

PURPOSE OF SEMPER FIDELIS

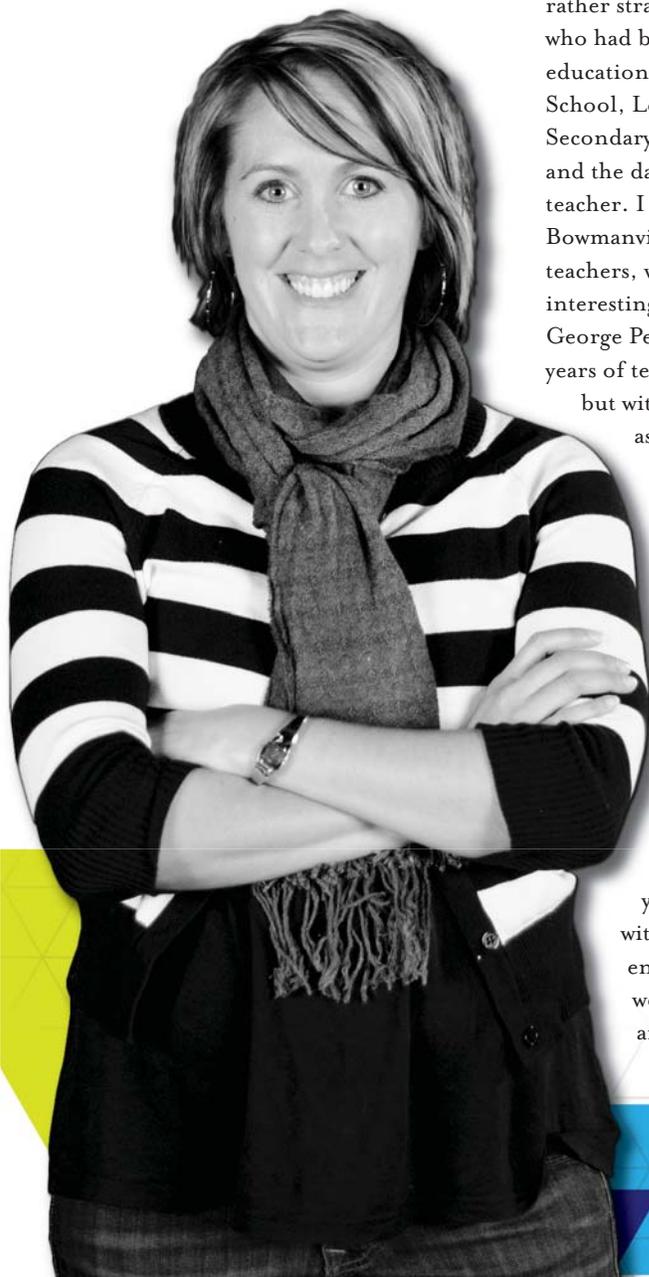
Semper Fidelis is a community forum of Christian educators united by a shared mission. Semper Fidelis will serve as a catalyst to stimulate and encourage passionate educators.

# semper fidelis

THE *official* NEWSLETTER OF EDIFIDE

## Christian Education is a Community EDUCATION BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

MEMBER *Spotlight*  
Jessica Geleyse Bandstra



It really wasn't until I had been teaching for a few years that I came to appreciate more fully the value of Christian education. That may sound rather strange coming from someone who had been immersed in Christian education (Clinton & District Christian School, London District Christian Secondary School, and Dordt College) and the daughter of a Christian school teacher. I began my teaching career in Bowmanville, one of five new first year teachers, which undoubtedly created interesting times for our principal, George Petrusma. What followed were 9 years of teaching mostly grade 5 classes, but with a variety of short term assignments in the primary and intermediate divisions.

As Diane Stronks wrote in March's *semper fidelis*—"...to (lead and) teach in a Christian school is an honour and an awesome responsibility." Along my journey, I have had the privilege of working with many experienced teachers and leaders who took me under their wing during my first years of teaching. I was blessed with a supportive principal who encouraged and affirmed me as I worked through the challenges and joys that come with being a

new teacher and who convinced me to take the Educators Leadership Development Institute (ELDI) course in August 2005. It was that experience at ELDI that sparked the interest in exploring Christian education beyond the classroom.

I have truly enjoyed my experience on the Edifide Board and the Professional Development committee. It has allowed me to take opportunities outside of my classroom to give back and really wrestle with the importance of Christian education and the unique challenges that come alongside this task and calling. I have had opportunity to interact with colleagues across the province who share their love of teaching and education by exploring ways of furthering those joys and challenges that come with working together as a community of learners.

