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A TEACHER'S TIME ...

THE CHALLENGE

THE BLESSING

As this school year nears its end, I invite you to look back upon it, focusing on the time that God gave to you. You had 24 hours in each day. Twenty-four hours to serve your Lord in your special calling. What a blessing! Though the number of hours for all teachers is the same, the real question is, "How did you manage them?" That is the challenge before you!

Teachers often find their days, weeks, months, quarters and year so full that many things do not get the kind of attention they need and deserve. As you reflect on your own challenge of time management, consider how each day was spent.

Was adequate time given to lesson preparation and instruction?

Did you take time to give individual attention and encouragement to your students?

Were other professional tasks and responsibilities attended to?

These questions are important for each teacher to consider seriously. But there are also other considerations of great importance.

Did you give your own family a quality portion of your time?

Do you get an adequate amount of sleep and also eat properly?

Are you careful to allow time for relaxation, leisure, hobbies, travel or whatever personal activity relieves stress and renews your energies?

Can you be depended upon to meet deadlines and due dates?

The questions set forth here for you to ponder also should not be set aside as impossible or insignificant, for they are important to your professional, physical and mental well-being and reputation. However, there are questions of even greater importance for you and every busy teacher. These are important to your spiritual well-being.

Do you make time for God in your daily life by setting aside time for thoughtful worship, personal prayers, Bible reading and devotion?

Are you conveying to others sincere faith in Christ, the joys of teaching and an attitude of Christian love and caring?

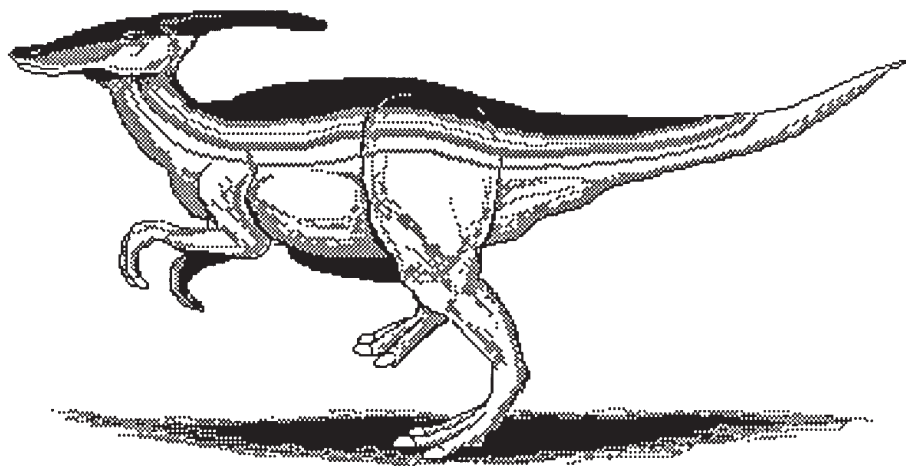
What a challenge it is for teachers to manage their time! How blessed we are to have a God who gives us strength and forgives our shortcomings as we strive to be good stewards of the 24 hours that God has given to us in each day. May we look to him for support as we daily labor in his calling and serve him in all that we do. We surely cannot meet the challenge of time management by ourselves, but with God's help and direction we will use our blessing of time according to his good will and pleasure.

IAP

DINOSAURS, GOD'S CREATURES

Part II

Paul R. Boehlke



[Part 1 of this paper indicated that the topic of dinosaurs has a place in the Christian classroom. To reject the idea is an over-reaction against evolutionary theory. Children often have a strong interest in these beasts, and they can be used to show the wonder of God's creation and also how science changes its ideas about nature. This part of the paper will furnish examples of new ideas that scientists are generating about dinosaurs.]

Some dinosaurs likely had more colorful skins than first imagined. The unevenness in fossil impressions of skin may be caused by spots of color. There is no reason to believe that dinosaurs did not have stripes and spots like the other animals made by God. Some colors may have

been for camouflage, attracting mates, or frightening off attackers. The actual colors, however, will never be known. Crests and horns also may have been used by dinosaurs to identify their species and to attract mates.

Again while speculating about social behaviors, scientists now believe that some of the duck-billed hadrosaurs communicated with each other with low frequency sounds as elephants do. For example, the head of the parasaurolophus may have allowed vibrations to travel from the throat to the top of the crest, around the corner, and then back down to the nose before being released. Such sounds would have been low pitched and difficult for predators to locate.

Yet the *parasaurolophus* would have been able to communicate with others of his species—perhaps warning the herd or attracting a mate.

Then imagine two long-necked dinosaurs battling each other with their long necks for the establishment of dominance. Male giraffes spar like this; it is called “necking.” Impressive blows can be delivered. Their swings, counter-blows, agile escapes, nimble footwork and complete misses can go on for ten minutes. Injury is rare, but sometimes occurs. A giraffe may be knocked unconscious. But no matter how badly a fight is going, they do not use their primary weapon, kicking. The giraffe can deliver a deadly kick to a predator (Dagg and Foster, 1982). Scientists believe that dinosaurs probably had similar social behaviors.

