Compass Bearing

Insight, Direction, and Connection for Reformed Schools

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Coordinator's Connection

Reformed Christian Education for the Sake of the World?

By: John Wynia

Many *Compass* Bearing readers will be familiar with the disappointing news received by Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College (CCRTC) in response to their application for accreditation with the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT).

The Accreditation Committee found "that the conceptual framework, grounded in Reformed Christian principles and a biblical perspective underpins all components of the program." However, the Committee cited OCT's duty to serve and protect the public interest and expressed concern that teachers trained at CCRTC might not be adequately prepared to teach in Ontario's diverse public education system.

Whatever we may think of that decision, it raises an important question for us all to consider: Is Reformed education in the public interest? For some years now, a similar question has been raised by Cardus in its 2014 education survey, "Private Schools for the Public Good." The public interest can be a bit tricky to define, but for the purposes of this article let's assume that Wikipedia has it right when it says, "public interest is 'the welfare or well-being of the general public" and society.'" With that definition we can refine our question: Does Reformed education serve the well-being of the general public?

The OCT's decision elicits many different responses. We can legitimately feel sorrow about it. Historically, plural societies recognized that religious communities contribute positively to public life, and for generations, Reformed Christian schools in Ontario have done precisely that. They have formed students who contribute to their communities as thoughtful citizens, compassionate neighbours, skilled workers, faithful church members, and devoted parents. Increasingly, however, faith-based conviction is viewed as something that may be tolerated privately but should not be allowed to meaningfully shape public institutions.

Governments ought to recognize and protect institutions that contribute to the flourishing of society under God.

Though we live in a pluralist society and believe in the freedom of religion, Reformed Christians have long confessed that civil authorities are not religiously neutral. Article 36 of the Belgic Confession teaches that governments are called to promote what is good and just according to God's law. While Christians may differ about how this applies in a modern pluralistic democracy, the underlying principle remains important: governments ought to recognize and protect institutions that contribute to the flourishing of society under God. We rightly grieve that OCT failed to promote what is good, and expressed doubts that teachers taught from and for a Reformed worldview would be less capable of serving the public good because of our particular religious views. Likewise we can be justly frustrated with the irony that Ontario's educational landscape often celebrates diversity of culture, identity, and perspective, but confessional Christian conviction increasingly appears unacceptable.

On the other hand, we may also respond to the decision with gratitude. After all, it implicitly acknowledged something Reformed schools have always claimed—that education is never neutral. Every educational system is shaped by a vision of what it means to be human, what is true, what is good, and what kind of life ought to be cultivated. In that sense, we can be thankful that the OCT recognized that Reformed education **is** genuinely distinct. If outside observers can clearly identify that our schools are founded on Scripture and shaped by a distinctly Reformed worldview, it is evidence—not of failure—but of faithfulness.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, August 27, 2026
CARE Day - Professional Development for educators

Thursday, Sept 10, 2026
Compass LRS Directors Meeting

Thursday, October 1, 2026
Membership Meeting

Reformed Christian Education for the Sake of the World? (Continued)

Christ calls His people to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5). Salt that loses its saltiness is no longer distinctive. Christian education that merely mirrors the surrounding culture ceases to offer anything uniquely Christian at all. If OCT could see that Reformed education does not simply add prayer or Bible classes to an otherwise secular vision of schooling, but seeks to understand all of life under the lordship of Christ, it confirms that our salt is still salty.

Humanly speaking we thought that accreditation for CCRTC graduates would have been a benefit to our schools and was therefore worth pursuing. However, our priority is not to prepare our students and teachers to conform to the assumptions and aims of secular institutions. We aim to prepare them to serve God faithfully within His world.

That brings us to a third possible response: acceptance. Given our sorrow over the way things seem to be going and our gratitude for having our distinctiveness highlighted, perhaps we should simply agree with OCT that Reformed education is not in the public interest.

This is a response that I don't think is acceptable. Reformed education is not different for the sake of being different. The distinctiveness of Reformed education is for the world. Far from withdrawing from public life, faithful Christian education equips students to engage it responsibly. Reformed schools aim to graduate teachers, tradespeople, business leaders, parents, pastors, artists, farmers, and citizens who understand that every square inch of creation belongs to Christ.

> **"let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Matthew 5: 16b**

For that reason, we should continue pursuing distinctly Reformed education with confidence and humility. We need not apologize for forming students according to the truth of Scripture. Nor should we lose sight of the broader calling God has given us.

There's a quote from John Calvin that I often think about, found in his commentary on Psalm 67. The editors of my *ESV Study Bible* suggest that Psalm 67 is "a prayer that God will bless [His covenant people] so that the rest of the world may come to know the true God." This reflects Calvin's comments on verse 6 of the Psalm ("The earth has yielded its increase; / God, our God, shall bless us."): "Notice is … taken of the temporal blessings which [God] confers upon his children, that they may have everything necessary to complete their happiness. And here it is to be remembered that **every benefit which God bestowed upon his ancient people was, as it were, a light held out before the eyes of the world to attract the attention of the nations to him.**" Done faithfully, Reformed education edifies the church and supports its efforts to serve as salt and light in the world God made and Christ redeems. Thus, Reformed education—in all its forms—is for the sake of the world and serves the public interest.

Professional Development: A Snapshot of Where We Are

By: Menco Wieske

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord and not for men." (Colossians 3:23)

Professional growth in our schools is not simply about improving skills or meeting expectations. It is part of a larger calling. The work of teaching and supporting students is work done before the Lord, and growth in that work is a way of serving Him more faithfully.

By looking for ways to make professional development more relevant and accessible, growth becomes something shared. And as we support one another, we not only strengthen our practice, but also build a professional community that reflects faithfulness to use our God-given talents in all that we do.

