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Toward a uniform curriculum



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One of the most amazing things about working with schools in the League is the amount of support each one is willing to give to the other. The League representatives see this support when they gather together for the luxury of a Friday evening meeting. It is also seen in the comradery of the principals, and the way in which teachers of similar grade levels gravitate toward each other at conventions, joint PD days and even sports tournaments.

When teachers gather together, one of the most popular topics of conversation is curriculum. They ask questions like, "What are you using for science?", "Do you have any support material for, 'Call it Courage'?", "Do you use AIM French- if you do, do you have any tips for getting my more introverted students involved in the play?", or, "What about the recorder? Have you thrown it away in favour of the ukulele yet? We have a great resource!"

Principals, too, ask questions about curriculum. Often their questions are linked to the development, or redevelopment, of an entire subject. These conversations tie in with the work of the staff and Education Committee at a school. Principals are interested in what resources schools are using, how they work, and whether there is a subject specific rationale that their school might borrow and refine for their own purpose.

It is amazing to see both the quality and the speed at which responses to these requests are made. Schools willingly share documents, the making of which required hours of time devoted to researching programs and writing rationales.

Over time though, it has become clear that no one school in the League (elementary or secondary) really has a complete picture of the program and resources other schools are using throughout the grades. (Even though the course codes at the high school level are the same, resources and rationales are still developed in house.)

This past school year, the League has been working to develop a document wherein The League's CARE Committee, and schools (meaning teachers, principals, Education Committees and Boards) would be able to have a complete picture of what is being taught in each school, in which grade, and using which resources.

Visits are being made to the schools to make this happen. During these visits year plans and course calendars are reviewed with the purpose of documenting what is being taught in what grades and which resources are being used in League schools. The vision for the final product is a spreadsheet that will allow CARE and decision makers in schools to easily see what is being taught throughout Ontario as they plan for changes and improvements.

This document may lay the ground work for enacting a vision that has been part of the League for decades: that schools who are members of the League develop a common curriculum to the extent that we are all teaching the same topics at the same grade levels.

Through the dedicated work of CARE, this is happening in in a few areas of our elementary schools already. In Memory Work, Bible History, Church History (at least from grade 1-4), and Physical Education, the time and work of many individuals has gone into making a program that schools have agreed to use in common. In other areas, like Math, Language Arts, and the Social Sciences, schools are much farther apart. Secondary schools are better aligned since they need to follow ministry guidelines and pass inspections to be allowed to issue credits toward the Ontario Secondary School Diploma. Still, the resources they use and how they work with the Ministry guidelines is largely unique to the individual school.

The Lord willing, once the curriculum map is complete, schools will have a tool that they may choose to use to streamline what is being taught and cooperate more efficiently on future developments.

Jason Heemskerk

Government Update



Back in October it was communicated to private schools across Ontario that the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change was asking for input on possible regulation changes to how water testing is conducted in school and daycare facilities.

The League office and several LCRSS schools took the opportunity to provide input for the Ministry to consider. The Ministry took these comments (as well as those of other interested parties) into consideration, and filed regulation changes on December 15, 2016. The following points summarize the procedures that schools will need to have in place by September in regards to water testing:

1. All schools will need to test all previously untested fountains and taps used to provide drinking water and food preparation. This is to ensure that all taps used for drinking and or food preparation have been tested for lead.
2. Every day that the school is open flushing is required if all or part of the plumbing that serves the school was installed before January 1, 1990. Daily flushing must be completed before the school is open for the day.
3. Flush weekly if all the plumbing that serves the building that houses the school was installed after January 1, 1990 and test results from standing samples in the past 24 months shows that lead levels have been less than 10 µg/L but more than 1 µg/L.
4. Drinking water taps at the end of each branch or run of pipe in plumbing will still need to be flushed for five minutes either weekly or daily, depending on the frequency of flushing that is required.

5. Schools must test drinking water and food preparation taps yearly unless they have met certain criteria. If they do, then they can reduce it to once every three years. These are the criteria:

- a. All drinking water fountains and every tap used to prepare food or drink or to provide drinking water for consumption by children must have been sampled at least once since O. Reg. 243/07 first came into effect in 2007;
- b. Test results for a consecutive 24 month period for the school is below the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standard for lead (10 µg/L); and
- c. The school must notify the ministry that these conditions have been met.

Please note that this is a summary only, and that school boards would do well to look at the complete regulations. These may be found online here: <https://goo.gl/og9Alv> .

The regulations will come into force July 1, 2017.



CCRTC

Since the mid-1970's the LCRSS has expressed a vital interest in teacher education. From offering summer courses leading to a *Diploma of Reformed Education* to spearheading the opening of a College offering fulltime programs of studies. After its opening in 1981, CCRTC has been providing a quality training program for teachers that belong to the LCRSS school community. The program offered at the college works to infuse a solid reformed understanding of education with relevant and current best practices in the profession. Every school in the League has benefited from the work of graduates from the college, and the training they received.

With the strong support from its member schools and the reformed church community-at-large, the CCRTC administration is now pursuing the possibility of granting a diploma that is accredited by the Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development and the Ontario College of Teachers. The work of preparing the accreditation application progresses steadily. We give thanks to our heavenly Father for providing health, strength, and stamina to walk this process one step at a time.

With the strong support and excellent services of a consulting group, the administration at CCRTC has focused attention on establishing contacts at the political levels to gain support for their application.

Since December meetings have been held with MPs and MPPs to make the case for accrediting a college that specializes in training teachers for reformed Christian schools, including schools within their respective constituencies.

It is with great thankfulness that we can report that these visits have gone well. There has been positive support for the application from all those who have been visited thus far.

During the months of March and April the work will continue. There will be more meetings, and more opportunities to explain the purpose and benefits of a teaching degree that is not only rigorous in relation to the Ontario teaching standard, but also reflects the values of a reformed Christian community.

The process of accreditation is gathering momentum and consuming a large amount of time and energy at CCRTC, even as the regular work of teaching the next generation of teachers continues. Even so, the Lord is blessing the efforts. While there is no guarantee that the bid will be successful, the college remembers its 'Ebenezer' daily, for they can truly say, 'Thus far, the Lord has helped us'.

As LCRSS, we join in the many prayers that this important work may continue and that in the end the application for obtaining accreditation will be successful.

LCRSS Committees:

- Assistance for the Special Child (ASC)
- Compensation Committee
- Curriculum Assistance for Reformed Educators (CARE)
- Government Contact Committee (GCC)
- Pension Committee
- Professional Development Committee (PDC)