On page 23, the second column, and third paragraph, the first sentence should include the word “not” before the word “agree.” The sentence should read as follows: “We do not agree with Mary Lou White in an article in the Elementary School Journal, etc.”

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Copies of the monograph Reformed Education by Rev. David J. Engelsma have been distributed. This monograph published by the Federation Of Protestant Reformed School Societies is a series of five essays on various aspects of education. Such topics as “The Covenant-Basis of Christian Education”, “Scripture in the Schools”, “Reformed Education and Culture” are included in this informative little booklet. You should have a copy. Mr. Peter Vander Schaaf, Covenant Christian High School, can be contacted for copies of this booklet.

A NEW APPROACH:
PROGRESS OR CONFUSION?

by Lois E. Kregel

Education is constantly changing; it takes very little perception to come to this conclusion. New ideas and theories are ever coming to the fore, although many of them are merely old ones in disguise; new methods, new materials are emerging. All of these things have an impact on teaching. It was only a few years ago, for example, that the new math came into the educational picture; now we find a definite trend toward returning to some of the old methods. Similarly, for a time phonics was neglected when reading was taught; when, however, the schools found that they were producing people who could neither read nor spell, there was a general movement back to more phonetic methods of teaching reading.

It is imperative for us that we be aware of the changes that are taking place in the field of education. As Christian parents and teachers we have the obligation to provide for our children the very best that we can. Now, if there are better ways of teaching, it behooves us to adopt them. If, on the other hand, there is something wrong with any new approach, we must be alert to any threat to the well-being of our covenant children. Our education must be a precision tool, sharply honed, in order to train our children to be citizens of the heavenly kingdom while they are travellers through this present one, and pursuing their calling in it.
What makes any trend good or bad, and under what circumstances may we, should we follow it? Negatively, change merely for its own sake may never be our objective; we may not try something new, simply because we feel we have used the old long enough. Nor may we follow a trend because others, even a majority of others, are following it. That, of all reasons, may never be ours, as Christians.

Briefly, I believe change is indicated only when that change is scripturally sound in its basis, and when the new approach is either pedagogically better than the old, or a refreshing and equally good alternative to it. Here, as in everything, the rule should be, "try the spirits."

One of the more recent trends in educational theory and practice is toward an interdisciplinary curriculum, particularly in the fields of the social studies and language arts. Trends, of course, are gradual: they do not make their appearances overnight. Already in the sixties it was being suggested by some educators that it would be better to lump social studies and language arts together, and teach them as one. In the March, 1973, issue of Grade Teacher magazine there appeared an article entitled, "Humanities is When you Get it All Together," by Howard S. Ravis. I would like to quote at length from this article, because it expresses rather well what is meant by an interdisciplinary curriculum.

"If you were asked to name one of the big trends in education today, you'd probably say, 'The Humanities.' It's the 'in thing'-starting in the high schools a few years back and now filtering down to the junior highs, middle and even elementary schools.

"But ask someone exactly what 'The humanities' (or just plain 'Humanities') is...and be ready for a big, blank stare. Why? Because, according to a recent report on the subject from the ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curricu-

lum Development) Working Group on the Humanities, what humanities is (or are) 'depends on who is doing the defining.'

"One definition views humanities solely as a course which combines language arts (or English) and social studies, with a little art and music appreciation thrown in. Rarely are math, sciences, and languages included. It's interdisciplinary and team taught, and usually offered to the brighter students.

"But there are others who say the humanities should be much more. Take Peter Greer...associate director of the National Humanities Faculty....

"Greer sees the humanities as a wide-ranging approach to teaching, affecting both content (curriculum) and method (instruction). 'Humanities,' he says, 'is not just a two hour course, it's the whole learning experience.

"I'm not saying that setting up a two hour course to replace language arts and social studies is bad or wrong. What I'm saying, what more and more of us are saying is that it's only a beginning.'

"Or, as the previously mentioned ASCD report comments.... 'The general intent in a true humanities program should be to relate all disciplines to the study of man and his humanness, and to relate all learning to the individual child.'"