Scientists believe that there was a massive extinction of dinosaurs at the end of the Mesozoic. The Cretaceous-Tertiary boundary (commonly called the K-T boundary) layer in the strata indicates a sudden change to the scientist. We do not know what happened except we know that the event did not occur seventy million years ago. The real questions about dinosaurs involve time. The effects of the Flood on the geological record and its real meaning are unclear to us. Could the Flood have caused extensive fossilization? We do not know. The Bible does not deal with such questions. We can say that if dinosaurs lived until the time of the Flood, then their representatives joined the other animals on the ark. “Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground

will come to you to be kept alive” (Ge 6:20). Kinds are not species and not every possible variation of dinosaur had to join Noah. It is likely that many species were lost. Large numbers may have been fossilized by the Flood. We should be open-minded about the appearance of the animals on the Ark. We do not know what any of the animals on the Ark looked like and what genes were required to produce what we have now. Perhaps the dinosaurs on the ark lived only a while after the Flood, never reaching numbers large enough to make many more fossils. We cannot know. Perhaps the dinosaurs were even extinct *before* the Flood. If mankind was so evil, the environment probably suffered. The easiest way to kill an organism is to change its environment. We cannot tell from the Bible, and any scheme that we might dream up to fit the geological record to the Scriptural record could be proven false in the long run. That would do more harm than good if people foolishly had attempted to support their faith with it. All science changes, even science done by well-meaning Christians. One may personally think that the K-T boundary has something to do with the Flood but that kind of thinking dare never be placed at the level of Scripture. We must be humble about such ideas and realize that the truth of the matter is probably far more complex. Speculation cannot take the place of preaching the gospel. The Holy Spirit does not work through reasoning, but through the Word itself.

Scientists do not think about the effects of a world-wide flood because they cannot imagine a natural cause

for such an event. That is part of the nature of modern science and one of its inherent limitations. The content of science excludes the supernatural and the single event. Nobel laureate Luis Alvarez and his son Walter in 1980 proposed that an asteroid about six miles in diameter struck the earth at about 45,000 miles per hour (odds: once in a 100 million years). The massive amounts of dust and debris blocked sunlight for months or years. The climate cooled dramatically. The Alvarez theory is based on a thin stratum of the metal iridium at the K-T boundary. Iridium is common in asteroids

but rare on earth.

Opponents of the massive impact theory argue that an unusual period of extreme volcanism could have pulled iridium from the interior

of the earth. The volcanism could have caused a lethal acid rain (or the same sun-blocking climate changes).

Dawson (1989) cites some conclusions which show how scientists think: 1) Most of the plant life in North Dakota died at the same time the dinosaurs died. Seventy-nine percent of the leaf types in existence at the end of the Cretaceous Period are not found above the K-T boundary. Sudden changes in pollen types at the K-T boundary also support the sud-

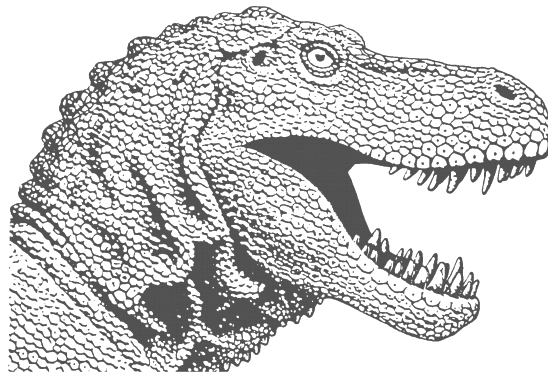
den extinction theory. 2) Furthermore, two-thirds of all species died at the K-T boundary. 3) A large crater of the proper age has been found in central Iowa. The crater is 20 miles wide, not large enough, but perhaps it only represents a piece of the asteroid. Some argue that Cuba was the primary impact site. 4) Advocates of the impact theory argue that quartz of a particular type would have been formed by the impact. That type of quartz has been found at the K-T boundary. 5) Massive amounts of soot have been found in the clays at the K-T boundary. The soot was interpreted

to be the result of extensive wildfires touched off by the impact.

David R. Raup (1986), in the spirit of "if it happened once..." believes that there

have been several extinctions caused by comets. He believes that a planet named Nemesis periodically dislodges comets from the Oort cloud which then hit the earth. This has happened every 26 million years, according to his thinking. This hypothesis has caused much controversy among scientists.

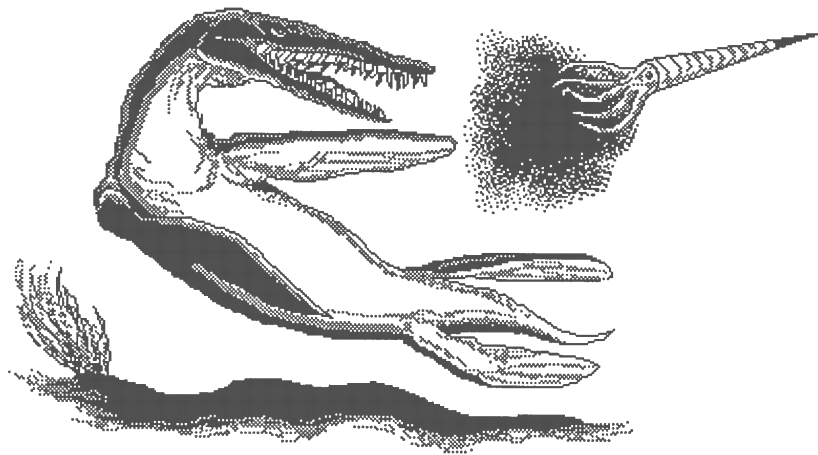
By the study of these things, our students can learn that dinosaur science is very typical science. In fact, we are teaching our students little



