

The Link

NEWSLETTER OF THE LEAGUE OF CANADIAN REFORMED SCHOOL SOCIETIES

GIVING THANKS FOR GATHERING

From the LCRSS Office

Fall is a season of thanksgiving. While driving through the Southern Ontario countryside, we can see farmers busy gathering in their crops and be thankful for the Lord's blessing on the harvest. He continues to provide us with food and with many, many good things. After a strange and challenging year, it was especially good to spend some time with family in October for Thanksgiving weekend and to remember the goodness of the Lord.

From the perspective of the LCRSS there is much for which we give thanks as well. Despite the many interruptions to schooling the work of the LCRSS was able to continue with relative normality. We were quite happy that we could begin to gather again with teachers and principals for a variety of projects. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will be able to read about the work on CARE's grade 5-8 Church History project done by a small group of teachers in early July, and the CARE Day that was hosted on August 26. Following a hiatus of nine months, principals joined together for a meeting of the Ontario Principals Association on August 27 and again on November 12. At the end of September, many LCRSS principals were also able to gather at the Muskoka Bible Centre in Huntsville for the National Principals Conference. And, though the format was significantly different than it has been in the past, we were able to host virtual gatherings for teachers at the High School Professional Development Day on October 28, and the Teachers Convention on October 29.

Despite all these divisions, there is so much that unites us.

Another reason for thanks for me personally has been the opportunity to resume school visits. It has been great to walk through busy hallways, to pop into active classrooms, to make presentations to schools' staff, and to sit with board members and principals to speak about the

work of the LCRSS. Visiting schools in person is a great way to both make the work of the LCRSS visible to our members and to hear and see where schools are at - where the "rubber meets the road" - in terms of the services and resources provided by the LCRSS.

Sometimes we don't realize the value of something until we have it taken away from us. Early in 2020, when COVID-19 began to impact our schools, we were not able to gather in person - not as students and teachers in classrooms, not as members of the school society, and not as staff for professional development.



Sunrise at Muskoka Bible Centre, Huntsville

One of the things that strikes me now as we resume our gatherings is the unity that is expressed, experienced, and developed in our local school communities and across the broader LCRSS community. Our member schools and supporting church communities are united in their desire and commitment to provide an excellent, Reformed education to God's covenant children, to the glory of His Name.

However, if I were asked to identify one of the biggest ways that COVID has challenged us over the past 20 months, what immediately springs to mind is unity. COVID has been divisive. Deep fault lines seem to have developed between those who favour mask-wearing and those who

Hallmarks of Reformed Education

CONFESSIONAL

Learning to say "I do" to all that God reveals about Himself in His Word and works

COVENANTAL

Recognizing God's claim on children who have received His promises in baptism

ANTITHETICAL

Equipping children for service in His Kingdom as prophets, priests, and kings

UNITY OF PURPOSE

Working with home and church to tell children the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord

despise it, between the “pro-vaxxers” and the “anti-vaxxers”, between those who want to follow the rules and those who don’t. This division spread through our churches, homes, and schools. But despite all this division, there is still so much that unites us. And what unites us is much more foundational than what divides us.



Principals discussing professional development opportunities.

As I was thinking about this, Psalm 133 kept coming back to mind. In this short Psalm, the Psalmist reminds us of the beauty of unity, and provides us with two vivid images that illustrate the goodness and pleasantness of dwelling together in unity. The first image David gives is of the fragrant oil anointing the head of Aaron and flowing down onto his robes (v.2). The author of the devotional on Psalm 133 in *Christ’s Psalms, Our Psalms* suggests that this image reminds us that unity is from above. He writes, “sinners divided because of the hurt they have experienced from each other can, by God’s grace, dwell together in unity.” The second image which David – under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – uses to illustrate the life-giving power of unity is the dew of Hermon which falls on the mountains of Zion (v.3). Unpacking this image, the same author reminds us of the parched geography of Jerusalem. The only thing that enabled crops to grow was the moisture and dew that would “sweep down” from Mount Hermon. This is what unity is like – it is life-giving. The devotional author explains: “As tension and division suck the life out of [relationships]...the fellowship of true unity brings abundant life.

