



ECHOES

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Where everyone knows your name

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

I love being part of a school community where students are in a position to be known, where there is plenty of face-to-face contact between teachers and learners. It's something we work hard at in the halls and classrooms of SDCH.



CODY VAN SOELEN AND SCIENCE
TEACHER MRS. JOAN BUMA

God told Moses how the priests were to bless the people with the following words: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Number 6:24-26). This face-to-face contact is not quite the same as the contact we experience with one another, but it is something that we as educators strive to imitate.

Our special needs committee talks constantly about not letting any students "fall through the cracks." Any student who needs learning support will get it, and any student who has certain social or behavioural challenges will have an advocate or coach. At the same time, students who are particularly gifted in certain respects are in relationships with teachers who challenge them to push the edges. All of this involves plenty of face-to-face contact.

Our annual grade 12 portfolio interviews were held in late May again this year. They give our students an experience where they face members of our community and share their educational

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Asking the “What if” questions

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

The Smithville Christian High School board spearheaded this discussion, and had previously sent a delegation to meet separately with each of the three other high schools. These three included the high schools from Beacon Christian Schools (St. Catharines), Great Lakes Christian High School (Beamsville), and Niagara Community of Christian Schools (Fort Erie).

The meeting showed us very clearly that, despite each school’s individual strengths and focuses, we are quite similar in our perspectives on Christian education. After a good discussion, all participants agreed that continuing the discussion was warranted. Therefore, we are planning another meeting in the fall.

Where will this take us? It is clear that any resulting changes would take some time, and we are not sure what the Lord has in store for us. What we do know is that there will be unity in the kingdom of God; and if we can experience that unity within our area Christian high schools, then we will be better positioned to build up and train the body of Christ in the Niagara region. Please pray that God will lead us as faithful stewards of his gifts to us.

In mid-June, four Niagara area Christian high schools got together for a meeting of the minds. The question being addressed was “What would it look like if we all worked together to bring Christian high school education to the Niagara area?”

Where everyone knows your name

Continued from page 1

experiences, after which they are given encouragement in serving the Lord wherever he leads them. There is value in this face-to-face contact, and there is value in being known.

At our graduation ceremony on June 24, we once again read the name of each graduate, after which we spent a few moments celebrating that student’s unique contribution to our school community. We always enjoy the look on students’ faces when they line up this last time.

Our students are clearly known. They are enfolded in a community where face to face interaction brings with it instruction, encouragement, laughter and discipline. We take every opportunity to celebrate their gifts and their uniqueness. Getting to know them as learners and image-bearers of God helps us as we help them develop their gifts and find out how they are uniquely suited for service in the kingdom. May God bless our school community as we continue to turn our faces towards our young people and enrich their lives, one student at a time.

Does your height measure your worth?

Differentiating instruction for unique image-bearers

BY AL KORVEMAKER, VICE-PRINCIPAL AND DIRECTOR OF PROGRAM

God tells us through his servant David that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). Though we all have the same God, through his careful design he has given each of us a purpose on this earth and has equipped us with various gifts. 1 Corinthians says: “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them...” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

These verses have a number of implications for us as at Smithville Christian High School, as we teach God’s children – not the least of which is to recognize that each child brings different intelligences, interests, academic abilities, social and emotional maturity levels, and learning styles to the classroom.

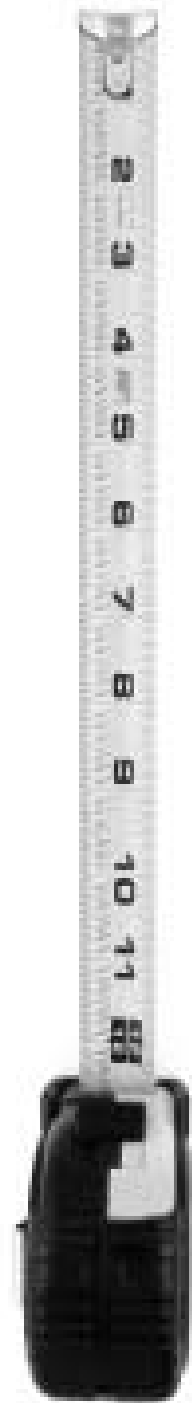
In the past, teaching meant relaying information in a whole class setting to a group of students of about the same age who would be given the same material and assessed by comparing each student to the group standard. While this was moderately effective, new research indicates that teachers must define challenge and growth differently – according to each student’s varying intelligences and readiness levels.