The 2025 Professional Development Survey helps us reflect on how that growth is taking place. With over 220 responses from teachers and learning support staff, it gives a clear picture of how people experience their work, how they grow in it, and what helps or gets in the way.

A Strong Foundation

One of the most encouraging results is how people view their work. Teachers and learning support staff strongly agree that their work is a *calling,* and that they feel passionate about their work of supporting parents in instructing their children. That sense of purpose is matched by very high job satisfaction. This says a lot about the strength of the culture in our schools.

At the same time, there are some challenges. Many teachers struggle to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Learning support staff are less certain about what their long-term path in education might look like.

Even with these challenges, the overall picture is positive. There is a strong and committed group of professionals who care deeply about their work and their students.

Confidence

One of the more interesting findings is the gap between confidence in professional growth and the perceived need for career planning. About nine out of 10 respondents say they are confident they will reach their long-term professional goals. But fewer than half say they have a clear growth plan.

This suggests that growth is happening, albeit often in informal ways. People are learning and improving, but not always through clear or structured plans. It also suggests that if principals and school boards can help make professional growth more intentional and clearly supported, confidence in professional development can be strengthened even further.

What Kind of PD do Teachers Prefer?

The survey revealed that there seems to be a preference for professional development activities that are chosen by the individual. Participants expressed the need for PD activities to be practical and relevant to their own situation.

The most valued activities include:

- trying new ideas in the classroom
- personal reading and learning
- taking courses by choice

In simple terms, personal growth reportedly matters most when it connects directly to daily teaching and when people have some control over how they learn.

Learning support staff highlight the same idea, while also pointing out the need for training that fits their specific role.

The Reality of Constraints

Even though the participants indicated a clear desire to grow professionally, there are real challenges. The biggest barriers are:

- time and workload
- energy and burnout
- family responsibilities

These are not small issues, and they are not going away. This means that professional development must be planned carefully. It is important to consider not only what is offered, but also when and how it is offered.

Supported, but Still Room to Grow

Most respondents say they feel supported in their professional growth. Principals, colleagues, and school boards are seen as encouraging and helpful in providing time and resources.

The next step is to find ways for Principals and Boards to more actively support planning for ongoing professional development.

> **"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."**
>
> **Col 3:23-24**

Looking Ahead

The survey also shows where more support is needed. The top three areas where teachers are asking for help are: assessment, teaching strategies, and helping students build resilience.

Learning support staff are looking for more guidance on three main areas as well: student needs, mental health, and their role in the classroom.

For the Professional Development Committee, this is great feedback that will help us with planning future professional development events.

A Simple Takeaway

What is clear from the survey is that there is no lack of desire to grow in our schools. People want to improve. They also want to learn and do their work well. The opportunity now is to support that desire more clearly. Professional learning should be easy to access and practical. It also needs to be closely connected to daily work.

Spurring One Another On

Scripture reminds us that growth is part of a team effort where we help each other. In Hebrews 10:24 we read: *"Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."* As Professional Development Committee, we are looking forward to working with these survey results and to apply them to our continued task of spurring each other on to further develop the gifts the Lord has so abundantly granted His Covenant people in our school communities.

MPP & MP Visit Grace Christian School



Effective Advocacy for Reformed Education

By: James Meinen

Greetings from the Government Contact Committee (GCC). Our mandate is to monitor provincial legislation and policy affecting Compass LRS member schools, increase awareness of government requirements, and serve as a sounding board for issues that may impact our schools. We also advocate for the freedom of parents to establish and maintain independent schools in keeping with our biblical convictions.

At the same time, effective advocacy is not the sole responsibility of the GCC. It is most impactful when individual schools build relationships with their local representatives and communicate directly with their MPPs. Encouragingly, several schools have taken this step. Grace Christian School recently hosted both their MP and MPP, and their MPP later shared a positive reflection on social media. At Harvest Christian School, local representatives have also visited, including one occasion where our MP joined in our Twin Day activities as my twin! These visits provide valuable opportunities to build relationships and help elected officials better understand our schools.



To support this work, the GCC has developed a briefing note that schools can share with their representatives. This document outlines who we are and highlights key facts about our community. Did you know?

- Compass LRS schools employ over 350 staff
- Approximately 2,900 students are enrolled in our Reformed schools
- These schools save Ontario taxpayers over $42 million
- Parents and supporters contribute more than $33 million annually to operate their schools
- Compass LRS Member Schools are supported by over 3,000 members

In addition, our schools are part of the 48% of Ontario's 1,500 independent schools that are religiously oriented, and our students represent part of the 7% of children in Ontario enrolled in independent schools. These statistics highlight the amazing support for Reformed education in our communities! They also show that we are not alone in desiring to raise our children in schools that mirror our values.

Currently, many independent schools are working to strengthen parental choice in education. Over the past year, the Coalition of Associations of Independent Schools (CAISO) has been formed to unite the independent school associations of Ontario for the purpose of speaking with one voice on issues that impact all independent schools. A proposal for Compass LRS to join CAISO is currently under consideration, with a vote scheduled for June. The GCC recommends membership, as its advocacy goals closely align with our own.

As we move forward, we encourage each member school who has not yet reached out to their government representative to do just that! The Lord willing, this communication will help promote the cause of covenant, Reformed education with our elected representatives.

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The Hallmarks of Reformed Education

Confessionally Grounded

Learning to say "I do" to all that God reveals about himself in his Word and works.

Covenantally Founded

Recognizing God's claim on children who have received his promises in baptism.

Enmity Surrounded

Equipping children for service in his Kingdom as prophets, priests, and kings.

Bound in Unity

Working with home and church to tell children the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord.