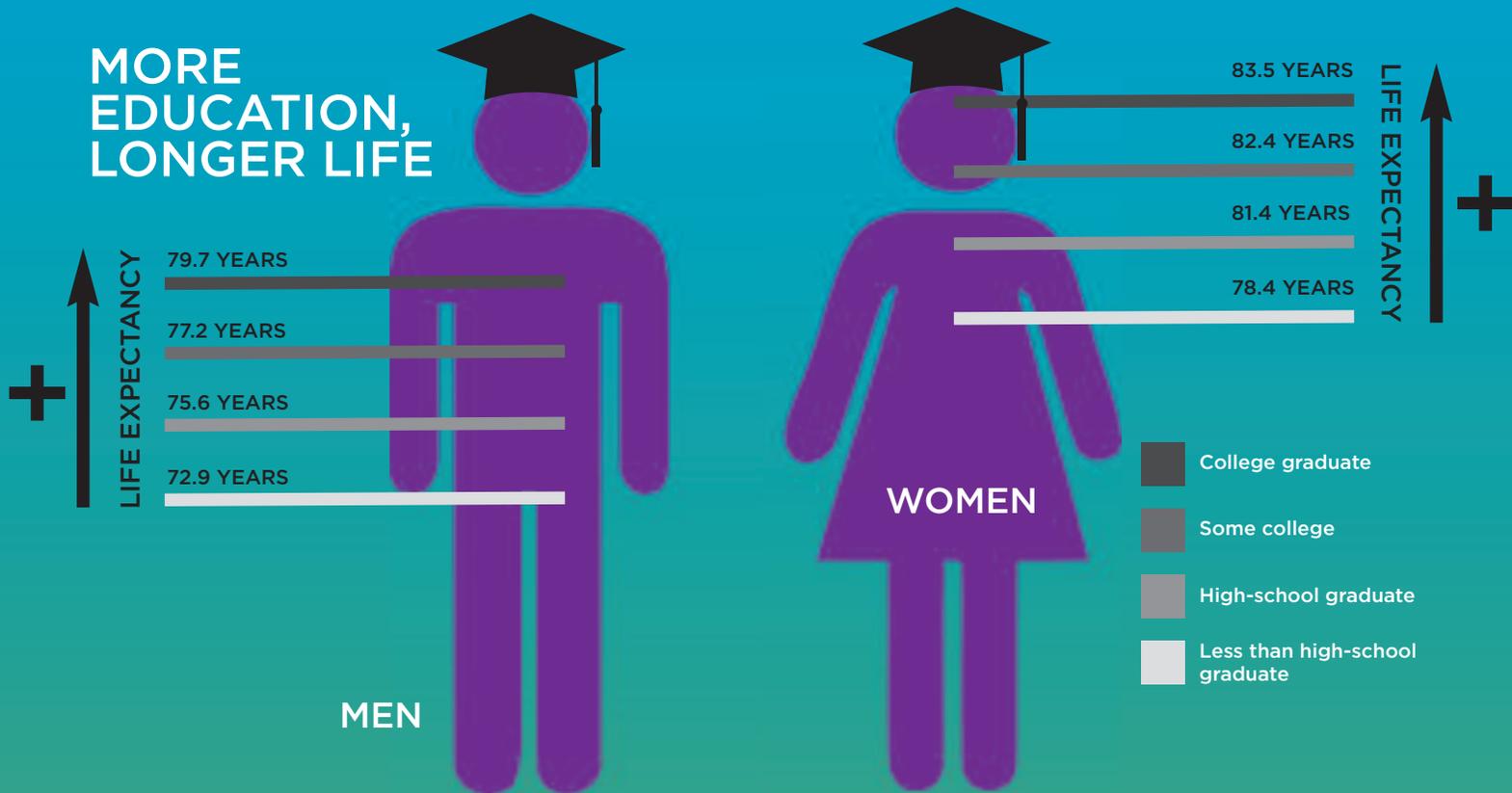
Standing on the Word: Christian Educators in Public Schools
By Finn Laursen Advantage Books Longwood, FL
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MEDIAN EARNINGS FOR POPULATION AGE 25-64
BY EDUCATION ATTAINMENT, 2006

EARTHLY IMPACT

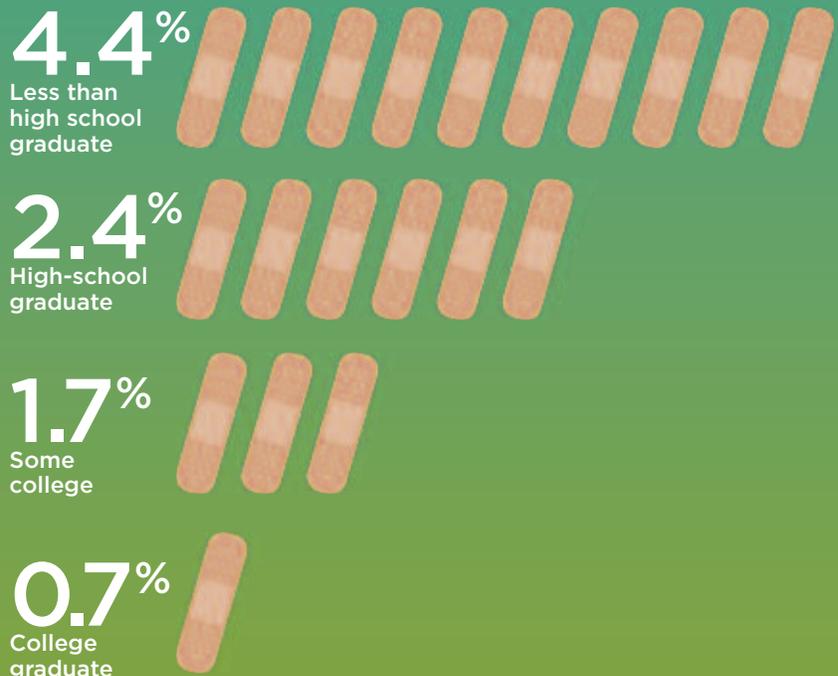
MORE EDUCATION, LONGER LIFE

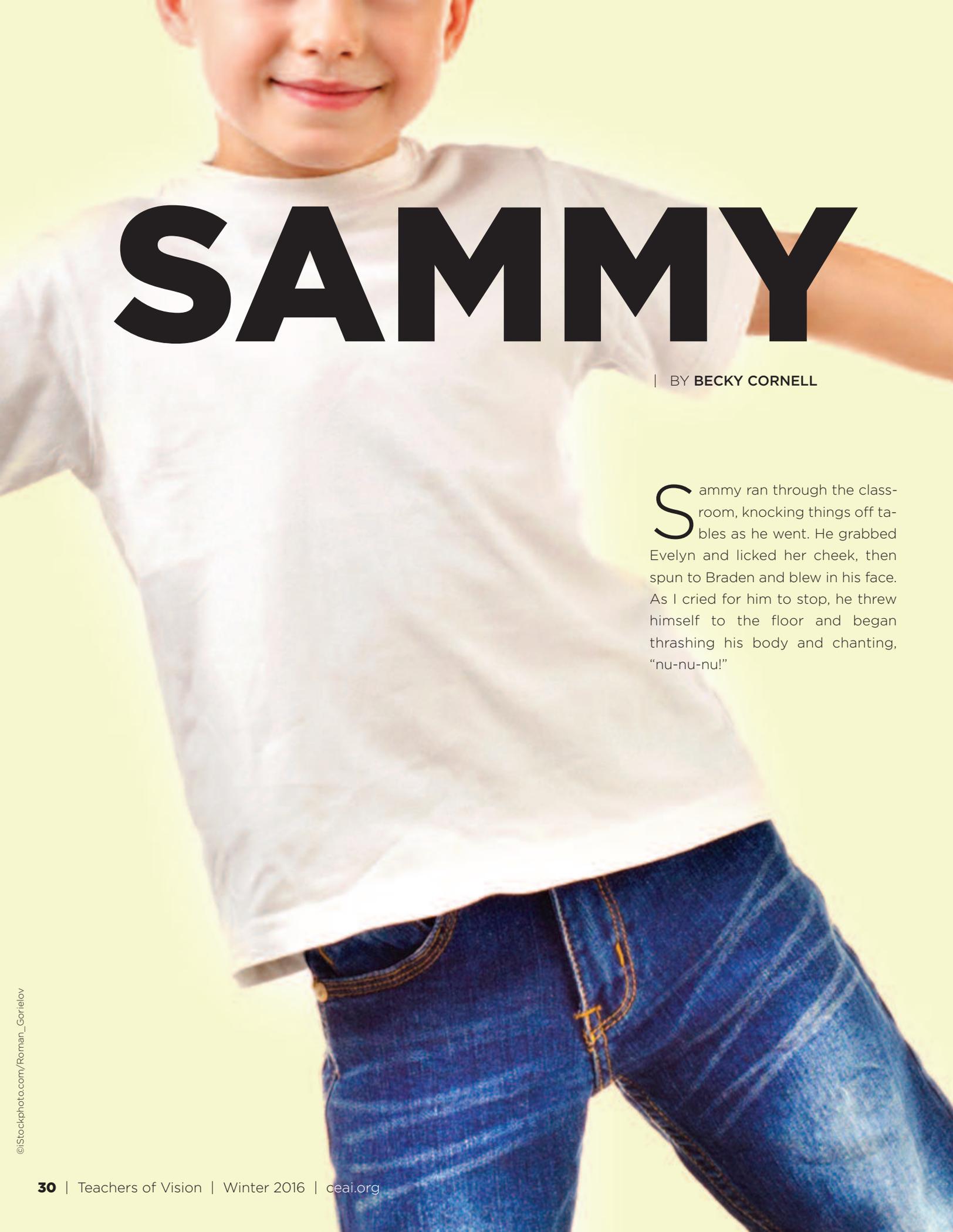


PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WITH POOR/FAIR HEALTH

MORE EDUCATED PARENTS, LESS ILLNESS AMONG CHILDREN

Percentage of children, ages 17 and under, with poor/fair health





SAMMY

| BY BECKY CORNELL

Sammy ran through the classroom, knocking things off tables as he went. He grabbed Evelyn and licked her cheek, then spun to Braden and blew in his face. As I cried for him to stop, he threw himself to the floor and began thrashing his body and chanting, “nu-nu-nu!”



This scene typified my days throughout my second year of teaching Kindergarten in a public school. All summer I had planned for the school year and spent much time in the Bible, praying and seeking wisdom and guidance. However, early in the year, I felt myself slipping into survivor mode. I quickly found myself wanting to flee as I encountered these situations daily.

During the first part of the year, Sammy consistently chose to not follow our classroom procedures. In fact, he did not even comply with one single instruction. I began our district's Response to Intervention process for Sammy by tallying behaviors and completing mountains of paper work. The school district's behavioral intervention team constantly visited my room, observing and offering suggestions.

Sammy utilized many tools to help him with behavior: a cube chair, wiggle seat, weighted lap blanket, weighted vest, and Velcro to rub under his chair and table. I even gave him "brain breaks" to build with blocks or play on my tablet, but to my dismay, nothing helped.

In my heart, I knew God wanted me to reach Sammy. I felt exhausted, but God assured me if I loved this child, He would take care of the rest. I constantly prayed for wisdom and confessed my struggle to love Sammy. I asked God to enable me to love Sammy the way He did.

One January day, while driving to school, God asked me if I was ready to quit doing things through my own strength. He wanted to partner with me. Trapped in negative momentum, I felt powerless to stop the train wreck transpiring in my classroom.

I cried out with great relief, "Yes, God! I'll partner with You."

At that moment, I heard God's voice say, "I love Sammy so much!"

His voice rocked me. I always intellectually knew that God loved Sammy. But that day, I actually felt God's unconditional, passionate love for Sammy wash over me as I wept.

That same morning, when I went outside to lead my students to the classroom, my eyes fell on Sammy. He ran to me for a hug, and God's love for Sammy again filled my heart! I hugged him, kissed the top

of his head, and told him I loved him. This time I could say it and mean it!

He smiled and said, "I love you, too!"

In my heart, I felt Jesus saying, "Thank you for hugging Sammy. When you hug one of my children, you let Me hug them. When you say, 'I love you,' to one of My children, they feel My love!"

After God changed my perspective, I often reminded Sammy that God loved him and always saw the best in him, even when he made mistakes. I began seeing the best in Sammy too. My passion for teaching returned as God continued to provide the grace and love I needed to edify Sammy. This once unmanageable student gradually realized he had control over his actions, and he began to follow procedures and focus in class. As my heart changed, I saw Sammy's behavior change also.

God's supernatural love truly changes everything! God can take a teacher who feels helpless and empower her with His love and, in turn, reignite her passion for teaching. God can take a child who the world deems as hopeless and completely alter his behavior and, in turn, transform his destiny! Only God knows the mighty works He has in store for this precious child. How many people will Sammy reach for God's Kingdom? With his energy, I would say millions!



Because of the Lord's great love
we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

Lam. 3:22-23 (NLT)

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UBIQUITOUSLY *by yours* YOURSELF

BY **KAREN C. SEDDON**
FLORIDA STATE DIRECTOR
CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS
ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL

SHARING TECHNOLOGY ANYTIME, ANY PLACE AND AT ANY PACE

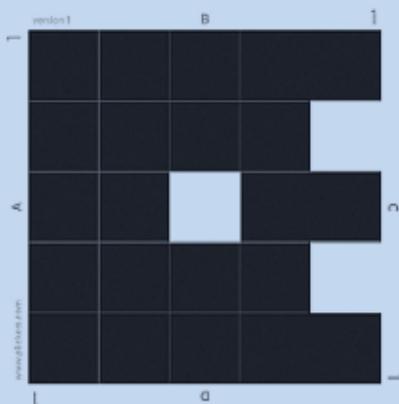


Plickers

All teachers today gather and interpret data to succeed with students. Plickers converts this formidable task into a simple pleasure. This FREE, high tech student response system allows teachers to record each student's answer to a question by scanning the class with a smart phone or tablet. Teachers simply scan the room for instant feedback.

How does Plickers work?

1. A teacher creates an online account, adding class lists.
2. Plickers generates and prints Plicker student picture cards for each student, which the teacher distributes to the students.
3. The teacher asks a question, and



the students hold up either the A, B, C, or D edge of their picture cards to display their answers.

4. The teacher uses a camera enabled device (tablet, smart phone, iPad, etc) to scan the room and gather all of the students' answers.

5. The app reads and records each response, generating reports of the data collected.

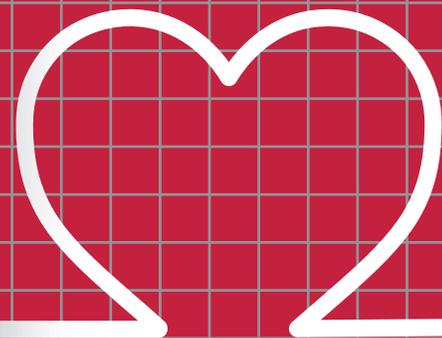
Plickers:

- Generates a variety of useful reports
- Allows grouping and categorizing of students in any manner
- Provides presentation tools for sharing data
- Creates an unlimited number of Plicker student picture cards
- Supplies video tutorials and overviews for ease of use

I encourage you to try Plickers. This app definitely holds the title "game-changer" when it comes to formative assessment. Use Plickers for bell ringers, review games, informal assessments, and much more.

As always, I am
Ubiquitously yours,
Karen

THE HEART DIMENSION



The Essence and Impact of Christian Education

| BY VERNARD T. GANT

How do we define Christian education? Most of us initially think of the instruction occurring inside the walls of Christian schools. However, the Bible suggests otherwise. We cannot limit Christian education to an institution or a building.

Look at the life of Jesus. Every work performed by Jesus resulted in an improved quality of life for the recipient. Blind people saw, deaf people heard, lame people walked, dead people lived, hungry people ate, bent people straightened, sick people experienced healing, bound people encountered freedom, and leprous people received cleansing. God's people have the opportunity and calling to impact others as Jesus did.