Unity is life-giving.

Not all LCRSS Member Schools view the ongoing COVID restrictions and regulations the same way, and not all agree on how best to implement or respond to them. Beyond COVID, there are other things that divide our Members as well. They have different policies, pedagogies, and curriculum resources. But despite these divisions and differences, the LCRSS is an expression of the fact that we have much that unites us. And the deep hope of providing

covenant children with Reformed education is a unifying purpose that is far greater than what divides us.

In this fall season, I am thankful for the unity that we have been able to express, experience, and develop as we have gathered together again after a long COVID hiatus. May God continue to grant us unity that gives life to our schools and, ultimately, glory to His Name!

“Teach With Us” Update

The Future of Reformed Education Rests on Reformed Teachers

We continue to gather data and information about the state of the teaching profession in Reformed schools across Canada and in Lynden, WA. Out of all the data gathered, we believe that there are two key pieces of information that will tell us if our efforts to attract career teachers to Reformed schools have been successful:

1. The number of qualified applicants per advertised position
2. The percentage of high school graduates who are considering teaching as a career.

A fall survey of principals of Reformed schools revealed that there were roughly **three qualified applicants for every four advertised positions in 2021** (compared to roughly five applicants for every four advertised positions in 2020). It also showed that **4.1% of all 2021 Ontario Reformed high school graduates** (6.3% of Western graduates) **were entering a post-secondary pathway to become a teacher**. These numbers are down from 2020 (8.2% in Ontario, 9.5% in the West. We’re looking forward to a national strategic planning meeting to discuss further initiatives for attracting teachers to our schools!

ARPA “Educational Diversity” Report Released

By John Sikkema (Government Contact Committee)

Roughly ninety-two percent of primary and secondary students in Canada attend public schools. In a [policy report](#) released earlier this year, ARPA Canada identifies Canada’s lack of educational diversity as a “problem on three fronts: (1) it encroaches on the moral responsibility of parents to educate their children; (2) it infringes on legal and constitutional rights in the realm of education; and (3) it hinders students’ success.”

The report, titled “Educational Diversity”, explains that parents bear the primary authority and responsibility for their children’s education. This biblical principle is affirmed

in common law, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. ARPA also explains that religion, worldview, and education are deeply linked. The goals and content of school curriculum are ultimately based on a worldview. Applying these principles in the context of Canada's religious and cultural diversity means, from a public policy standpoint, that the government ought to respect and support parental choice in education.

ARPA recognizes that the civil government may play a legitimate role in education by setting basic standards necessary to achieve legitimate civic goals for the common good (e.g., having a literate population with a basic understanding of the nation's civic institutions). However, civil governments overreach by giving state-run schools major financial advantages over other schools and by interfering in the freedom of schools to teach and to govern themselves in accordance with their religious worldview.

***The government ought to respect
and support parental choice in
education.***

Not only does the unfair treatment of independent schools fail to respect parents' and religious communities' fundamental freedoms, it leads to worse outcomes overall in terms of commonly shared educational goals, ARPA contends. A diverse school system with many independent schools offers a variety of pedagogical approaches and curriculum content, encourages greater parental involvement, and creates competition for students, all of which leads to better education outcomes.

ARPA Canada has been preoccupied this year with various issues including COVID-19 restrictions on churches, "medical assistance in dying" and "conversion therapy". But ARPA hopes to ramp up both its lobbying and its grassroots engagement on education issues in the coming months, with its new education policy report as a foundation.

CARE Summer 2021 Activities

Church History Writing Project

From July 5-9, 2021, a team of teacher-writers, together with a facilitator, met at CCRTC to draft templates for Church History lessons in Grades 5-8. Writers included Wayne Bartels, Arthur Kingma, Liane Mans, Keith Sikkema, and Lydia VanVeen. With their love for Church History and desire for personal professional growth, each worked on a chosen grade and reviewed each other's work. The draft templates for grades 5 and 6 are now completed (42 of 42), grade 7 has seen good progress (38 of 53) and grade 8 is over half-way (34 of 61).

With a good team, CARE may finish this phase of the project in the next session (Summer 2022).

