

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

Pathways to Leadership: Reflections on ELDI 2012

WISDOM IN ALL ASPECTS OF EDUCATION

MEMBER *Spotlight*
Jody A. Scheerer



Leadership pathways have always been a critical focus when it comes to my professional development. As someone who enjoys leadership opportunities within both my present school and the greater field of education, I am constantly attempting to cultivate these skills for both my present circumstances and future leadership opportunities.

My journey of educational leadership has been taking place since I began my teaching career at Guelph Community Christian School after graduating from Redeemer in 2000, through serving on a wide range of committees, being a mentor teacher, serving on hiring committees (both teacher and administrator), and many other leadership opportunities. However, one of the major pathways that opened my mind up to leadership was serving on the Edifide (then OCSTA) Board of Directors. My time of service on the Coordinating Committee, School Policy Committee, and as vice-chair provided me with wisdom in all aspects of education. It was a growing experience, and I felt inspired by my fellow Board members, Hilda Roukema, and particularly Diane Stronks, our current Edifide executive director to pursue leadership.

Most recently I have been able to utilize my passion for restorative practices by helping implement them at GCCS and by becoming a member of Shalem Mental Health Network's school-based restorative justice practitioners. In all of these experiences, I have felt that the Lord has been my potter, shaping me and truly being my leader.

This past summer I had the privilege of attending the Educators Leadership Development Institute in Orillia. I went into this experience hoping for an affirmation of

leadership, particularly in whether the Lord has called me to administration. As someone who has been on the pathway to leadership for quite some time, I was excited to hear more about the inner workings of administration and all that it entails. ELDI was one of the best experiences of my career thus far. I left ELDI feeling enriched with a great deal of knowledge in regard to leadership, established in new friendships with some amazing leaders, and excited about where the Lord is leading me in the future. The tranquil setting at the YMCA Geneva Camp in Orillia, the laughter, and the incredible food each day made the experience just that much better! It was empowering to participate in a "think tank" relating to the role of leadership for a week. ELDI provided me with practical ways to align visioning with the nurturing of faith that is needed within our Christian schools. The knowledge that I gained helped me understand how to balance time, energy, work load, and faith life as I continue on my journey of leadership in my professional life. Diane Stronks (Edifide), Hugo Marcus (OACS), Ray Hendriks (OACS), Bonnie Desjardins (OCSAA), Jeff Blamer (CSI), and Bruce Hekman (Calvin College) did a phenomenal job as facilitators, and together they gave a clear picture of what it takes to be a Christian school administrator. ELDI was an enriching pathway to leadership that has left a lasting impression.

The calling of leadership is a blessing. It is a process and a gift from our Heavenly Father that needs to be centered on Him alone. I look forward to continuing to explore God's calling along my leadership pathways both this coming school year and in my future endeavors, knowing that He is using me as one of His instruments. May our Father be glorified in each of your leadership experiences this coming year! To God be the Glory!



Whither LEADERSHIP?

As you read this issue of Semper Fidelis, you will encounter three of our members who are at different places in their leadership journeys. As you may know, one of the five foci of Edifide has been and continues to be Leadership Development. Edifide is one of six organizations that sponsor the annual Educators Leadership Development Institute (ELDI) for teachers who are thinking about leadership. Our goal is also to provide leadership opportunities through service on our board and committees. This gives our members a rare look into the inner workings of schools, leaders, and educators.

The central question always comes down to what it takes to become a good leader. Please enjoy this issue.



My Journey

by Tim Benton
Toronto District Christian High (TD) in Woodbridge

Christian education has been central in my life; in many ways, the reason I am now employed at a Christian school is a result of my positive experiences in

Christian schools growing up. I am a product of the Christian school system, right from Kindergarten through to my current graduate studies program. Stops along the way for me included John Knox Christian School in Woodstock, London District Christian High, Redeemer University College, and now Calvin College as part of their masters of educational leadership program. I have taught and been involved in administration in two schools, first at Niagara Christian Community of Schools (NCC) in Fort Erie and now currently at Toronto District Christian High (TD) in Woodbridge.

Based on my schooling experience growing up, I understand inherently how Christian schools “feel” when things are really working well. I know what great places Christian schools can be for kids to grow, which has become even more important to me as my eldest son, Lucas, heads off to nursery school for the first time in the fall at Halton Hills Christian School. The “feel,” or culture, at Christian schools is something that I want to spend my life working on.

I had the opportunity to take on a leadership position early in my career. In fact, my first job out of teachers college was as a vice-principal at NCC. It was a rather unique opportunity, but looking back at it I am really thankful for the chance that NCC gave me and for the people who supported me while I was there. I’ve since moved on to TD, and I have grown in all sorts of ways with the terrific leadership team that is assembled here as well.

Over time I have found that leadership is not a position, but rather something that anyone can offer given the right set of God-breathed circumstances. Specifically, I have learned that leadership within Christian schools often involves providing moral and spiritual direction. By extension, something that has really become clear to me in my leadership journey is

the importance of spending daily time in devotions, reflection, and prayer to re-calibrate my own spiritual compass.

I feel blessed to be able to work with the students and colleagues in my current position as vice-principal at TD and I am excited for God’s plan to continue to unfold in my life!



My Thoughts on Leadership

by Brent Smeenk



As I come to the end of my term on the EDIFIDE Board of Directors I would like to share a few thoughts about leadership. I believe that all educators lead. One of the dynamics of leadership

that intrigues me is the perceived contrast between “having authority over” and “leadership as serving”. How does a leader have authority which requires obedience, and at the same time, lead with a fully humble and sincere servant-hood. It is fun to think about how this applies to educators.