science if we do not let them see hints of its inner workings. Science is always a creative and selective use of evidence to build a reasonable, natural explanation. There are many assumptions. There are many inferences. There are cases of searching until you find what you need to fit and support your favorite ideas. Science is a human construction. James Gorman, who has followed Horner's work, states, "Paleontology exists not primarily in the fossil bones but in the thinking of the paleontologists who collect, organize and interpret these bones. The scientists who study dinosaurs have to construct, within the restraints of theory and evidence, an image of what the dinosaurs were. A bucket of fossils means next to nothing to me or to other laymen. The parts don't come close to adding up to a whole" (Horner and Gorman, 1988, 17). Science is puzzle-solving with most of the pieces missing and many parts out of place. There is no promise of truth. Our understanding of dinosaurs will change as scientists

consider different ideas. Science always changes as time goes on. Nevertheless, to do science is a gift of God. To investigate, to explore is human. God blesses us through even the study of dinosaur bones. Discovery can be thrilling and rewarding. The wonder of God's creation awes us and speaks of His wisdom. "Look at Behemoth...He ranks first among the works of God..." (Job 40: 15, 19).

Children should certainly study dinosaurs. It should not be difficult for them to see how scientists are arriving at their conclusions. They use selected facts, use information that we accept about existing animals to compare and build a reasonable story. Our students should not come to ridicule the scientist but to sense the limitations of science and of all our knowledge. Science and other disciplines can be very, very wrong. A good scientist knows this. In their sinless state, Adam and Eve could talk with God in the garden and be the best of scientists. But when we get to heaven, God may have to tell



us many things—perhaps, among them, that *parasaurolophus* never made the sounds we supposed.

We need to teach our children that scientists are certainly in error about when these creatures lived. Scripture clearly teaches that wonderful animals were created with mankind and lived with us. We cannot prove that with reason and evidence, but the Spirit works that faith in us.

The large dinosaurs are gone now. We should sense a loss. Extinction is very real and final. Sin has caused the whole creation to suffer. Species with wonderful engineering have become extinct in the past; this is likely to continue unless we change our values and understandings. It has been estimated that we lose four species every hour. Presently the cutting of the rain forests is causing a massive loss of plant and animal species that have not yet even been identified. We are appalled at the Exxon oil spill in Alaska, but then we change the oil in our car and dump it into the street. We must teach our children to respect and guard the creation and the creatures in it (Ge 1:28). God made us and all creatures because he delighted in it. It pleased him to create the world. The reason that Jesus came to live *as a man* and die for us is the same as the reason he created us and all creatures: We are to remain his, he rescues us, restores us, and continues to delight in us. Yes, we are unworthy, but by grace we are his. And the world is still his; he reminds us of this in the Psalms. We must grow more sensitive to caring for his creation. We are caretakers, and we must answer for our stewardship of his creation.

Dinosaurs are valid subject matter for the Christian school curriculum. Because the previous generation may not be accustomed to their inclusion, bulletin boards and teaching materials should clearly indicate that the teacher believes that God made them. The title of a classroom bulletin board, for example, might be the same as this paper's. These extinct creatures show the wonder of the Creation. Children (and even commentator Walter Cronkite) love them. They clearly show the blessings and the limitations of doing science. They remind us that the earth is suffering because of sin. All these things call for the inclusion of dinosaurs in the curriculum of the Christian school.

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Professor Paul R. Boehlke teaches in the science department at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

FAMILY MINISTRY MATERIALS: WHAT SHALL WE CHOOSE?

Gerald F. Kastens

The break-up of the American family has been accompanied by a virtual explosion of written, video and audio resources claiming to provide an avenue by which we can deal effectively with the problems of society as they relate to family and family-life. The church has also been inundated by a proliferation of religious or quasi-religious programs designed for use within the Christian community. The gurus of Christian family living include familiar names such as Bruce Narramore, Gary Collins, H. Norman Wright, Jay Adams, James Dobson, Charles Swindoll and a host of others, each claiming to offer true biblical-based instruction to meet the needs of families.

Since the number of current resources within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod for family living/family ministry is limited, programs produced by non-WELS publishers have become popular within our Synod. Knowing the differences in beliefs which exist among the Reformed, the Roman Catholic and the humanists presents a real dilemma for a WELS pastor, teacher or layperson. The basic questions which beg to be answered are these: 1) What are the risks and dangers involved in using material which does not correctly apply the Word of God in teaching family living? 2) What principles can be used to aid in the selection of family ministry materials

produced by those outside the WELS? 3) Are there materials/authors which might be harmful to Christian family education?

The evaluation and use of any educational material is not a matter which is to be taken lightly or done in a haphazard fashion. A primary task for Christians, prior to the selection process, is to examine the potential risks or consequences which are involved in the use of materials which have been produced by those with whom we have doctrinal differences. Once these factors have been identified, principles for evaluation and selection can be determined.

Dangers

People have an endless variety of problems with which to deal in daily family living. There are also those who have provided an endless variety of answers and problem-solving advice to enhance family life. Many of these people call their answers biblical and Christian. If the answers which Christian family ministers or counselors give are truly biblical and Christian, the people who listen to those answers will end up closer to their God in the hope of salvation. If they are not, these people will end up closer to a god that does not exist and offers no eternal hope. Material which does not clearly and correctly present and maintain its focus on law and gospel throughout may drive a

person farther from the one true God.

