discussed by our students who
listen to it either on the sly or
with permission? Rock is not
being broadcasted through our
school buildings, but in how many
hearts is this music echoing
while Christian lessons are being
taught? Brian Dykstra

from the
TEACHERS' LOUNGE

Have you ever wondered about the rationale for including
"Band" in the course offerings of a school? In our high school
in Grand Rapids, band meets for 50 minutes every day of the
week. It’s a full-credit course. In many of our grade schools,
band is offered as a two or three-session a week option to
students in 5th through 9th grades. Sometimes those bands may
meet during noon hours; but no doubt other sessions are held
during “class” time. Whatever the particular circumstances, in
the very nature of the case one must take band in stead of doing
something else. So, again, the question: should instrumental
music have that kind of place in our schools? And, if it does,
should students be encouraged to participate in it? A band
director in the Teachers’ Lounge suggests answers to these
questions. Here’s Mrs. Gail Wories, director of band in our
South Holland (Illinois) Protestant Reformed School:

School Band:
An Enrichment
of the Curriculum

Gail Wories

Their eyes are looking up at
me. Their black cases are resting
on their laps. At my suggestion
the band students open their
cases carefully, as many questions
arise in their minds. This is the
first day of band lessons. A thrill
goes through me at the thought
of teaching them something they
know little about. I often think
of taping these first few sessions
to play back to them at the end
of a year. They would be struck
with what they had learned in a
year's time.

Another thought brings me to
a nursing home near our school.
Our band walked the short dis-
tance one afternoon to play a few
familiar numbers for the old
people there. We had gone once
before. The students knew what
to expect this time. Many in the
audience were verbally excited.
Each hymn we played brought
out an excited comment from one
to another. They shook their
heads when a hymn jogged their
memory. What a thrill to play for
such an audience. The students
were afterwards asked to ap-
proach the old people who
wanted to thank them for coming.
Some students actually had to
pull away from an appreciative
listener.

Why have a band program in
our Christian schools? There are
some who find it to be an ex-
pensive frill. These people see no
reason for frills when we have
trouble enough meeting the
standards for a "basic" Christian
education. I can sympathize with
them to a point, but feel that a
band program can enrich the lives
of our children, bring praise to
God's name, and be a blessing to
others.

God has given us the ability
to make music vocally and with
instruments. Man's need for
emotional expression has brought
out the music in us. That human
beings respond to music is a uni-
versal fact. That we can express
our talents and emotions through
music is what music education is
all about.

Christian education must be
concerned with the total develop-
ment of our children. We must
provide an opportunity for
growth in all areas of life. The
more a child learns about the
music he hears around him, the
more meaning it will take on and
the more enjoyment he will have
from it for the rest of his life.

Band instruction teaches a
child how music is made and how
the cultures have been reflected
through music. He will also learn
the theory of music, the written
signs and symbols and how it is
to be interpreted through his
instrument. Of course, he will
learn about his instrument and
how to play it. He will become
familiar with the other instru-
ments in the band. The skills of
playing an instrument further de-
velop eye-hand coordination.
Learning an instrument takes time
and is a challenge that demands
discipline and the taking on of
new responsibilities. There must
be a commitment to daily practice
if one wants to grow in the skill
of his instrument.

Not only does band provide
an opportunity for a child to learn
an instrument, but it also provides
the opportunity for group parti-
From the TEACHERS' LOUNGE

cipation. Unlike sports, each student in band is assured of a position in band and contributes to the overall performance. This demands teamwork and cooperation among band members. The band need not be large, but it should have a balance of instruments. No matter what size (and especially if it is small), each person must put forth his best effort to make the whole band succeed. A student soon learns that if he does not play his part well, the entire band suffers. Band gives each member a sense of belonging that a shared experience brings. The director must guide, encourage, and motivate the students to make band an enjoyable experience for all.

The foremost goal for all students in using what they have learned is to praise God through their preparation and performance of the selected music. They must give to God what talents He has given them. The values of the Christian school are reflected in the music that is played. The director conveys his Christian values in the music he selects and in how he teaches it. There is an opportunity here to select a variety of good music. Obviously, not all music in a performance will be "Christian" in nature, but I believe we must always have some *Psalter* numbers or appropriate hymns in the performance. It's enjoyable to play a piece that one is otherwise used to singing or has listened to. This provides a way, also, to reflect our faith through the music even though words are not being sung. The audience will review the words in their mind, or sing with the band in an expression of faith.

The performance of the band will leave an impression on the listeners. The band students must be adequately prepared so that the intended emotions and impressions will be made. If the band has conveyed, through their music, the best use of their talents for God's glory, and brought enjoyment to their audience, the performance will have been a worthwhile experience for all.

Once the performances are over and school is finished, many students will close that instrument case for the last time; but the sense of accomplishment will still be with them. Their lives will be enriched with the knowledge of the music they have come to know and enjoy. Some will occasionally bring that instrument out and perform a piece for a church or school function. They will again share their knowledge of music to convey a message to others. The band instruments don't have to remain on the shelf once schooling is over. I think more opportunities should be made for players, at any age, to perform.

I've been meaning to visit my
husband’s grandfather at that nursing home near our school. It’s not always easy to communicate with him, although he understands what is being said. Maybe I should take my clarinet there and play some of his favorite Psalter numbers and hymns.

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Bulletin Board

For our “Bulletin Board” special this time we’d like to make use of an article which appeared in the Fall, 1985 issue of “The Ledger” — newsletter of Loveland (Colorado) Protestant Reformed School. For the Loveland constituency, Principal Tom DeVries wrote a short account of last fall’s Teachers’ Convention in Iowa. That convention, incidentally, was noteworthy in this respect that at none other of our 30 previous conventions were there so many teachers present, from so many schools, from so many parts of the country. Even all the way from Lynden, Washington! But... let’s hear it from Mr. De Vries. The pictures are from the camera of Mr. Skip Hunter, principal of Northwest Iowa (Doon) Protestant Reformed School.

TEACHERS’ CONVENTION

On October 17 and 18, all four teachers (from Loveland) attended the thirty-first Protestant Reformed Teachers’ Institute Convention at Hull and Doon, Iowa. These institutes are usually held in the Grand Rapids, Michigan area, but this year’s meeting was held in the west as a concession to the western teachers. Although we in Loveland are not members of the Institute, the invitation was to us, also. Teachers attended from all of our schools except the one in California.

The thirteen hour trip from here to Iowa can be boring, but in this case it was not. The time held something for everyone. The fall colors were at their peak in the Platte and Missouri river valleys. We followed the old Oregon Trail for about 200 miles, and passed the site where Lewis