Educators brush up against these dynamics in many areas, including the area of discipline. Principals discipline staff and students. Teachers discipline students. I have been on the receiving end of discipline over the course of my life, perhaps more than I would like to admit. One of the loving acts of service, administered by those who have had authority over me, was to act in my best interest, training and correcting me when I got off track. At the time, as the Apostle Paul says in Hebrews 12, discipline does not seem pleasant, but painful. “Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”

(NIV) I would not and could not be growing or maturing without discipline.

Without discipline, I would most likely get comfy in my ruts, deny my blind spots, and bolster my defences against change. As I look back at my life as a student and educator, it is clear that I owe a great deal of gratitude to those who served me by disciplining me (regardless of my less than cheerful response at the time). Perhaps then, discipline is not primarily an indication that something is wrong, but instead, an indication that something is right; your community is functioning well. With tongue in cheek, my prayer in this area of my life is “Heavenly Father, I’m done now, right? No more discipline needed, right?” More sincerely though, my prayer in this area is, “Thanks, Father”. If I am to take on new areas of leadership, I will need discipline to get me there.

Married to the dynamics of discipline is the role of community in developing leaders. The role of community is intricate and beautiful, requiring discipline as well as many other components to be functioning. We cannot fully become who God made us to be without relationships with others.

One of the fruits of relationships can be a distilling and clarifying of God’s call on our lives. Experienced and mature people in my life have been a rich source of wisdom as I consider God’s call to new areas of leadership. For instance, I have heard it said, one of the most important skills a leader must have is the ability and willingness to ask for help. This comment debunked the image I had that leaders are autonomous and isolated, and must have it all together, prior to assuming a leadership role. Someone else recently told me that if you feel seventy- percent ready to take a leadership role, you are ready. Comments like this encourage me to re-think the Moses-esque response I often have to the intimidation of leading. As I ponder this, I hear in my heart, God’s instruction to Joshua, to not be afraid. Not because Joshua had it all together, but because God was with him.

May God bless the leaders He has called, and is calling. If you are being called to new levels or areas of leadership, I hope that God’s voice in your community will be clear and inspiring. If you have been leading for some time in a particular role, I hope that you will continue to speak words of life and wisdom into the lives of developing-leaders around you.

May God be blessed, as we dive into the coming year as educators.

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Community News

Congratulations to Tanya & Joe Smits (Sarnia Christian School) on the safe arrival of Amy Lynae (8lbs 1oz) on September 12, 2012. A little sister for Jadyne, Kayla, and Tyler.

Gop and Melanie Intarachot (Stratford & District Christian School) welcome Leland Jeremiah into their family. Leland arrived on August 27, weighing 9lb 14oz and is baby brother to Uriah. Praise God for this little one.

MISSION:
To enlighten, equip and encourage Christian educators.

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

Thoughts on LEADERSHIP.....

by Diane Stronks

To be a leader means many things. Not only does one need to examine strengths and aptitudes in a deep and intentional way, but one also needs to know in which areas one needs to grow. Leadership entails competency. Leaders need to attend to areas of strategic planning, execution of tasks, and relationship-building. They must surround themselves with a team that complements those strengths and aptitudes to ensure that organizations grow and maintain health.

How one leads is at the heart of leadership. Walter Wright, author of many leadership books and former executive director of the Max De Pree Centre, believes that relationships are at the heart of influence and leadership. His question is, if you believe that you are a leader and no one is following, are you truly leading? He has emphasized the connection between leader and follower as the follower giving the leader permission to lead. Leading does not come from a person's position as much as it comes from that person's ability to make connections and build relationships.

Wright suggests that character and values are the most important things that leaders need to attend to. Just as Parker Palmer states, "You teach who you are," Wright would imply that "You lead who you are." High expectations and high support for those who are following are fundamental to inspiring confidence and risk-taking on the part of your followers. Changing the culture in schools needs to include integrity, care, and concern as well as clear, transparent expectations with reasonable targets and planning. A leader needs to lead from the belief that people can change.

As many know, teachers who resort to using their position to ensure that students are following, often fail. You must listen to me because I am the teacher! I would suggest that school leaders who use their position to ensure that the staff is following will also encounter failure. You must follow me because I am the leader!

Leadership is risky. Leaders put their best idea forward and hope that it rings true to their followers. True leadership is not forced, and it always wishes to work "with" others. Great leaders share a vision, invite others along, and continually attend to the needs of followers, particularly those who are most vulnerable. It is a shared journey with students, teachers, educators, parents, board members, and other stakeholders.

I leave you with a quote from Walter Wright.

"We have defined leadership as a relationship of influence—a transforming relationship in which the leader invests in the growth and development of the followers, empowering them to become what God has gifted them to be."

Walter Wright from the book, Relational Leadership; A Biblical Model for Leadership Service



October 25, 26	Edifide Christian Educators Convention RUC
October 29-November 5	Edifide Office Closed
November 8	Brantford Christian School Membership Meeting
November 14	Edifide BOD
November 15/16	CSI Pension and Insurance Plan BOD
November 21-23	Ontario College of Teachers Conference
December 4	Christian Schools Canada Committee on Learning
December 7	Mediation Commission
January 11/12 2013	Christian Schools Canada
January 22-26	High Tech High, HS Principals



777 Garner Road East PH: 905.648.1200
Ancaster ON, L9K1J4 PH: 877.486.3233
office@edifide.net FAX: 905.648.8670
www.edifide.net

Diane Stronks ~ Executive Director
diane.stronks@edifide.net

Faith Boer ~ Administrative Assistant
faith.boer@edifide.net