When we choose to use or refer people to other writers, lecturers or counselors, none of whom have taken the same vows of faithfulness to the Word of God which we have, it is up to us to recognize that they in turn become God's spokesmen on our behalf. Generally speaking, you should

expect Reformed theology from Reformed publishing houses. The same is true with Roman Catholic or humanistic writing. Any answer is not necessarily better than no answer at all. In essence what we are telling people is to seek the scriptural counsel of another prophet; it makes no difference for there is no difference. The second danger is that our people will become very comfortable in going to someone else for help and information.

The third consequence of replacing Scripture as the source and norm in dealing with family living is that we give our people the impression that God's Word doesn't apply to their lives. If we allow someone else to do the job God wants us to do, or if we use some tool other than the Word of



God for the work, we are guilty of saying that God's Word is meant for Sunday morning, but not for the rest of the week.

Furthermore, our people face conflict with humanism and materialism every day. The one haven which they have come to depend upon is the church which by grace is faithful to the Word of God. If in any way they are permitted to think that earth-centered and human oriented thinking is Christian and bibli-

cal, then they have lost the refuge and strength that God wants them to have in his church. At the very least, we run the risk of losing them to a church body which will answer their human needs. At worst, they could be lost to the kingdom of God altogether because we allowed them to focus on earthly problems with earthly solutions and no Savior from sin.

Principles to consider

It is impossible to keep up with all that is new on the market concerning the family and healthy family living. A frequently asked question is, "How can we as Christians assess and use these programs?" We can make such an assessment primarily on the basis of Scriptural principles. When evaluating or using family programming,

Christians will need to beware of programs which a) attempt to espouse a less than Christian understanding of the role of husbands and wives and the subsequent responsibilities of parenthood; b) attempt to improve people and relationships in a way that would improperly make use of law and gospel as outlined in the Scriptures; c) attempt to make less of the child-parent relationship as a God-given relationship.

A nine point critique for family ministry resources (as developed by the WELS Family Ministry Task Force) is offered at this point as a guide to evaluating resources for Christian family ministry.

- The resource clearly and correctly presents law and gospel.
- The resource keeps a central focus on law and gospel throughout.
- The resource offers practical applications of law and gospel for Christian living.
- The resource keeps its focus on Scripture throughout.
- The resource is clear and easy to use.
- The resource accomplishes its stated purpose.
- The resource develops a scriptural sense of family.
- The resource promotes a sense of mission for the Christian.
- The resource can be used without direct pastoral supervision or instruction.

Careful discernment

The majority of the material produced outside of the WELS must be used under supervision and with caution. Since the largest share of the

material for sale on the shelves of Christian book stores has been produced by Reformed Christian publishing houses (e.g., Baker, Zondervan, Judson Press), it would be well to begin an assessment with a general observation concerning these materials. Though reformed authors such as Josh McDowell, Charles Swindoll and James Dobson may at times state the gospel, there is a clear tendency on their part to rely more upon the law to change people and their lives. There is also a tendency to interpret Scripture in a rational way. While we may completely agree with the Reformed movement that moral actions are a part of our lives as Christians, we also see these actions as fruits of faith, not as goals of faith. Such an approach to Scripture can leave our people with the belief that peaceful family life and clean moral living are the goals of Christianity. Man ultimately becomes the lord over the Scriptures, not its servant as God intended.

A popular approach which many Christians have begun to employ in developing approaches to family-life education has been the union of Scripture and secular humanism. The American Guidance Service (AGS), Circle Pines, Minnesota, has even gone so far as to publish a special manual for Christians to employ when using their parenting program, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP). The STEP program is a program written by Dr. Don Dinkmeyer and Dr. Gary McKay. Both are secular humanist authors who advocate the use of basic principles of psychology which often stand in opposition to God's Word. Though



the program has been developed primarily for public schools, a version called *STEP Biblically* has been marketed for use among the Christian community. Integration of Scripture with the modern writers of psychology is a practice which has its risks. The integration of Scripture gives the impression that two equals are being combined into a single unit. In reality, however, the rationalist and humanistic influences in the writing place reason in a position superior to Scripture.

Sadly, the matter of redemption, Christ's payment for our sins, is pitifully lacking in what is passed off by some as Christian family ministry resources. Much of what the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) offers through its Parish Services headquartered in Chicago, as well as Augsburg-Fortress Press, tends to deal more with social issues and the social gospel. Clear law and gospel presentations are rare. On occasion a cheap grace is stressed which offers forgiveness without repentance and without

Christ's redemption to support it. That cheap grace is not the forgiveness which God won for all and it is not the type of healing which families need.

Finally, there is the matter of genuine competence in the ministry. Since there are potential risks and possible consequences for using material which may not be faithful to the truths of Scripture, we need to

be extremely cautious about our endorsements of material that come from outside sources. Faithful ministers need to have the commitment to allow our people to see that there is truly a difference between material that is genuinely Christian and biblical and that which claims to be Christian and biblical. Nothing that comes from a lesser commitment to Scripture deserves our endorsement.

May God keep us vigilant to anything that would weaken our commitment to the truths of Scripture. May God strengthen us to remain truly effective as we serve as his shepherds by properly applying law and gospel in the matter of family-life and family ministry.

Gerald F. Kastens is principal and upper grade teacher at St. Paul Lutheran School, Lake Mills, Wisconsin.

FUND MANAGEMENT: AVOIDING CRITICISM, DOING WHAT IS RIGHT, HONORING GOD

James L. Raabe

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning a special collection they and the Macedonian churches had taken, he said that he was sending Titus, "and we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. *We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of men.* (2 Co 8:18-21)

These words are as appropriate for us today as they were when Paul penned them. In an age when through greed and dishonesty some have given the public ministry a blackened eye with their mismanagement of funds, and an age when the reputation of pastors and teachers seems to be lessening in the eyes of some parishioners, how important it is that called servants of the Word strive to avoid any criticism of the way they administer funds! How important it is that they do what is right in the eyes of the Lord and in the eyes of men!