In plain language, the proponents of this theory would discontinue separate courses in history, geography, grammar, composition, government, etc., and substitute for these the study of man—his relationship to his environment, to his fellow man, to his historical development in many different countries, even to his religion. The studies (disciplines) would be intertwined. This is interdisciplinary teaching.

The advantage, they say, is that they are able to give a better representation of the body of learning, which has grown so large that a teacher cannot cover all the necessary ground. Besides, these
educators add, when man as a whole is elevated, national differences are minimized and we grow closer to achieving one world. Moreover, students are encouraged to form their own concepts, and this is good for them, they say; it teaches them to think for themselves.

To see what this concept does to a textbook, examine with me one of the textbooks in a series called Exploring the Social Sciences, published by the American Book Company. This one is called Learning About Countries and Societies. In the preface to the Teachers’ Guide we read, “Exploring the Social Sciences is a multi-disciplinary program. History, geography, sociology, anthropology, archeology, political science, and economics are stressed in these units. Other disciplines such as philosophy, urbanology, religion, language, and the arts are considered. Although each unit of study approaches its subject from the vantage point of many different disciplines the stress is placed on the several disciplines most relevant to the material discussed. The net result of this approach is the pupils’ understanding that any given area of study may be explored valuably using many different criteria.

“The wide range of social science processes is explored in these units. The goal of Exploring the Social Sciences is not to make miniature social scientists out of our young people. Rather, the emphasis on processes is a means of enabling pupils to achieve a degree of independence in working with concepts and generalizations and in analyzing various social science phenomena. (bold mine, L.K.)

There you have one of the stated purposes of this plan of teaching. Now let us look at some of the contents of the textbook itself.

Unit I Ancient Greece
Chapter 1
A Historian Looks at Ancient Greece
Chapter 2
A Sociologist Looks at Athens

Chapter 3
An Economist Looks at Athens
Chapter 4
An Archaeologist Looks at Ancient Greece
Chapter 5
Philosophers, Historians and Scientists in Ancient Greece

Unit IV India
Chapter 1
An Anthropologist Looks at India
Chapter 2
A Political Scientist Looks at India
Chapter 3
A Geographer Looks at India
Chapter 4
An Urbanologist Looks at India

Confucian China, Medieval France, The Middle East, Nigeria, Brazil, and the Soviet Union receive similar treatment. And why are those countries and areas lumped together for study in one textbook? It seems like an arbitrary choice: some other group of eight countries would have served as well.

Now let us go back to our original standards and ask, Is this method of teaching scripturally sound in its basis?

Obviously, we, as Protestant Reformed parents and teachers are not going to be carried about by every educational wind that blows. The material quoted above is so obviously man-centered, so humanistic, that we do not have to be very spiritually sensitive to see the evil in the philosophy that pervades it. It is a philosophy that clearly elevates, glorifies man, and makes him central to every study. We believe that not man, but God is the center of all things, and His church and the gathering of it is the reason for the continued existence of the world.

Over against the avowed purpose of this method of teaching stands our own: to inculcate in our children a world-and-life view that is antithetical, while they are gaining knowledge of facts; and let us not forget that learning facts is crucial to
viewing all things in their proper perspective. How can we get wisdom if we have no knowledge?

Besides, the very idea that this emphasis on man in general helps wipe out national boundaries and brings us closer to one world ought to make our spiritual antennae stand up. This is exactly the anti-christian idea, attempted repeatedly throughout history, and culminating in the final kingdom of the anti-Christ. We must have no part of it.

But is this method, perhaps better, or even an equally good and refreshing alternative? Could we, for example, adopt its form, and use our own content? Would we be wise to follow the example of the textbook referred to above, and, instead of taking part of a day for history, part for geography, civics, literature, etc., lump these disciplines together under a general theme, such as, Learning About God’s World? And would it not be better to de-emphasize so much learning of facts, and let the students form their own concepts, by what is known as the inquiry method? Would they not be learning many good social traits, such as respect for one another’s ideas, and would it not be much better for them to think things out for themselves?

