

The Link

NEWSLETTER OF THE LEAGUE OF CANADIAN REFORMED SCHOOL SOCIETIES

CONFESSIONALLY GROUNDED

From the LCRSS Office

Over the last several years, post-apocalyptic stories have proliferated in the media. Movies, television shows, books, and video games, have entertained and shocked audiences as heroes and villains adapt to brave new worlds ushered in by (imaginary) catastrophic and civilization-ending tragedies. Watching (or reading about) people adjusting to seismic shifts in ‘the way of the world’ – to the end of the world as we know it – can be engrossing entertainment: new realities push characters to behave and think in ways they would never have imagined possible before.

The story of Noah is an interesting counterpoint to these ‘post-apocalyptic’ narratives. Noah is warned about an impending civilization-ending tragedy and instructed to build an Ark to save himself and his family and two of every living thing. Noah’s could be called a pre-apocalyptic story.

Reformed education is a constant learning to say ‘I do’ to all that God reveals about Himself in His Word and works as the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of Life.

I often imagine what this experience would have been like for Noah: What did his neighbours think? What kind of conversations must he have had with his wife and his sons and his sons’ wives? How long did it take to build the ark? Did Noah live near any large body of water? Did Noah or his sons have any experience in carpentry? The Bible doesn’t provide us with these details. Instead, it provides this refrain to Noah’s story: Noah “did all that the Lord had commanded him” (Gen. 6:22; 7:5, 9, 16; 8:18).

Hebrews 11 tells us that Noah did all this “by faith” (v. 7): “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household.” In this too, the story of Noah provides an important contrast. Where the heroes



Artist's rendition of the ark under construction

and villains of contemporary post-apocalyptic epics are constantly being pushed to react to the changes they are experiencing, Noah was acting on faith. Characters in post-apocalyptic stories may struggle to believe what they are seeing; Noah built an ark because he believed without seeing. The heroes of post-apocalyptic stories are often realists – they accept situations as they are and are prepared to deal with them, but I don’t think that’s how Noah’s contemporaries would have described him.

Thus, we say that “Reformed education is a constant learning to say ‘I do’ to all that God reveals about Himself in His Word and works as the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of Life.” Moreover, the confessional task of the school is “to show the children that all things in the created world have their being and purpose in God and can be truly known in relation to Him.” Therefore, we believe that our Reformed schools are, and work so they will be, confessionally grounded.

Being ‘confessionally grounded’ can be understood in a dual sense. First, to be grounded can be understood as being sensible, well-balanced (another term I doubt Noah’s neighbours would have used to describe him as he built the ark). We confess that if we truly want to understand reality – if we want to understand things as

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

they really are – we can only do so in relation to God. Thus, our being *confessional* – our submission to God’s self-revelation in His Word – helps us, helps our students, helps our schools to make sense of reality. In a world that is tossed to and fro on every wind of doctrine, being confessional keeps us balanced and ‘on the right path.’

Confession is the context of all learning in a Reformed school.

The second sense being ‘confessionally grounded’ carries with it is that of ‘grounding’ something abstract to give it a firm theoretical or practical basis. Thus, we say that confession is the context of all learning in a Reformed school. When our students study math or science, English or geography, health or carpentry, they are exploring and uncovering God’s revelation of Himself in His Word and works and learning to submit themselves to Him. Our aim as we provide instruction in each of these subjects is to help students to see, very practically, who their God is, who they are, and what He has called them to be and to do so that they will be grounded in confession.

To say that ‘Reformed schools are confessional in character’ means that we want our students to be like Noah, to know what he knew, and what his contemporaries learned too late when the flood came: being confessionally grounded is the only safe way to live. Psalm 46 provides a beautiful picture of what this does for our students. If they are confessionally grounded, they can say with the Psalmist, no matter what situation they face:

“God is our refuge and strength,

a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
Though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,

Though its waters roar and foam,

Though the mountains tremble at its swelling...

The Lord of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our fortress. (Ps. 46:1-3, 11)



Damage to the Coquihalla Highway from the 2021 BC flooding

TEACH! WITH US •

On April 8, 2022 Reformed education stakeholders from across Canada gathered at Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church in Hamilton for a strategic planning session to develop initiatives related to the current shortage of teachers in Reformed schools.