The role and responsibilities of school administrators in our synod



are changing and growing. No longer are principals simply head teachers. They are considered more than that. Principals are truly becoming administrators, and the duties of administration include the management of funds.

To be sure, there exists a wide variance in the amount of direct handling of funds required of principals. Some have no direct contact with funds; others have limited contact such as administering the milk money and book store receipts and expenditures; still others have

detailed responsibilities in the receiving and expending of monies. Regardless of the amount of direct contact principals have with funds, they all have a responsibility concerning fund administration.

Even though administration of funds becomes a responsibility of principals, this area is one in which they are most often poorly trained. Although they have the mandate to avoid criticism and to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord and of men, principals are often not equipped with the tools they need to carry out this mandate. Therefore, in their continuing growth in administrative skills and knowledge, principals are well-advised to be trained also concerning fund administration. The remainder of this article will provide reasons for principals to learn fund accounting and reporting.

Whether or not principals are directly involved in the management of funds, they still need to understand how monies are managed. In their reports to boards, councils, congregations and associations, principals need to be able to understand the financial reports, to speak about them with their constituency, and, when necessary, to interpret them. Principals are the ones who are in the closest contact with the overall operation of the school. They need to exert leadership concerning school operation. This leadership also shows itself in principals' roles in planning, reporting and interpreting the school's financial operation.

What people want to hear concerning a school's financial operation varies widely. The man on the street



might simply want to know, "How much did we take in?" and "How much did we spend?" The professional businessman, on the other hand, might be more interested in the balance sheet and the changes in fund equity. Others might be most concerned with how the school is keeping in line with the budget. Certainly all need to know, "What can we spend and when can we spend it?" Principals must be equipped to provide the proper information in acceptable forms to care for the needs of all the members. In addition, principals must know what kinds of reports and records will provide the information desired.

A special challenge for principals who need to relate and interpret financial information is the businessman. Businessmen are quite accustomed to interpreting income statements and balance sheets. What these businessmen are acquainted

with, however, are reports related to “for-profit” accounting. The financial operation of schools and congregations follow the rules and procedures of fund accounting, which in a number of significant ways are different from those of “for-profit” accounting. Principals need to be well-versed on the differences and able to explain the differences clearly.

Principals provide a constant in the financial operation of the school. By call or election, under the concept of the universal priesthood of believers, both principals and councils, board, and the like receive delegated rights and privileges. However, there is a difference between called and elected persons. The call gives permanent duties and responsibilities as long as the call is in effect. Election gives duties and responsibilities which are temporary, lasting only for the duration of the term. In addition, unless special responsibilities are otherwise delegated, boards and councils have power only when in session. Board members do not have the right to establish policy and make decisions when the board is not in session, but principals continue in their office whether or not the board is meeting. Principals, therefore, provide a unifying force in the financial operation of the school. They administer its affairs between board meetings, providing for continuity by assuring that the accepted rules and procedures are followed as board and council members leave office and new ones take their place.

Above all, principals must be knowledgeable about fund accounting and reporting as a safeguard to all those involved in the handling of

monies. They should see to it that generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) are followed, and that records and reports are in line with those principles. These principles lay out guidelines of operation and lend themselves well to auditing and evaluation. By assuring that GAAP are followed, principals are taking strong steps to avoid criticism of the way monies are administered and the pains to do what is right. In order to promote and encourage the use of GAAP, however, principals must be knowledgeable about them. Such knowledge requires special study on their part.

Bookkeeping and accounting principles and procedures may not be the first love nor the top priority for principals carrying out the responsibilities of their office, but these principles and procedures should be in the repertoire of the effective principal's administrative skills. Time used to become acquainted with them is time well spent, for in yet another way, it shows the principal's desire, as it was the desire of the Apostle Paul, to “administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help.”

James L. Raabe is the principal and a teacher at Luther High School, Onalaska, Wisconsin.

[Dr. Raabe is offering a one-week workshop on fund accounting and reporting at Dr. Martin Luther College. June 24-28, 1991. For further information and registration consult the DMLC Summer Session catalog. (editor)]

Pass or Fail: Research vs. Practice

George E. LaGrow



Since the middle of the nineteenth century when the grading system was first instituted in this country, people have questioned the advantages and disadvantages of retaining students who are unable to master the curriculum at a satisfactory level. Widespread use of retention and extensive study of this practice still have not resolved the question.

The debate seems to be between research and common sense or between theory and practice. Few

areas of educational practice elicit as many opposing opinions as this one. Indeed, the issue remains unsettled: Should we retain or should we socially promote the low achieving child? It is this writer's intent to consider the issue and propose a solution.

Current retention rates are as high or higher than they were in the 19th century. It is estimated that five to seven percent of public school children are retained in the U.S. annually. The cumulative effect of this failure rate over the elementary years is astounding. Even allowing for students who fail more than one year, it is estimated that by ninth grade approximately half of all students in the U.S. have failed at least one grade (or are no longer in school). While I do not believe the retention rate in our Lutheran elementary schools is as high as in the public schools, I do believe that the practice is still as common today as it was in the early history of our school system and that it is done for the same reasons.

