



OCSTA News



FOOD FOR THOUGHT RISK-TAKING

“Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people.’ At once, they left their nets and followed him.” Matthew 4:19, 20

Volume 31, Issue 4
January/February
2010

“...So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground.” Matthew 25:25

In my first year of teaching, I had a grade 9 student who had transferred in from the British school system. He was Canadian but had been in England long enough to pick up a lovely British accent. He was funny and outgoing and very bright. When he wrote tests in my mathematics class, he would always be the first one done, which meant that he would do 80% of the test and not finish the rest. He scored 100% on the parts that he finished. When I questioned him outside of class in private, he admitted that he didn't want to get 100% because he wanted to fit in and not be the top of the class. Here was a 14-year-old boy worried about taking risks and wanting to fit in.

In a recent book that I read, *Purple Cows*, the author (Seth Godin) suggests that in our society we have learned to fit in, to play it safe, and thereby miss the chance of being remarkable. Christians are called to resist this cultural teaching. Scripture is full of stories of taking risks, of walking on in faith, and of remarkable episodes of God's power working through our weakness. I wonder sometimes how we, as Christian educators, take risks. Do we always play it safe? Are we hungering and thirsting for righteousness, for change, for new and innovative ways to breathe life into our classes, our hallways, our teaching methods, and our schools? What are the conditions that need to be present for risk-taking to happen?

I am not proposing change for the sake of change. I believe that good education needs to conserve *and* be innovative. If we are still teaching the way that we did when we first began our careers, and if we have not changed our handouts, our methodologies, or our curriculum, then we need to be challenged to grow and to learn. Each one of us should strive to be remarkable Christian educators wherever we teach.

So where do we start? The first step would be prayer. Let each of us pray to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit in our professional lives. Looking for opportunities to grow and develop as professionals should be one of our priorities, and if we open ourselves up to such opportunities, they will appear.

Second, we need to risk sharing what we do with other educators. I will admit that I still am still nervous every time I stand in front of peers. I don't know what I expect—judgment, ridicule, or disfavour—but each of us has to have the courage to take such risks. It is understandable that a new educator might be adverse to sharing his or her ideas, but it should be unthinkable that a veteran still feels the same way. So, don't hide your light under a bushel. It is with smiles and encouragement that we all need to be empowered to take risks, however small at first.

What are some of these possible safe risks? Your educators association is encouraging you to step up. Write an article about a remarkable educator/mentor for the newsletter, become a facilitator for the EHE groups, volunteer to host a workshop at the convention, sign up for a summer workshop, take a course in leadership development, plan (perhaps with your principal) your professional portfolio to follow a path that leads to becoming a remarkable educator. It is through both the posture of servant and leader that we can encourage each other to become who God intended us to be!

Shalom, *Diane*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Diana Brunsveld
Smithville

Justin Cook
Ancaster

Heidi Elgersma
Stratford

Kevin Huinink
Breslau

Stephen Janssen
Bowmanville

Willy Katerberg
Georgetown

Peter Minnesma
London

Linda Sennema
Hamilton

Brent Smeenck
Belleville

Natalie Van Andel
Woodstock

Vivian Vanderhoek
Burlington

Randy Zondag
Kitchener

WHAT IS OCSTA UP TO NOW?

(Update from the OCSTA Office: Promotion and Membership Committee)

During the past two years, much of the focus of the OCSTA office has been on the linking of professional development through our annual OCSTA Educators Convention, the regional PD days, and the Summer Institute. More focus had initially been applied at the elementary level, but plans are now in the making for a more concerted effort at the high school level. The launching of the *Educators Helping Educators* online communities will help the organization to be nimble enough to serve all of our educators across the grade and curriculum levels. The ongoing development of workshops/ courses in the areas of special education, differentiated instruction, restorative practice, mathematics, and leadership development continue to be a focus, but we look forward to suggestions for professional development from all of our members.

The OCSTA board has been working towards a strategic plan that includes concerted efforts to link Christian educators in various school systems. At this juncture, our membership consists mainly of Christian educators in OACS schools, but we are hoping to continue to attract Christian educators from other Christian schools. OCSTA has the unique advantage of being the only Christian educators association in Ontario. The interest in OCSTA does not stop there, however. There are inquiries from Christian educators in other school systems who wish to be part of the ongoing conversation about what it means to integrate faith and learning. Another area of growth could be membership for college and university professors who wish to maintain contact with Christian educators in general. Your OCSTA board is interested in pursuing these possibilities and their untapped potential. As a result, this year's main focus has been and will continue to be on the **Promotion and Membership Committee (also known as the Communications Committee)**. The mandate for the committee has been updated.