Christian education is a community - a community of learners where we are solidly grounded in Biblical truth, a place where lifelong friendships are formed, a community of support and encouragement for colleagues, and a community in which we can grow professionally and personally. I'm not sure where my journey in education will take me, but I do know God has used the last 9 years to help shape who I am through the people I've worked with and through the experiences I've had.



## Assessment and Evaluation in Our Schools

by Jodi Wildschut  
London Christian Elementary School

For the past three years, assessment and evaluation has been a frequent conversation topic at Edifide Professional Development Committee meetings. The PD Committee is made up of a creative mix of educators, all of whom share a passion for brainstorming important foci for Edifide. These foci are then woven through District PD Days, the October Convention and the Summer Institute.

Assessment and evaluation has become a hot topic again with the 2010 release of the Ministry of Education's publication, "Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools". This document outlines essential research and principles for ensuring assessment is done consistently and fairly throughout Ontario schools. It affirms many of our current practices and shows us that there is much more we can do. This is an important document that teachers should be familiar with. The benefit of this document (and of the Ministry of Education) is that we can choose the key resources to implement.

We have a responsibility as educators to continue to learn and ensure that our teaching and assessment practices improve student learning. As Toronto-based assessment expert Damian Cooper states, "When we know better, we must do better". Passivity should not be an option.

Edifide has been working to incorporate assessment themed workshops into all PD activities. Learning from each other has been a key method of doing this as specific teachers have risen up to lead and educate others in how assessment works in their grade-level. We are blessed to have many great leaders who are committed to improving assessment practices in our schools. In addition, we had the opportunity to participate in an important assessment conference in January 2012 coordinated by the OACS and led by Dr. Thomas Guskey.

Like many other schools, London Christian Elementary School has been making assessment and evaluation a priority. We have embarked on a three-year assessment review which will be our primary focus at curriculum and division meetings.

As a staff, we attended the OACS Assessment Conference. We have explored "Growing Success" and "Inside the Black Box" (an article written in 1999 that unleashed important research findings in the area of assessment). We are implementing the "Eight Big Ideas of Assessment" (Damian Cooper). We are gleaning from the expertise of Damian Cooper (Talk About Assessment, Redefining Fair), Anne Davies (Making Classroom Assessment Work), Douglas Reeves (The Elements of Grading), Ken O'Connor (How to Grade for Learning) and many others. We are setting personal goals and challenging ourselves to implement one change at a time. We are trying new methods and putting what we have learned into practice. We are also committed to making important report card changes that are standards-based. We plan to weave our new learning into curriculum redesign projects. We are participating in mini-book clubs as we learn together and as we use our new knowledge to share with our colleagues. This is only the beginning. I have heard from many of you that your schools are also making key changes in assessment and evaluation. It is exciting to be part of this process.

Why does Edifide feel that assessment and evaluation is important? It has to be. Our school's mission statements claim that we aim to educate students to their full potential. By neglecting important assessment practices, we are doing them a disservice and not preparing them well. As Christian schools, we have a special mandate to educate the whole child, calling them to live lives that glorify God in every part of their being. When we implement significant assessment strategies, we show students that life-long learning is more than achieving top marks or gold stars. We teach them to actively pursue learning and growth in every area of their lives.

*"Assessment which is explicitly designed to promote learning is the single most powerful tool we have for both raising standards and empowering lifelong learners." - Assessment for Learning: Beyond the Black Box, 1999, University of Cambridge School of Education*

**Jodi Wildschut is in her 12th year of teaching, working the past 10 at London Christian Elementary School. She currently teaches Grade 3 and has served as the school's Vice Principal since 2004.**

**MISSION:**  
To enlighten, equip and encourage Christian educators.



## Project Based Learning

by Karl Nielsen  
Durham Christian High School

### Why PROJECT BASED LEARNING?

(One of the other foci of Professional Development in many of our schools has been a move to Project Based Learning. Be

prepared to hear and experience many more opportunities to discuss this exciting new direction in education at both the elementary and secondary level.)

### Project Based Learning

Marshall McLuhan's famous axiom "The medium is the message . . ." assumes that content is only a part of the meaning of any human communication. The form of the communication has as much an influence on the audience as the content. Consider the differences between a novel and a film and you get the idea. How many times have you seen a cinematic version of a beloved novel and been disappointed by the representations of characters, events or ideas in the novel? Things are compressed, altered or omitted altogether. These kinds of things are sometimes referred to as "invisible messages" – often they subvert or deconstruct the stated messages of the content. An example is Sesame Street. On the surface, it a family oriented



*..... our disciplines must be understood as parts of a whole – voices in a dialogue – ideas that inform and enhance each other –*

show to help kids develop basic literacy, numeracy and social skills. However, its structure is essentially a series of 30–60 second "commercials" for letters, numbers or social skills. The "invisible" effect was to blur the lines between learning and entertainment – something schools have been fighting with ever since.