Several new initiatives are planned, including:

- Create a **mature/part-time student program** at CCRTC for those who want to transition to teaching from another career
- Establish a **scholarship to defray the cost of teacher training**
- Develop a **local ‘Teach With Us’ program** to help schools ‘grow their own’ teachers
- Create and maintain a **‘Reformed-teacher-in-training’ registry** to help local schools connect and build relationships with students training to become teachers in their area
- Recruit more current teachers to be **Champions of Reformed Education** who are passionate about their career and willing to talk about it and mentor teachers in training.



Discussing initiatives to help solve the teacher shortage

***Have feedback about anything
you’re reading in The Link?***

Email coordinator@lcrss.ca
to share your thoughts.

Co-ops, Trades, and Tech Courses in LCRSS High Schools

By Steve DeBoer, Jason Heemskerck, Mike Vander Deen, and John Wynia for the High School Committee

Emmanuel Christian High School (Fergus), Guido de Bres Christian High School (Hamilton), and Providence Reformed Collegiate (Komoka) are the member High Schools of the LCRSS. Over the past few years, each of these schools has been working on developing and/or expanding their offerings in the trades/technology department. This focus provides an excellent opportunity to give a brief overview of the trades/tech and co-op programs offered, and the work being done at our schools to prepare covenant youth for service in these areas.



League Coordinator (LC): What trades/tech courses does your school offer?

Emmanuel Christian High School (ECHS): Our grade 12 students can participate in a co-op program in the second half of the second semester. We also offer Communications Technology course to our grade 10s every year and a Computer Engineering Technology course to grade 11s and 12s every other year.

Guido de Bres Christian High School (GDB): We offer trades/tech courses at the grade 9, 10, and 11 level in Construction Technology, Transportation Technology, Woodworking, and Green Industries. Students in grade 11 and 12 can also participate in the co-op program.

Providence Reformed Collegiate (PRC): Our school currently offers two grade 11 trades/tech courses alongside our co-op program: Construction Engineering Technology, and Transportation Technology.



LC: On average, how many students are enrolled in these courses?

ECHS: We usually have 20-25 students who partake in the grade 12 co-op program. About 20 kids enroll in Communications Technology, and around 15 enroll in Computer Engineering Technology every other year.

GDB: Our trades/tech courses are usually full, with 32 students enrolled. We have about 10-15 grade 11 and 12 students who do half-day co-op placement in the second semester, and 20-25 grade 12 students who do a full-day co-op placement in the second semester.

PRC: Our average enrollment for the grade 11 tech courses is 12-15 students, and we have about the same number who participate in the co-op program.



LC: How has this program evolved/developed over the past three to five years?

ECHS: We have basically had a similar trades/tech & co-op program for the last several years but, following a school review and strategic planning session with LCRSS, we have a lot of planned expansion and development for the next three to five years.

GDB: We recently hired another staff member to help with the delivery of, and preparation for, the co-op program, and we added three courses (grade 10 Transportation Technology, grade 11 Custom Woodworking, and grade 9 Exploring Construction Technology) to our course calendar.

PRC: We started our co-op program and have been adding more offerings of our trades/tech courses to our course calendar. We also hired an additional staff member – a mechanic with 25 years experience who always wanted to teach.



LC: *What are your plans/hopes for the program for the next 1-3 years?*

ECBS: We will be expanding our co-op offerings for students and hope to enroll in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) with Edvance Christian Schools Association beginning this fall. We are hoping to expand our course offerings in the trades/tech program too, so that students have more hands-on learning opportunities.

GDB: Our hope is to improve our co-op placements by allowing students to enroll in OYAP, and we would love to have another 'tech' teacher so that we could add more sections for our tech courses during the year.

PRC: We are working on developing the current course offerings and fostering relationships with local businesses through our co-op program.

LC: *What success stories can you share about your trades/tech/co-op program?*

ECBS: At this point our success story is the enthusiasm in our supporting community to expand our offerings in this area. We look forward to seeing how we can do more to equip our students for service in the trades in the next few years.