As Carol Ann Tomlinson says in her book *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*, “acknowledging that students learn at different speeds and that they differ in ability to think abstractly or understand complex ideas is like acknowledging that students at any given age aren’t all the same height: It is not a statement of worth but of reality.”

What this means in practical terms is that teachers have had to change the methods they use in the classroom. While whole group instruction is still an important component of teaching, other instructional styles must also be present in the classroom. In the past 15 years, teachers have begun to vary their instructional styles more and more.

Recently at SDCH, our staff have used their professional development time to focus on differentiating instruction. This does not mean that we develop 20 different assignments and assessments for the 20 students in our classes, rather we think of multiple ways in which to work with the content that may align with students’ various gifts.

Using differentiated instruction is another pedagogical method that teachers at SDCH have been applying to their units and lesson plans. As a learning community we recognize that we serve one God by using and developing the various talents of our uniquely-gifted Christian students.



Who is Being Helped

Below is a list of the some of the needs that are being met by Smithville Christian High School's Resource Department:

- Attention Deficit Disorder
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Autism Spectrum Disorders such as Asperger's Syndrome, Autism, and Pervasively Developmentally Delayed – Not Otherwise Specified
- Cerebral Palsy
- Developmentally Delayed
- Learning Disabilities such as Central Auditory Processing Deficit, Dyslexia, and Dysgraphia
- Weaknesses in reading comprehension, written expression, and computation skills
- Physically Challenged
- Tourette's Syndrome
- Executive Function Disorder
- and more.

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

Helping every student be successful

BY MARLENE BERGSMA,
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

Offering individual help to every student who needs it has made Smithville Christian High School's resource department famous for its success.

"All children are God's image bearers. He created each one uniquely and knit them together in a remarkable way," says Michelle Slump-Houwer, the head of Smithville Christian High School's resource department, explaining the school's philosophy. "Each one has their strengths and weaknesses and they CAN learn and do keep on learning – becoming hard-working, successful students."

Slump-Houwer says the resource department is an important part of the way Smithville Christian High School meets the needs "of the many types and styles of learners we have."

She said helping individual students is good for them because it helps them "become successful and feel confident," but it also helps everyone else.

"We can learn from each other while developing an accepting and loving community," she said.

Slump-Houwer says every classroom teacher helps the resource department succeed in helping students.

"We try to do as much inclusion in classroom activities as possible, trying to maximize the student's learning opportunities," she said. "Our staff is great at making warm, accepting and flexible classroom settings."

Slump-Houwer says she works directly with about 22 to 25 students a year, and often works indirectly with another 6 to 10. Special needs students used to represent about 8% of the high school population, but the number has increased to 10% or more, she says.

Slump-Houwer has been a resource teacher and special education teacher for 22 years, but it's not a career path she chose. Rather God chose her, in a very sudden and dramatic way.

"The truth is, I was registered to obtain my certification as a Reading Specialist, but when the Dean of Education at Calvin College, who at that time was Corine Kaas, the Director of Special Education, had to sign the bottom line of my form, she tore the form up right before my eyes and said, 'I would like you to meet our new Learning



Disabilities professor. She needs some students in her classes. I'll sign you up for the Learning Disabilities Endorsement program.' "

Despite the sudden and seemingly random change in her plans, Slump-Houwer says she loved the program and has never regretted agreeing to the switch. Looking back, Slump-Houwer realizes that she had already formed a close relationship with a special person, who she took on outings every other week, and she had already begun tutoring some special students.

"The Lord knew what He was doing," she says.