To this I say emphatically, No! Concepts must not be developed by the student, but taught to him: truth is objective. It is not so, that one concept is as good as another. Our students must learn the proper view of life—its meaning, its purpose. Oh, I do not mean to imply that this must be shoved down their throats, or that children must not be taught to think for themselves. Concepts must be imparted, but in such a way that thinking is stimulated, not stifled; thought-provoking questions, open discussions should be the rule; facts alone can truly be dull facts, and concepts can be dull concepts, unless the student understands how “all things work together” in all their beauty and unity.

Children need skillful, sanctified guidance.

Such guidance must be orderly. Facts must be presented and learned in a systematic way, and not so that the student gets a smattering of knowledge; I find interdisciplinary teaching utterly mind-boggling, and certainly not conducive to good memory; and without a firmly implanted foundation of knowledge, even good concepts are easily undermined and swept away.

It is true that the body of material to be learned grows larger day by day. History is being made fast; countries are changing in boundaries and names; technology increases; books and magazines pour off the presses. Do we then say, “Why even try to learn facts systematically? Let’s mix them all together and study man; in so doing we will pick up whatever factual information we can, and form concepts from it?” It would seem to me that a better solution would be to find our priorities in factual learning and teach these, but logically, systematically, and, where indicated, chronologically. I think that it is also of paramount importance to stimulate and encourage much more reading at home by our children; the student could surely supplement what he learns in school by reading at home. Here we have a concrete way in which parents can and should help, both by reading and discussing more themselves and by providing good reading material in the home.

Objection to an interdisciplinary curriculum, however, does not mean objection to a unified curriculum. Has not this always been basic to good Christian education? Can we teach history without talking about church history? Can we teach geography apart from ecology, and talk about God’s creation without talking about our responsibility to respect it and marvel at it, and take care of it? And do we not seek all day to glorify God in our speech, which is His gift, by using it correctly, by seeking to write well, and
beautifully? Should we not really be teaching grammar all day? Is not everything a student writes a lesson in composition, whether in history, civics, geography, or anything else? Even more specifically, the geography of a country is closely related to its history, and the development of government never stands isolated from either one. It is surely good to teach the relationship between all of these subjects, without wiping out the distinctions between them. The latter creates confusion: the former is conducive to orderly learning.

Interdisciplinary teaching, then, is not an option for us; rather, we should strive for that ideal of a truly unified curriculum, remembering the words of Proverbs 10:14; "Wise men lay up knowledge."

ACADEMIC AWARDS: ARE THEY GODLY REWARDS?

by Carol Brands

Lying on the bed just across the hallway from me is a little baby, one month old. He is our baby, my husband and I say, our first baby. Yet even as we say this we know that he is not our baby, not really. He is the Lord’s child, given to us as a heritage with the task of training him in the service of the Lord. It is a child of God who is lying in the bedroom across the hallway.

My husband and I have been entrusted with the responsible privilege of training this child. God has created this child in such a way that he looks to us, his parents, to supply his needs and to teach him concepts and attitudes about God and God’s world. As we behave, so he learns to behave. As we talk, so he learns to talk. As we in behavior and speech with discipline instruct him, so he learns to live before God.

Our responsibility is awesome, for through us this child learns to know God. If that is true, then it is important that we train him properly. How shall we train this child? What shall be our guide in deciding how to train him? How can we train him to KNOW GOD?

We know the answer in principle. Our position to the child is parallel to God’s position to us. As God deals with us, his adult children, so we must deal with his little children. As He loves, we must love. As He rebukes, we must rebuke. As He chastens, we must chasten. As He deals gently, we must deal gently. As He leads by His Word and Spirit, so we must instruct by the Word in submission and dependence on the Spirit.

This guiding principle of parental training must be the principle also in the topic of this requested article. The topic as requested is an evaluation of the awards system in our schools. The issue, as I see it, is that of Godly motivation for our children. The motivation we provide must parallel the motivation God gives us, or else we fail to instruct in Godliness... and we fail in our responsibility.

I. Godly motivation
How we as adults need motivation to live the life of Godliness! Pressures on all