Proponents of retention argue that students who do not understand the material nor master the prerequisite skills at one grade level will find it difficult if not impossible to benefit from material at the next level. Retention is also used to give slow learners or poorly adjusted students time to come up to grade level. This

action theoretically reduces the range of abilities in each grade, and that makes the teacher's job easier. Also, many educators use retention as a remedy for dealing with students who are immature for their grade level. Those who favor retaining kindergarten or first grade students most often use that reason for their action. At times, retention, or the fear of possible retention, is used to motivate or to punish the child who is an obvious underachiever. Common sense seems strongly to support these reasons for retention. Retention looks as if it should work; however, the evidence from research on retention does not support the practice.

An overwhelming majority of research clearly demonstrates the overall negative effects of retention. Retained children generally performed more poorly than those of comparable ability who had gone on without repeating. Any apparent benefit of retention tends to diminish over time so that differences in performance between those retained and children of comparable ability who were promoted disappear in later grades. There are many studies that indicate that retaining a child actual-

*“VERY SELDOM
FLUNK A BOY
AND NEVER FAIL
A GIRL”*

*ACCORDING TO
RESEARCH,
RETENTION
SIMPLY
DOESN'T WORK*

ly lowers that child's achievement level.

Not surprisingly, researchers of the dropout phenomenon have consistently found that children who have been retained are five times more likely to drop out of school than are those who have been consistently promoted. Almost 100% of students who have repeated two grades end up dropping out of school.

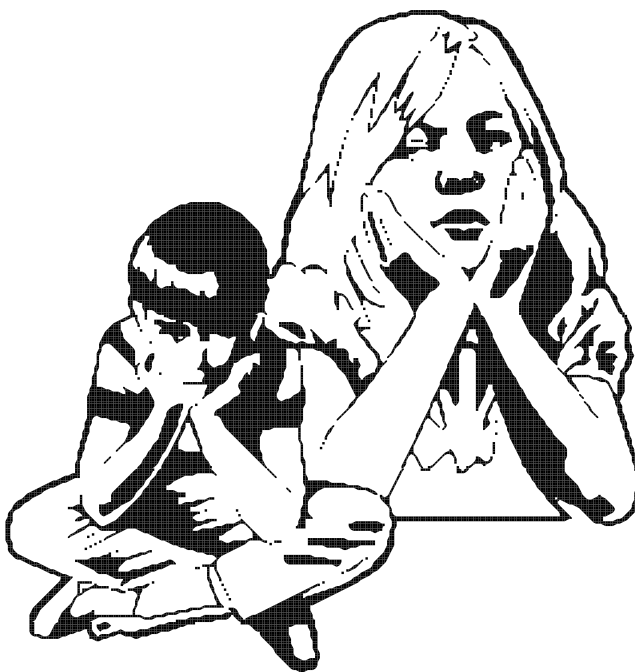
The emotional effects of failure can be devastating. In a study of child stressors by Yamamoto (1980), children rated the prospect of repeating a grade as more stressful than “wetting in class” or being caught stealing. The only two life events that children consider more stressful than being retained are going blind or losing a parent.

In a synthesis of fifty controlled studies, Holmes (1989) found that retained students did more poorly than matched controls, who were not retained, on follow-up measures of social adjustment, attitudes toward school, behavioral outcomes and attendance. Children have always feared and hated being retained and the studies bear that out. Even those who fail in kindergarten, a seemingly common sense remedy for the imma-

ture child, have slightly more negative feelings about school. Neither is there any achievement benefit in retaining a child in kindergarten or first grade for whatever reason, and regardless of how well the extra year is presented to the child, he still pays an emotional cost. The stigma of failure is damaging to the social, intellectual and personal development of low-achieving students, and starts a snowballing cycle of failure that may extend into adult life.

According to research, retention simply doesn't work, in spite of the fact that it seems to make such common sense. Why is that?

There is no research that has been able to determine exactly why retention doesn't work, but one can speculate. Obviously children who have suffered the negative emotional effects of failure have less than a positive attitude toward school and learning. Going through the same material with the same teacher using the same methods is not a sensible solution to the child's educational problems. This is especially true of children in kindergarten or primary grades who have failed in developmentally inappropriate programs that stress academics, strict discipline and a lock-step curriculum. If the child failed to learn the material the first time, simply repeating the same things wouldn't seem to be ben-



eficial, especially if the program is developmentally inappropriate.

Considering only the age of the child or his academic ability when deciding whether to retain is inappropriate. Factors such as physical size, academic potential, psychosocial maturity, neurological maturity, self-concept, grade placement, previous retentions, absenteeism, gender, peer pressure, child's and parents' attitude toward retention, age of siblings, health, and the availability of special educational personnel and services also should be considered.

Often, retained children are consigned to a program of school work that is not only boring but also devoid of any connection to the kinds of problems they encounter in the real world. They usually are drilled in the basic facts and skills by well-meaning

teachers who believe that repetition is not only the mother of learning, but also the father, sister, brother and all other relatives. More current learning theory suggests that skills are learned best when they are learned in context. Yes, low achieving children need intellectually challenging material and stimulating methods of instruction as much as high achievers.

If retention doesn't work, and by itself it doesn't, then what can be done for children who find it difficult to perform at an acceptable level?

There are intervention programs that have demonstrated more effectiveness than retention. Remedial help, given by a professional educator in pull-out programs has demonstrated some success. Before- and after-school programs and summer school have also been used with good results. Using non-professional instructional aides is a cost-efficient way to help those who lag behind. There are not only parents but also grandparents and even interested congregation members without children who have the time and capabilities to serve as instructional aides. Children who get such personal attention often do better simply because someone is taking a personal interest in them.