Slump-Houwer loves her job, and it's clear that her students and their families love her. Over the years they have shown their appreciation with "heartfelt thanks, tearful hugs, finger-numbing handshakes, visits at my home, hour-long telephone calls, half-hour talks after school, many, many, many cards and gifts, and, did I say tearful hugs?

"I love my job and I love my kids," she said. "They are all God's children and they belong to and are part of all of us."

How to create a Fan-tastic Storm

BY LEANNE RIEBOT, ATHLETIC COUNCIL

Good afternoon sports fans!

This year your attendance at school sports events has been superb, and the Athletics Council sends out its appreciation. Why? Your intense school spirit sets sparks in the players' hearts, and sends chills down the opponents' spines.

This is why we need you fans. Your task is grand, and necessary for the success of our Storm. Your task is not only to show up at games, not only to come along, not only to sit and enjoy the game quietly. No, your task, sports fans, is to show up with your game faces on, to bring other Storm fans with you, to be on your feet with your hands held high and your voices strong. When you fulfill this task, you are a part of the team which you cheer for.

The STORM is nothing without its thunder, lightning and powerful winds, and this, Storm fans, is what you have the power to give. Your support is the wind on our players' backs, and the thunder which frightens our opponents. Go Storm!

Team updates:

Our Badminton teams had a very successful season. We came home with the team Gold and Silver medals from an exhibition tournament in the beginning of the year, and we hosted the (OCSSAA) Christian High Tournament again this year at Brock University, operating 19 courts simultaneously. Great job guys!

Track and Field saw nearly one-fifth of the student body participating this year, which led to a number of athletes qualifying for OFSAA regionals, and three athletes qualifying for OFSAA. Huge congratulations to Crystal Elmers who took home the OFSAA Gold medal in Midget High Jump.

Our boys and girls Soccer teams had very successful seasons with both teams combining for 14-0 regular season records. The girls qualified, for the second year in a row, as the #1 seed going into the OFSAA tournament. Of course this year was a particularly special year, with Smithville Christian hosting OFSAA! On the pitch, it was a gruelling tournament, which saw our ladies qualify to the semi-finals, and to finish by winning the Antique Bronze. For more OFSAA news, see pages 6, 7 and 8.

Junior.Boys Basketball finished off strong. They ended the season with an 8-2 record. They made it to zone finals but lost against a tough team, Eden. Great season boys!

Junior.Girls Volleyball played an awesome season. The zone champions finished off the season with a 12-0 record! They competed in SOSSA, placing second! Way to go ladies!



*June 4-6, 2009
Smithville, Ontario*





*For more photos, visit the
Smithville Christian OFSAA website at
www.ofsaa.on.ca/girlsasoccer/*



WHEN A SMALL SCHOOL ACTS BIG

Smithville Christian welcomes the province

BY MARLENE BERGSMA
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

Can a small Christian school host a top-notch event?

Absolutely, says Fred Breukelman, Smithville Christian High School's athletics director and co-convenor of this year's OFSAA Girls 'A' Soccer Championship, hosted June 4 to 6 in Smithville.

"The event was a tremendous success, a result of the endless efforts of our volunteers and the beautiful weather," said Breukelman. "There were 16 teams from all over Ontario, from as far away as Kenora, North Bay, Hearst, London and Ottawa, who participated in the tournament."

Breukelman said members of the hosting committee and students in his Grade 12 leadership class worked hard to make sure the tournament went off without a hitch and that visiting teams and spectators were welcomed and well cared for.

Their efforts paid off.

"I think many schools saw that we, even as a smaller Christian school, could do a professional job of hosting a provincial event," he said. "So many teams were overwhelmed with our hosting efforts, the details, and the extra mile that many students and staff went to make OFSAA 2009 a successful tournament for the athletes."

Co-convenor Gina VandenDool said Thursday night's banquet was a highlight for many players and coaches, with the SDCH gymnasium transformed into a festive banquet hall, featuring punch fountains, black-and-white themed décor, and even soccer-ball-shaped chocolate party favours. The banquet was hosted by alumni parent Sonya Wierenga, as a fundraiser for Rose City Kids, a Welland mission supported by many SDCH community members. (For more on the ministry, visit www.rosecitykids.com).