GDB: I think our greatest success story from the program has been the hiring of additional staff to support the program. Hiring a full-time teacher to work on the tech courses has allowed us to expand our offerings and give students more experience in multiple trade sectors, meaning new opportunities to expand their knowledge in areas where they will be able to use the gifts and talents the Lord has given them. Hiring a staff member to help with the co-op program has meant not only that we have more to offer co-op placements for students who wish to go into the trades, but we can also give them to students who wish to explore more academic co-ops in schools, vet-clinics, and laboratories.

PRC: It has been very good to see the appreciation local businesses have for our students. When our co-op coordinator makes his visits, he hears that our students are loved and that the businesses would welcome more of them for future placements. It's also great to see students who now have jobs in the businesses where they did co-op placements.



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Thanking the Convention Committee...and Looking Ahead

By Christine van Halen-Faber for the Professional Development Committee

*"Hope springs eternal in the human breast."
(Alexander Pope)*

This well-known adage might well be the moniker for the Convention Committee. During the past two years, Mel de Jonge, Sarah Faber, Marsha Leistra, and Jody Tomlin have worked tirelessly to make the annual Teachers Convention a reality despite challenging circumstances. As we look back on the unique-yet-appreciated 2021 Teachers Convention, we do so in order to look ahead with hope to many more next convention opportunities.

Regular readers of the Link will likely recall that originally the annual teachers convention was known as the CRTA Convention, an event organized under the auspices of the Canadian Reformed Teachers Association (CRTA). When the CRTA ceased to exist, a number of valuable professional avenues for teacher input were lost. Including the home of the Teachers Convention. Given its close connection to ongoing teacher growth, it seemed prudent to offer the convention, along with its organizing committee, a new home under the marquee of the League's Professional Development Committee (PDC). All we need yet is a catchy convention name. We welcome your suggestions!

Together with the members of the Convention Committee, the PDC is excited to further develop this concept from blueprint to moving in and feeling at home. As is the case with every move, there will be some changes. For example, in addition to having a PDC member function as a liaison and active Convention Committee member, we also envision that the Principal representative on the PDC will be more fully involved as a link between the schools/Principals and the Convention

Committee. It is our hope that in the future, all convention-related matters from developing a theme to seeking speakers and workshop leaders to budgeting to registration to financial accountability etc. etc., can be streamlined in such a way that the annual event may benefit our Reformed Christian community of teachers and schools.

From PDC's perspective, the prospect of helping shape future conventions is an exciting one. Over the course of the past number of years, efforts have been made to seek ways in which the unique character of Reformed education can be translated into authentic teaching practice. We recognize that developing a teacher task description (e.g., LCRSS Personnel Manual, Schedule G) is one thing. How to best review a teacher's performance in light of such a description is quite another. And how to encourage continued professional growth as part of such an accountability structure is yet something else. Over the course of the 2021-2022 school year, the Ontario Principals Association has grappled with these and similar topics in the hope of embracing a protocol that can be applied effectively to all LCRSS member schools. We are convinced that somewhere in all of this, the reconceptualization of the Teachers Convention can play a significant role.

As PDC we look forward to a re-energized and robust approach to the 2022 Teachers Convention. If you share our excitement, let us know and we'll be happy to make you part of the team. For now, please mark the date: Friday October 28, 2022 and the place: Emmanuel Christian High School in Fergus ON.

In closing, we thank the members of the Convention Committee, especially Sarah Faber who is retiring from the committee, for their hard work and dedication. Thank you for your hope-filled ways of making our Teachers Conventions a reality.

Upcoming LCRSS Events

August 25, 2022	CARE Day at John Calvin School/Smithville
September 13, 2022	LCRSS Directors Meeting at Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College
October 6, 2022	LCRSS Membership Meeting at Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College
October 21-22, 2022	League Learning Day: Conversion Therapy Bans and Reformed Schools in Guelph (location TBD)
October 28, 2022	Annual Teachers Convention at Emmanuel Christian High School/Fergus
November 3, 2022	Annual ASC Presentation by Andrea Foster: Ministry with Families Affected By Disability @ Grace Christian School/Millgrove
November 25, 2022	LCRSS Annual General Meeting at Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College