Probably one of the more powerful intervention techniques is peer- or cross-aged tutoring. This program is not only a no-cost program, but research has demonstrated amazing positive results. Peer tutoring programs which use low-achieving upper grade children tutoring low-achieving lower grade children show significant growth in achievement for both the

tutor and the child being tutored.

If you are a classroom teacher who has a child for the second year in the same grade, consider changing the methodologies that failed the previous year. Try to reach that child by teaching the same concept in a different way. Appeal to as many senses as possible as you teach. Try to discover the child's learning style and match your teaching style to it. It can help.

More than twenty years ago, Lester Found, then vice-principal at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, presented a paper about non-promotion to a teacher's conference that I attended. I think highly of Mr. Found (he was one of my favorite teachers) and I value his opinions. After presenting his rather lengthy paper he summed it up by saying, "Very seldom flunk a boy, and never flunk a girl." I thought that was a wise statement then. I still think so.

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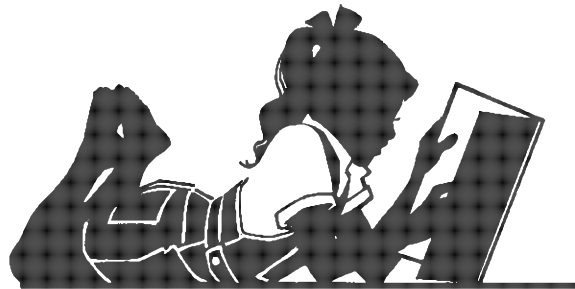
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George E. LaGrow teaches in the education division at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

Whole Language: A Personal Venture

Wally Kissinger

In the spring of 1989, I approached my principal about using "whole language" with my first grade students. Whole language is an approach to teaching reading and writing based on the premise that children learn language by using it, thinking it, reading and writing it. He replied, "You have had a successful reading program, why do you want to change?" Yes, I did seem to have a successful reading program. After all I had taught reading for 17 years and picked up lots of "tricks of the trade" during those years. Yet, every time I had a non-reading student or had to retain someone in first grade because of reading, it made me think: Could I have reached that student using a different reading approach? For the last few years I have attended state reading conventions and have gone to many workshops on whole language. I also read and clipped every article on reading, especially those emphasizing the whole language approach. After convincing my principal that I would not throw everything out and that I only wanted to incorporate whole language into my reading program, he replied, "Teaching new things or in new ways is good because it keeps the teacher from getting into a rut."



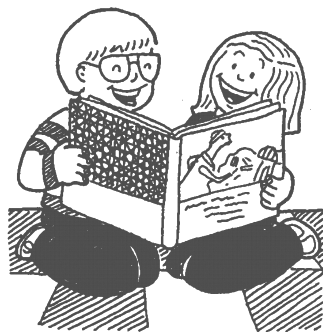
Starting out

The next problem was money. As in many parochial schools, there seems never enough and never any extra. We were using five workbooks in first grade. I said, "Let me have the money that I would use for three of the workbooks and I will buy big books." I would have been willing to skip all workbooks but we are required to give letter grades for reading and using the workbooks would give me an objective letter grade. The other reason I was to continue using the workbook was that the students would not be in a whole language reading program in second grade. This experience would help them to do the workbooks in second grade.

I had \$250.00 to spend in place of the three workbooks I would skip. It didn't go far, but it was enough to get me started. I arbitrarily kept levels four and five of the workbooks.

Though I normally would not get to the level four workbook until November or December, I started using it right away, doing the easier pages and skipping around a lot. I tried to work it so that for each report card I had one unit completed to give a percent grade in reading. I didn't have much material to teach with so getting started was a challenge. I made my own big book and 24 little books for the first day of school. This book used about 15 words on the Dolch list and many words in our first primer. By using repetition and predictability I wanted to make sure that each student would learn to read that book the first day, take it home and read it at home. It worked: Every student was able to read that book at home and then come to school the next day and read it again to an appreciative mother helper who came every day to listen to the children read.

I had three different mother helpers. About a month later, one mother helper said to me, "I didn't know why you were making the kids read the books to me after they have read them at home, but I do now. They have so much fun reading the stories with such expression. I can see they really love reading."



Selecting books

Whole language classrooms need materials that motivate children to extend their natural language abilities. Children must want to read and they must find the experience rewarding. Therefore, during the summer of 1989, I went through my room library.

These are the types of books I looked for:

- Strong story line in which something actually happens.
- Characters and situations with which children identify strongly.
- Attractive illustrations that support and enhance the text.
- Humor and warmth.
- Rich and memorable language features that ensure predictability such as rhyme and repetition.

I took all the good literature books from my room library. I listed the books I wanted to use, pored over book orders, compared prices and checked to see which student book clubs offered the best books. I found out that Scholastic offers big books for 75-90 points and accompanying little books for 10 points. I used all my points to purchase good literature books. For each big book I got six small books. I had only 21 students so in four days every student would get a chance to take the book home. I purchased ziplock bags to keep the books clean. I did have multiple copies of some books in my room from previous years. Many of these have tapes. I have 12 earphones so half the class can listen to the tapes at one time. Thus, I now had an impressive list of accumulated books.