Local Olympic rowing athlete Melanie Kok was the guest speaker at the banquet, inspiring the athletes with her personal bronze-medal success story. SDCH soccer player Colleen Slappendel said hearing that Kok was originally a soccer player who actually got a late start in rowing was encouraging to athletes who might want to try a different sport. Slappendel said she also liked the way Kok advised the athletes to accept criticism well, because only those who care about you and think you can do better will even bother to criticize.

VandenDool said the next day's feedback on the banquet "made me proud, especially the comment, 'we felt like soccer princesses.' "



FRED BREUKELMAN,
MELANIE KOK AND GINA
VANDENDOOL

Smithville Christian students, who volunteered many hours to organize and host, were part of the success of the tournament, said David Wonder, SDCH's girls' soccer coach and a member of the organizing committee.

VandenDool, who helped arrange sponsors for the tournament, said the event also allowed the school "to make great connections with Smithville community."

Marg McGill, past-president of OFSAA, told organizers "it was one of the best events she has ever attended, and she has been to many," said VandenDool.

On top of all the media coverage and positive feedback that made the event such a success, Breukelman said there was one other important aspect to the tournament.

"The excellent play and sportsmanship on the field was exhilarating!"

Keeping your options open

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

Does choosing a Christian high school close doors for your teenager? Does a Christian education mean an inferior education?

The answer to both those questions is an emphatic “No,” says Linda Booy-Korvemaker, Smithville Christian High School’s head of student services.

As part of the school’s guidance department for many years, Booy-Korvemaker has met with every one of the hundreds of students who have graduated during her time here.

And she has seen them apply to – and get accepted by – some of the most prestigious university and college programs across the continent.

“Students are accepted in highly competitive programs both at the university and college level when they graduate from SDCH,” said Booy-Korvemaker. “We offer the courses students require to get into any college or university. Our students graduate with two diplomas: the OSSD and the SDCH diploma. Some of our graduates have also achieved full scholarships into prestigious institutions across North America.”

Three students in the class of 2009 are good examples, said Booy-Korvemaker. Justine Schilstra, Katie Monster and Madeleine Bonsma all applied to limited-entry programs at McMaster University in Hamilton and all were accepted. Katie and Madeleine were among the 700 students who applied for 60 spaces in the university’s prestigious Bachelor of Arts and Science program, and Justine was one of hundreds to apply for the limited number of spaces in the Health Sciences program.

Bonsma and Monster ended up choosing other schools (Waterloo and Redeemer), but “the fact that three of our graduates were offered admission to some of the most challenging university programs in Ontario shows SDCH is recognized and highly respected by these institutions,” Booy-Korvemaker said. Graduates Derrick DeKlerk, Tori Vermeer and Brad VanHoffen will also be attending challenging and prestigious limited-enrolment university programs in the fall.

The education offered by the teachers of Smithville Christian High School meets or exceeds all Ontario Ministry of Education standards, and, because it’s a private school, Smithville Christian undergoes a rigorous inspection every two years to make sure it continues to meet ministry requirements, Booy-Korvemaker said.

But because our graduates are being accepted into top-level programs, sometimes with averages lower than the posted minimums, Booy-Korvemaker knows that the school has a good reputation in college and university admissions offices.

The varied career paths of the school’s graduates are also proof of its success, she said.

SDCH alumni are running successful businesses, becoming doctors, lawyers and crown attorneys, engineers, university professors, and more, she said. Tell your family members, neighbours and friends that choosing Smithville Christian means you are getting the best – caring Christian teachers and an excellent education that opens doors to the future.



PART OF THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 2009

"People give to people." This was the underlying theme of a seminar on philanthropy that I attended recently. The speaker built on that theme by suggesting prospective donors are less interested in the actual organizational structures we tend to promote and more interested in knowing that their gifts will impact real people. I found these comments to be very helpful.