Similarly, "school" sends messages about learning to students that have little relation to the content of the curriculum. The way we "do" school

subtly suggests to students that whole areas of God's creation are separable – they can be compartmentalized as if they are unrelated: Literature is distinct from History; Geography is set apart from Bible/Religion; Math is not Science. If an English teacher asks a question about History; or, a History teacher asks a question about Literature; or a Chemistry teacher asks a question requiring skills in mathematics, students often feel justified in commenting, "This is History not English!" In short, the pedagogical structure of education we have inherited instills in students the assumption that learning can be separated in to discrete disciplines that have little or no relation to one another. This flies in the face of a Christian perspective, which assumes a synthetic, organic relationship between disciplines: Creation is an integrated whole – it is the work of God. Therefore, our disciplines must be understood

as parts of a whole – voices in a dialogue – ideas that inform and enhance each other – a human contrivance and not a natural part of the created order.

Project Based Learning addresses this "invisible message" of disintegration. Students are encouraged to tackle "big ideas" and "big questions" that can be addressed from a variety of perspectives – scientific, historical, ethical, artistic and so forth. Under the guidance of faculty mentors, students tackle key issues by examining them through multiple academic lenses. The potential for these projects to give students a more integrated and holistic vision of God's creation and their role(s) within it is truly exciting.

<sup>1</sup> Example: Who ruled England when Shakespeare began his career as a playwright?

<sup>2</sup> Example: Which Enlightenment ideas informed Mary Shelley's Frankenstein? How were the writings of William Blake influenced by the American and French Revolutions?

<sup>3</sup> How many moles of v is a required to produce w moles of uv when mixed with y moles of u?

**Karl Nielsen has taught all levels from elementary school to post secondary over the course of a 17 year career. He specializes in English and Media, but has taught History and Cultural Studies as well. Karl is currently teaching English at Durham Christian High School in Bowmanville, Ontario.**

**VISION:**  
A vibrant, stimulating community of Christian educators on the leading edge of new ideas and best practices.

## Feeling overwhelmed yet?

by Diane Stronks

These are very exciting times in education! We know more about learning than at any other time in history. As Dan Beerens put it in his keynote presentations across the province....we are living in a "tsunami" of change in education and technology and we are NOT finished yet. The conversations at the Professional Development Committee have been very rich....the topics that we have discussed and promoted include:



*"....tsunami of change in education...."*

1. Resource-Every teacher is a Special Education Teacher
2. Hospitality-Restorative practice as the fundamental philosophy in schools, classrooms and culture change.
3. Assessment and Evaluation-Ontario's "Growing Success" document as well as research-based knowledge about how best to promote learning
4. Technology-How to utilize technology effectively in the classroom without it becoming the "focus" of the learning. (laptops, smart boards, hand held devices, i-pads) and familiarizing ourselves with twitter, Facebook, blogs, Flickr, youtube, cloud and google.
5. Project Based Learning-Innovative approaches to our splintered and compartmentalized ways of approaching education; the point being to create

meaning for education and to ask excellent essential questions that are begging to be answered.

6. Brain Research-how the plasticity of the brain and the opportunity to develop new pathways for learning can be utilized to build potential and capacity in our students
7. AND undergirding all of this change.....staying true to our call to be unique centers of transformational Christian education where nurturing faith is not an afterthought but we intentionally create learning where we are focused on the flourishing of our students (see Dan Beerens.... "Nurturing Faith Blog").

As professionals, it is imperative that we work towards implementation of any and all of these important innovative changes in education. One of the issues for educators and schools is....how to begin? Every educational community may focus on one (or two) areas and in some cases....there are regions or partnerships who are working together. It is the goal of your professional association to encourage each of you to move forward, to be mobilized and to that end; our goal is to keep you abreast of the newest innovations in education as well as to provide you with learning opportunities to launch these excellent ideas in your classrooms and in your schools.

It is time to embrace change!

<b>June 5</b>	Leadership Roundtable Redeemer University College
<b>June 15/16</b>	Cardus Board of Directors
<b>June 20-23</b>	Project Based Learning Conference, Napa, California
<b>July 3-9</b>	Summer Institute PD Workshops and Courses Redeemer University College
<b>July 30-August 3</b>	Educators Leadership Development Institute, Orillia
<b>August 9-12</b>	Advanced Trustee Management Standards Course, Halifax, N.S.
<b>August 16/17</b>	Christian Schools International Pension and Insurance Board
<b>August 23</b>	Edifide Board of Directors, Guelph, ON
<b>August 30</b>	High School PD Day featuring Damien Cooper, Woodland C.H.S., Breslau
<b>September 4</b>	School Begins!

**Edifide Office closed July 9-August 20, 2012**

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