A Christian educator:

- E**steems children as worthwhile individuals created in God's image
- E**mbraces children entirely
- E**ncourages children to develop character
- E**quips children to be productive
- E**nhances children's God-given abilities
- E**levates children beyond their circumstances
- E**nables children to escape poverty

These educational good works, when done by God's people, result

in an improved quality of life for the students.

Through these impactful actions, we imitate the work of Jesus, regardless of the institution in which we instruct. Educators do not need to openly share Scripture in the classroom of a Christian school building in order to impact their students with the love of Jesus.

Simply put, an educator who improves the quality of life for children provides a Christian education. Christian educators, recognize and be encouraged that even in a public school building, all Christian teachers can legally provide their students the essence of a Christian education.

Reflections

of a Retired Educator

Dear Friends,

You and I probably agree that retirement allows for meaningful experiences and a time of growth in the Christian faith. However, no matter how much a person anticipates this season of life, retirement comes as a shock.

For years, I planned and worked the last few weeks of summer preparing for the next year's classes. That first year I retired, suddenly, I had no such need to plan. I felt a loss of meaning. I needed to find a whole new purpose in life.

So, I moved back to my home area and quickly involved myself with family, community, and a lively, growing church. I spent time connecting with my family whom I cherish. I strengthened relationships with my friends as well. I also volunteered at a care center and a historical society, which filled me with rewarding satisfaction. I even re-connected with former students. Furthermore, retirement afforded me the time to pursue one of my dreams: writing. Through self-discipline and hard work, I wrote and published both articles and books. In addition to all of my other activities, I coordinated adult classes and Bible studies in my church. This allowed me to happily continue sharing my education expertise and talents while staying involved and

active. Throughout this time, I made new friends and grew in my faith.

Although, in general, activity benefits retirees, my desire to find my new purpose led me to feel over-burdened with too many activities. I thought life would be simpler after I retired. Yes, retirement offered many new satisfying opportunities, but my life did not feel simpler. In fact, changing roles and challenges complicated my retirement. The Lord soon encouraged me to step down from my coordinating role at church. I acted in obedience, and the Lord removed my sense of obligation to that task.

During this time, I needed to step back and ask, "Lord, what is Your will and purpose for me at this time? What do I continue to do? What do I stop doing? What new direction might I consider?"

I encourage you to ask the Lord for direction as you explore your changing roles in this season of life. God desires for us to find peace and contentment in our retirement purpose. Even though our roles may change with each stage of life, God never changes. He never leaves our side. He endures as the sure foundation.

God's Blessings,
Vernal Lind

I would enjoy hearing from you.
Email vlind@ceai.org

LEGALLY SPEAKING

Q & A

Actual questions from CEAI members, along with the responses they received, are listed below. The answers or opinions expressed in this article are not intended to render legal advice. Factual and legal issues may exist, which must be considered in each circumstance and may require the advice of an attorney.

Q I work in a public middle school. One of our parents got permission from our principal to start a Bible club for students before school. I will be the advisor. Is there anything I should know before the club starts?

A As the school advisor for the club, you have to remember your role as a teacher. An employee of the government represents the government and, therefore, cannot "establish a religion." You can not use your position to force your beliefs on your students; you cannot proselytize. For example, as a government employee, you cannot pray with a student, lead prayer, or lead devotions. You can function as their advisor in planning and programming, but must allow them to lead. The club must be student-led.

However, if asked questions during the meetings by a student, you can answer them honestly. Do not feel you need to hide your faith or withhold your spiritual insight when a student asks you a question. The courts have consistently ruled that teachers do not lose their freedom of speech just because they are educators. You can also be the students' advocates, making sure the school does not inhibit their religious rights. You have an impact by simply living out biblical principles, allowing you to reflect the light of Christ without preaching a sermon. Again, keep in mind that supervision should be your **main** role.

If someone in the district tries to challenge the group, and most districts have someone who will, try not to give them a reason to shut you down. Remember, the club must be student-led to be above reproach.