For many years already, in fact for almost a decade, our foundation has been actively promoting itself as a credible means of supporting SDCH and our sister schools with either a current or future (estate) planned gift. Much effort has been spent on establishing a sound organizational structure that will ensure gifts produce a long-term benefit for our schools. However, it's really not about our foundation or even our Christian schools but rather the impact your gifts will have on our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren that is likely most meaningful to you.

Your immediate and future support of our foundation will impact real people. This will ensure that families will be helped in meeting their growing tuition commitments and in some cases; that they will be able to keep their children enrolled at SDCH and/or other Christian schools. This in turn means that our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren will continue to be able to receive that Christ-centered education that we believe will prepare them for a lifetime of service to Him.

"People giving to people..." - please give this your prayerful consideration as to what this might mean for you. Have a safe and blessed summer!

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Guiding the individual

- to be part of a community

BY LINDA BOOY-KORVEMAKER
STUDENT SERVICES

Individualized learning is a large part of the guidance program at any high school in Ontario. Guidance counselors work with students to plan their high school courses and facilitate their future plans, and they support students in their emotional and social development in ways that are always "individual."

But at a Christian high school there's more. We are able to talk with our students about the spiritual element that covers and weaves through all these areas. When a student struggles with problems or decisions, we pray. When a student struggles with career paths, we discover where God has gifted them. Being a guidance counselor at a Christian school is a privilege and a witness of how we are different.

Individualized learning is a "big" word these days and we all want it for our children. The fact is, we live in a society where community needs are usually considered second to the individual's needs. Yet for a Christian, this creates tension. Individualized learning is clearly important; we must see Jesus in all our students. But community is also a part of that individualized learning; we are individual parts of the body of Christ.

How this works in the guidance department at Smithville Christian High School is that we look at three key areas in career planning: our students' abilities (areas of strength), our students' interests (what they enjoy), and our students' values (what is important to them). These three circles overlap and where they overlap is where they find their career options. What is different for Christian students is how they decide to use these areas to serve in God's kingdom today.

What a blessing to celebrate our individual students in their power to serve their communities!

WHEN FAITH AND LEARNING MEET

Alumnus Profile - Ken Dam

BY MARLENE BERGSMA
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

Ken Dam says his years at Smithville Christian High School prepared him for a career that successfully blends his faith with the gritty world of labour relations.



The SDCH alumnus, who graduated in 1998, went on to study history and theology at Redeemer University College with “no idea” of what he wanted to do next.

After four years at Redeemer, he spent a year teaching English in South Korea before returning to Canada to complete a two-year master's degree in philosophy at Toronto's Institute of Christian Studies, specializing in political theory.

Since 2007, he's been a union representative at the Christian Labour Association's office in Mississauga, representing the rights of about 600 workers at 10 different workplaces.

He lives in Hamilton with his wife, Claire.

Dam says he didn't realize it at the time but “SDCH prepared me. It was the beginning of a life-long journey of learning how to integrate faith and life together. SDCH prepared me to think critically about how we live in the world and how we engage the world.

“It planted a seed in me.”

Dam says relations between workers and management can often be difficult, and that's why it's important to “bring the truth of the gospel to the labour relations scene. Even in labour relations, the Biblical principles of justice, integrity and respect apply.”

Many of the bosses with whom he meets and the workers he represents are not Christians, but that is all the more reason for Dam to be Christ-like in his daily work.

“The world of labour relations can be a very dirty world,” he said. “As a Christian, you have to navigate and interact with

this world, and have integrity, and be honest, and show respect to people with whom you may have many differences.”

Dam said the people he represents trust him. “They trust the professionalism of the CLAC and they trust we are doing the best for them.”

Dam, who's still a newlywed, said if he and Claire have children, he intends to send them to a Christian school.

“Christian truths have meaning in every aspect of life.”



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, ROBYN DEKLERK, KELLY HARRIS, COLIN BOUWERS AND TREVOR VANHOFFEN IN GRADE 10 CIVICS CLASS.

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