The mandate of the OCSTA Promotion and Membership Committee is

- ◆ *to develop communication mechanisms and strategies that engage our membership,*
- ◆ *to encourage membership opportunities,*
- ◆ *to empower, enable, and inspire Christian educators, and*
- ◆ *to seek new members in the wider educational community.*

It is certainly understood that the bulk of our membership will always be the OACS educators. We continue to develop strong partnerships with the OACS in the areas of employment services, professional development, curriculum development and leadership support. OCSTA members receive benefits in all five areas of **APPLE SERVICES (Access; Professional Development; Professional Liaisons; Leadership Development; Employment Services)**.

The committee is planning to redo all of our communication materials. This would include a new look for the association, which would be more inclusive, as well as a new logo and tagline. The committee is working toward a more cohesive design for the newsletters, reports, promotional materials, and website. It wishes to tell the story of our association in an inviting and dynamic way. We will also discuss membership with our sister organization, OCSAA (Ontario Christian School Administrators Association) for input and visioning. As we work toward inclusion and change, the membership will be asked to endorse the move to other types of OCSTA membership.

These are exciting times! The committee will keep you informed as new developments take place. Stay tuned!

The Promotion & Membership Committee consists of the following members:

Ruth Arthur—Woodland Christian High School, Breslau
 Jim Hosmar—Calvin Christian School, Hamilton
 Kevin Huinink—Woodland Christian High School, Breslau
 Brent Smeenk—Quinte Christian High School
 Natalie Van Andel—John Knox Christian School, Woodstock
 Diane Stronks—OCSTA

WE NEED YOU!

At this time of the year, committee and board members are beginning to look to the end of various terms of service. OCSTA is a dynamic organization that is looking to refocus its vision and is entering a major strategic planning session. If you are interested in visioning and planning for the future of Christian education in Ontario, **this is your invitation to join our team of energetic leaders**. We are looking for members who are in good standing, have their CSTC, and are interested in serving in any one of these areas:

Board of Directors—3 members
Standing Convention Committee—1 member

Please email office@ocsta.org or Diane Stronks, dstronks@ocsta.org, with any questions or suggestions. We really appreciate your input.

SHARING STORIES OF REMARKABLE EDUCATORS

WHY I STILL TEACH

by Ruth Arthur

The Promotion and Membership Committee has commissioned this series of articles celebrating those educators, leaders, and mentors in our lives who have encouraged and led us in the art and craft of education. This series is part of an overall theme for the OCSTA NEWS wherein we are hoping to be a "community of gratitude" looking at the past, celebrating the present, and anticipating the future. If you would like to share stories of remarkable educators who have influenced your life, please contact the OCSTA office.

The past few weeks have found me in much the same place, sitting in front of my fireplace, cozy in my IKEA Poang chair, waiting for my first child to be born. My maternity leave began the first day of Christmas vacation. As I finish up my stack of marking before handing my courses over to another teacher, I find myself thinking about my students and realizing that I will greatly miss teaching. *What? Miss teaching?* Only a few years ago I struggled to get up each morning and come to work. How did I get from a place of wanting to quit teaching to the place I'm in now, a place where I realize that I will actually miss being away from my profession? Why do I now love the work I once dreaded?

To help answer these questions, allow me to share with you some of my experiences in education. My grade 12 English teacher, Johanna Kuyvenhoven, was excellent. I remember her encouragement as I worked on my ISU project about Beatnik poetry. I remember the way she wrote on the chalkboard in neatly printed letters, revealing insights I had missed in the novels we read as a class. Most of all, I remember thinking that I wanted to be a teacher like her—someone who obviously loved her subject matter and cared deeply about authentically imparting this love to her students.

Fast forward to my second year of college. I had the privilege of taking a children's literature course from Jim Rooks. I enrolled in the course because I needed the credit, certainly not because I had a deep love of children's stories. Nevertheless, Jim's excitement and knowledge regarding the course material was infectious. I began to look forward to each class. I even read, and enjoyed, several children's books. My bookshelves today house a sizable collection of children's books begun shortly after Jim's course finished. I cannot wait to share these treasures with my son!

And then, three years later, I landed an actual teaching job. I was ecstatic! Here was my chance to impart my love of the written word to my students. I would be like Johanna and Jim before me, inspiring young minds to love reading and to dig for meaning in the books and stories they read. In reality, my first two years of teaching squashed this vision. I hated teaching and found myself longing to quit. My husband reminded me almost daily that I had promised to give the teaching profession a two-year trial period. So I slugged on. During these difficult days, I thought about the reasons I became a teacher, and then, as I had when I was a student, I decided to watch the teachers all around me—my colleagues. In my difficult first year of teaching, I found myself upheld by my co-teacher, Phil Teeuwssen. He answered my many questions, allowed me to take over his office one afternoon for a good cry, and continually reminded me that he believed I could do this job—something I desperately needed to hear from someone other than my wonderful (and biased) husband.