When I started the program, I was very concerned about vocabulary. I

worked very hard picking books that used words from the Dolch list and words that would match up to our basal so the student would not have difficulty in second grade. I found out later that this really was not necessary. Throughout the year I did not need to teach or drill the vocabulary before we read a story. The only vocabulary I taught was what they needed to know to understand the story. We did much reading. We read most of our five basal books. We read the best stories from the old Houghton-Mifflin series, as many literature books as we could and we used the SRA Reading Lab. Every Friday we brought snacks to eat and we read for half an hour in the library. They were willing to give up recess to do their Friday free reading (of course I read too). Reading was never done sitting in desks. We had a carpeted corner with a bean bag chair. The children could sit, sprawl, lie down however they wanted to make themselves comfortable.

Writing

From the first day we wrote daily in a journal. These were assigned writings. This was a good way to tie in thoughts about their Bible stories. Then we did innovative text writing, where you take a favorite story or book and keep the structure—changing only parts of the story. Every student would do one page. We stapled these into books. They were favorites that the students read and reread often.

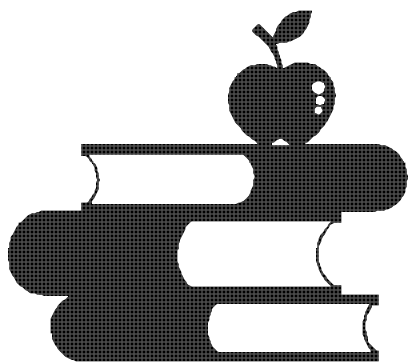
From innovative writings, we progressed to writing our own stories. I had many story starters that the children used. They had learned story

mapping in reading so they knew the basic components that each story must have. They glued these stories in an old spiral-bound calendar right on top of the original page. Each student had his or her own book and the books were very sturdy. The children read their stories to our Kindergarten Pen Pals with whom we got together once a week starting second semester. They shared with us and we shared with them. This gave us another chance to write invitations and thank yous. The children also wrote letters to a person in the hospital, and they had a pen pal from the Veterans Hospital in New York. The class also made a calendar poem book. At the beginning of the year the poems were copied, but by the end of the year the class did write a few original ones cooperatively.

We were not too concerned about correct spelling. They used inventive spelling. I gave them the Dolch word list and they were encouraged to use it. The only corrected spelling was in the child's permanent published book, which was also typed on a primary typewriter to give it that professional look. The culminating writing activity was a published book written by each child. This was quite an undertaking and it took some students a long time to finish. They were not only authors but also the illustrators. We started it in April and everyone did get finished. These were professionally spiral bound with heavier paper for the front and back cover.

Besides the story each book had a dedication page, an autobiography page and a reader's comment page. It had a library pocket for other students to check out. I printed two

copies, one for the student to take home, and one to be kept in the classroom library permanently. We learned about the Newbery and Caldecott Awards. We decided that our books also should have awards. The students voted and we announced our "Newbery" and "Caldecott" winners at our First Grade Play Night. The winning authors read their stories over the loudspeakers to all the parents and friends. Each student read his or her story to someone who was not a family member. Some students also entered original stories in national writing contests. We did not have winners, but their stories also became part of our room library. We have a special "Author's Chair" in which the students may sit in only when reading their original writings.



Phonics

Did I throw out teaching phonics? NO! an emphatic NO! The student needs to know phonics to write. I had not used a phonics book in the last

five years. I have recordings that teach all long and short vowel sounds and the consonants. I have many phonic games and activities that the Mother Helpers used with the students. I use a "fun pack" for every month that also contains phonic skill sheets. I also tried to teach phonics using the whole language books. Knowledge of phonics is essential for independent reading, but with whole language phonics is learned after children begin reading and not before.

Test Results

At the end of the year we were very happy with the results of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. We had expected the results to be a little lower than other years, but we were surprised that they had surpassed all previous years. We had changed to the ITBS four years earlier, so we could compare only those scores. There were 21 students using the whole language approach, and 11 students using the basal. They were tested together as one class. The whole language students average was 3.2 and the ones using the basal achieved a 2.9. No one in either group scored below the expected grade equivalent of 1.8.

Failures

None of the students had to be retained because of reading. I did have two students who had great difficulty doing the basal workbook pages. In fact they were receiving Cs, Ds and even an F on their unit grades. Were they readers? Yes! Did they like reading? Yes! Did they read a lot? Yes! One of these children, a

boy, went to the library every day before school to get a new book. He could read all our whole language books with expression and fluency. His parents were so proud of him. This boy was also a very good writer and an excellent illustrator. He won our "Caldecott" award. Why did he have so much difficulty with the workbook pages? He had difficulty understanding and following directions. Also, he had difficulty with some skills such as sequencing and finding main ideas. He also had difficulty in other subjects such as mathematics.

The other student, a girl, was also a good reader, enjoyed reading, and read with fluency and expression. Still, she had poor fine motor skills; she could not write or draw. She was also having much difficulty with mathematics. We decided to have her evaluated through the public school system. They found that she was below average intelligence and they were amazed at her reading scores. The only part of the test she did poor-

ly on was where she had to decode words that were not real words like "dem pon." She tried to make real words out of them. That made good sense to me because in first grade she had been taught if it doesn't make sense then it's not right. Because of her many other problems it was decided that she should go to a different school.

It has been two years since I started teaching whole language at Trinity. Because of its success more of our teachers are using a whole language approach. Our combined-first-and-second grade teacher, our second grade teacher and our remedial teacher are now using a whole language approach. Our third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers are incorporating some ideas from the approach in their teaching.

Mrs. Wally Kissinger teaches at Trinity Lutheran School, Waukesha, Wisconsin.