Q I work as a paraprofessional in a public school. I have the desire to mentor and work with 5th and 6th grade girls from my school. How do I invite them to my home legally? I want to do things transparently and invite all those who would like to participate.

A As a rule, you should not mix your job with the ministry. So, I suggest you partner with a local ministry such as your church. Your church could arrange a mentoring program at school or the church. You can then serve as a mentor during the hours outside of your work schedule.

Meeting in your home is not illegal. However, inviting students to your home sets you up for the potential of false allegations that can be avoided by meeting elsewhere. A public gathering place, with multiple adults present at all times, provides the safest location for all.

Q I am principal of a high school. I have a band student that belongs to a non-Christian religion. One of his church elders wants to meet with the band director about the music the band intends to play for a concert. He wants to talk about the band curriculum.

Can you give me any guidance on what is appropriate? As it stands, the band director allows the student to abstain (without penalty) from playing any music that is objectionable to him due to his religion.

A You **must** accommodate the student's religious objections. If not playing certain songs resolves their objections, you stand on solid ground.

However, if they request more accommodations, you should make reasonable adjustments. If an assignment or project poses a problem, when reasonably possible, find an agreed upon alternative assignment. For instance, if participating in a certain concert infringes on a student's beliefs, you could assign an alternative research project.

If reasonable accommodations cannot be made, you should allow the student to drop the course without penalty. Avoid legal action against the school for religious harassment or discrimination. The financial ramifications could be overwhelming for the school if they lost a legal battle, considering they would have to pay for the student's legal costs in addition to the court-ordered penalty.

Q Does a concrete legal statement prohibiting students from using the school PA system to make Christian club announcements exist?

A The courts have been quite clear: if a non-religious group has access to the public address system, the religious group must also have access. Schools cannot discriminate based on religious content of announcements made by students.

Students in general do not have the right for unfettered use of the PA system. However, if secular clubs can make announcements, then Christian clubs can also.

To submit questions regarding school law issues relating to religious freedoms to experienced attorneys, visit *Ask an Attorney* on our website ceai.org. For all other legal inquiries email service@ceai.org.

To submit questions regarding educational issues to our experienced educators visit *Ask an Educator* on our website ceai.org.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Reader Friends,

At the end of my senior year of high school, I received an invitation from my freshman language arts teacher Miss Clancy. She heard that I wanted to go to college to earn my teaching degree, so she offered me a chance to teach a freshman language arts class. I could hardly believe it. When I stood in front of the class, my heart raced. My emotions fluctuated between nervous and excited. A ripple of realization flowed over me as I reached for the piece of chalk. At that moment I knew I wanted to be a teacher. Miss Clancy handed me the chance to confirm my calling that day.

Additionally, she taught me parts of speech so I could master the English language, and she exposed me to all types of literature. She introduced me to Anne Shirley of Green Gables, who was the very first literary charac-

ter with whom I truly identified. Going above and beyond, Miss Clancy talked with me about matters of the heart. She encouraged me to open up to others and practice servant leadership. What an impactful teacher!

Clearly, educators impact students in a multitude of ways – by example, by words, by actions, by the education provided, by prayers, and by the unconditional grace and love offered. What a privilege!

I celebrated Miss Clancy, a teacher who impacted my life. Now the editorial staff wants to celebrate a teacher that has had an impact on you.

Blessings,

Dawn Molnar

Teachers of Vision
Managing Editor

WE INVITE YOU, THE READER, TO NOMINATE AN IMPACTFUL EDUCATOR FOR US TO CELEBRATE.

The nominee can be a current educator with whom you work, an educator who impacted you when you were a student, or an educator who has impacted your child.

TO ENTER, SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING:

- Name of Educator
- School District of the Nominee
- Your contact information (name, email, address)
- Explain in 300 words or less how this nominee impacted students and/or the school culture.

Submit nominations by February 14th to tov@ceai.org.

We will publish our favorite nominations in the 2016 Spring Issue.



We at *Christian Educators Association International* are for you. We exist to encourage, equip, and empower you to continue impact-

ing your schools. In our next 2016 Spring Issue of *Teachers of Vision* you will be refreshed as we focus on CELEBRATION.

TODAY'S LESSON

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