These lesson templates are typically 4-5 pages in length per lesson. They include suggestions for lesson themes, a rationale, objectives and assessment, and methodology. They provide a range of other supports. The bulk consists of context and lesson content information that should help the teacher prepare their lesson without having to go to various other resources.

Going forward, CARE's Review and Editing Committee (REC) can start reviewing what has been completed for grades 5 and 6, using a tool developed for that purpose. This includes making suggestions for edits for content, format, style, etc. In the next phase, suggestions can be implemented for a final version which will be made available to the schools as "The" Church History package for grades 5 and 6. A similar process would be used for the remaining grades upon completion of the drafts.

- Keith Sikkema, Facilitator

CARE Day, August 26

The August CARE day was held across three different locations. The Primary teachers met at Dufferin Area Christian School in Orangeville, the Junior teachers met at John Calvin School in Smithville, and the Intermediate teachers met at Maranatha Christian School in Fergus. Below are reports from the Primary and Intermediate groups.

Primary (Dufferin Area Christian School)

At DACS, we welcomed Mr. Arthur Kingma to introduce the Oral Communication strand to not only the audience of primary grade teachers gathered at DACS, but via technological means also to wider audience in the province. Arthur and Stephen Chase, his colleague from BC who authored the Oral Communication section of the CARE Language Arts Conceptual Framework, reminded us why Oral Communication is an important aspect of Language Arts instruction in a Reformed Christian School.



DACS, Orangeville

Our audience broke into several grade-related groups. The challenge for our groups was that the work CARE assigned for the day required participants to think across multiple grades. Once the focus was set on just one grade at a time, the discussion flowed better. We did not get an opportunity to present to the entire group gathered for the day, but for many of the teachers the opportunity to exchange ideas about Language Arts and other classroom-related subjects was a very welcome benefit to the day.

- *Jelko Oosterhof and John Wynia (Primary Facilitators for the August CARE Day)*

Intermediate (Maranatha Christian School)

Teachers of the intermediate grades (7 and 8) met at Maranatha in Fergus. A wide variety of teaching experience levels allowed the 'older' teachers to assist the 'younger' ones. The goal was to work with CARE's Language Arts Conceptual Framework and the Ontario curriculum to create a scope and sequence (a series of tasks, projects and assessments that could be done at each grade level) for Oral Communication. We agreed to split into three groups, and have each group put together their own vision of an oral communication scope and sequence for our two grades. Each group presented their ideas towards the end of the day, so that we could share our ideas.



Maranatha, Fergus

The challenge, we discovered, was bridging the philosophical and spiritual components of the Conceptual Framework with the Ontario curriculum expectations and imagining what that might look like in our everyday classroom. We also concluded that we as educators must give students meaningful exercises for them to improve their speaking and listening skills, so that measurable growth can be seen from year to year. All in all, participation in the August CARE Day was a useful and productive activity for the intermediate staff of LCRSS Member Schools.

- *Wayne Bartels and Mike Joesse (Intermediate Facilitators for the August CARE Day)*

An Update from the "CC"

By Ivan Tiggelaar (Compensation Committee)

The mandate of the Compensation Committee is to advise the Board of Directors of the LCRSS on matters related to compensation, accreditation, and personnel policies.

The Compensation Committee's main activity is to review and recommend salary adjustments, and to review and recommend changes to the Personnel Manual. There are two sub-committees of the Compensation Committee:

The Credentials Committee is activated from time to time at the request of the LCRSS or Compensation Committee to review and update the credentials used to define the compensation categories in the annual Salary Report.

The Health Benefits and Pension Committee's task is to review and audit the health benefits and pension plan obtained through the LCRSS for the benefit of staff of member associations.

All three committees were extremely busy during the past year.

The Credentials Committee reviewed and recommended: (1) an allowance for the Learning Resource Coordinator/ Special Education Resource Teacher (LRC/SERT) position, (2) guidelines for compensation of educational support staff, and (3) an adjustment to the classroom teacher credentials allowances.