During my second and third years of teaching, Gary VanArragon was a constant source of encouragement. He named my struggles, allowing me to talk about them in real and meaningful ways. He provided perspective when I felt that the fishbowl existence of a Christian school teacher was too much to endure. He made me promise to go home some nights and do nothing but read a good book, allowing me to relax and remember again why I began this journey in the first place.

Now, as I begin my maternity leave, after five and a half years of teaching, I can say with confidence that I will return to the profession of teaching, a profession I have come to (dare I write it?) love. Johanna, Jim, Phil and Gary—thank you for the important roles you have played in my teaching journey. You are, in very substantial ways, reasons I still teach.

(Ruth Arthur lives in Cambridge with her husband, John, and three-week-old son, Benjamin. Though she plans to return to teaching in 2011, she looks forward to a year at home getting to know Ben).

BOOK REVIEW



The book, *Crucial Conversations*, by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler, is an excellent resource to show how to achieve personal, team, and organizational success by healing broken promises, resolving violated expectations, and reverse unacceptable behaviour. The thesis is that behind the problems that routinely plague organizations and families, you'll find individuals who are either unwilling or unable to deal with failed promises. Others have broken rules, missed deadlines, failed to live up to commitments, or just plain behaved badly—and nobody confronts the issue. Or they do, but do a lousy job and create a whole new set of problems. As a result, accountability suffers. New research demonstrates that these disappointments aren't just irritating; they're costly.

This is a must-read book for parents, educators, and leaders. The book deals with real-life situations and increases confidence in persons facing issues like the following:

- ◆ An employee speaks to you in an insulting tone that crosses the line between sarcasm and insubordination. Now what?
- ◆ Your boss just committed you to a deadline you know you can't meet—and not-so-subtly hinted that he doesn't want to hear complaints about it.
- ◆ Your son walks through the door sporting colourful new body art that raises your blood pressure by forty points. Speak now, pay later.
- ◆ An accountant wonders how to step up to a client who is violating the law. Can you spell unemployment?
- ◆ Family members fret over how to tell granddad that he should no longer drive his car. This is going to get ugly.
- ◆ A nurse worries about what to say to an abusive physician. She quickly remembers "how things work around here" and decides not to say anything.



Everyone knows how to run for cover, or if adequately provoked, step up to these confrontations in a way that causes a real ruckus. That we have down pat. *Crucial Confrontations* teaches us how to deal with violated expectations in a way that solves the problem at hand and doesn't harm our relationships; in fact, we can even strengthen them.

This book was highly recommended by Dr. Bruce Hekman of Calvin College in the ELDI program and will be utilized in the upcoming leadership course offered this summer at Redeemer University College.

- Review Adapted from Amazon.ca

BUILDING COMMUNITY WITHIN OUR MEMBERSHIP

Pray With Us

Please pray for **Anne Ashcroft** (Honorary Member) as she continues to struggle with cancer and has suspended treatments. If old friends and colleagues wish to contact her, her mailing address is 64 Welwood Avenue, RR # 2 Wellesley, ON N0B 2T0.

Celebrate With Us

Congratulations to John and **Ruth Ann Arthur** (Woodland Christian High School—Breslau) on the safe arrival of their first child, a son, Benjamin Ronald John Arthur. Benjamin was born on January 8, 2010, weighing in at 8 pounds, 13 ounces, and was 22 inches long.

Calendar of Events

January 15/16	CSC Board, Winnipeg, MB	February 5/6	Christian Educators Journal Board, Grand Rapids
January 18	OCSTA Promotion and Membership meeting	February 10	Tyndale University College Education Symposium
January 21/22	OACS High School Principals	February 11	OCSTA Professional Development Committee-Conference Call
January 27	Stratford Christian School Visit	February 12	Niagara/Hamilton OCSTA PD Day, Calvin Christian School, Hamilton
January 29/30	Cardus Board	February 16	OACS/OCSTA Coordinating Committee
February 1	Government Relations meeting, RUC	February 22/23	CSI Pension and Insurance Board
February 2	OCSTA Convention Planning Committee meeting, Peterborough		
February 3	"Hope in Troubled Times" Lecture, RUC		

The OCSTA News is produced by the
Ontario Christian School Teachers Association
777 Garner Road East, Ancaster, Ontario L9K 1J4

Executive Director: Diane Stronks; email: dstronks@ocsta.org

Administrative Assistant: Faith Boer; email: office@ocsta.org

☎: 905 648 1200 ☎: 1-877-486-3233 ☎: 905 648 8670; website: www.ocsta.org