The Health Benefits and Pension Committee completed an overall review which included a review of their broker PV&V Insurance. The Committee was very satisfied with the work PV&V provides to the LCRSS. The Committee along with PV&V went out in November 2020 to obtain quotes on the LCRSS Benefits Plan. They received quotes from five benefits providers and the recommendation to the LCRSS was to stay with the existing provider (Canada Life).

The Compensation Committee's main activity each year is to prepare the annual Salary Report for the upcoming school year. This is presented to the LCRSS Member Schools at the November Membership Meeting. Part of the Committee's evaluation is to review the salary grid and adjust, where required, based on the economic factors in the market. Currently, the LCRSS is in the middle of the four-year adjustment to the salary grid in which staff in Categories 4 and 5 were extended to 13 years of experience, those in Category 3 to 11 years of experience, those in Category 2 to 9 years, and those in Category 1 to 8 years. Over the past two years the Committee also updated the Personnel Manual as a template for each LCRSS Member School's use.

We thank all the committee members who serve on these committees and especially those that have retired from the committees in the past year, namely Keith Sikkema (Credentials), Ben Helder (Compensation), Harold Bouwman (Compensation), and James Van Brenk (Compensation). New members added in the past year are Kendra Baker (Compensation) and Bud Arnold (Compensation).

Upcoming LCRSS Events

Event	Date and Format
January Membership Meeting	January 28, 2022, Hybrid (Virtual & In-Person)
CARE Day	February 18, 2022, Format TBD
Annual EA Day	February 18, 2022, Format TBD
League Learning Day	Date TBD (March/early April 2022), In-Person
Teach With Us Canada Strategic Planning	Date TBD (March/early April 2022), In-Person

Annual Directors' Report

Kevin Hutchinson (LCRSS Chairman)

It is with pleasure and thankfulness to the Lord that we, as Directors, submit the 2020-2021 Annual Report to the LCRSS Membership. We acknowledge that anything and everything that we have accomplished is because the Lord provides us with what we need, and we look to His strength and guidance for the future as well.

As the ongoing pandemic continued to challenge us through 2021 at all levels – teachers, staff, students, boards, parents – it has never been clearer how much we rely on our Lord for all things. We are thankful that schools could continue to operate, and students could continue to be taught. Often times this was very difficult to accomplish and could only be done through the use of technology. It was the diligent work of the teachers and their flexibility that allowed the job to get done despite these challenges.

At the LCRSS level, adjustments also had to be made. Some of our plans had to be cancelled while other, new activities had to be completed. During this pandemic crisis, our LCRSS Coordinator was especially instrumental in coordinating meetings and keeping track of the constant changes and restrictions with respect to the education of our children. The value of his efforts and work were reflected in the positive comments provided in the LCRSS Coordinator Survey that was conducted by the LCRSS Human Resource Committee. We thank everyone for the overwhelming responses; this feedback is instrumental in ensuring that we continue to hit the mark for delivering quality service for your schools.

But our work is never done! It seems that things are busier than ever, and there are many plans for the upcoming year! Among these plans are a National Strategy Meeting to Attract and Retain Career Teachers, advancing the LCRSS Policy Support repository, and a “League Day” focused on creating a Case for Support which documents the value of Reformed Christian Education. These plans are in addition to the normal activities and conferences that our hard-working committees continue to organize and complete on an annual basis.

The 2022 year will also see the retirement of long-serving Directors Henrietta VanderLaan, Sharon Van Sydenborgh, and Kevin Hutchinson. We wish them all the best with their future endeavors. More importantly we welcome the new Directors and look forward to the fresh look that a new set of eyes (several new sets!) bring to the Directors’ “table”.

Finally, in concluding this report for 2021, we want to acknowledge the many volunteers who work on committees or help individually with initiatives. The value that they provide is amazing and inspiring, even in the face of struggles to find new ways to accomplish tasks and objectives in this current pandemic situation. What a great blessing the Lord provides us through the communion of saints, all working together toward the worthy objective of quality Reformed Christian education for the children the Lord has entrusted us with.

Respectfully submitted, on behalf of the LCRSS Board of Directors,

- Kevin Hutchinson, Chairman

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

On behalf of the LCRSS, we wish you a blessed Christmas celebration and a New Year of God’s provident care in 2022!

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be
upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of
peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*