LCRSS
LEAGUE OF CANADIAN REFORMED SCHOOL SOCIETIES INC.

The Link

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Coordinator's Connection

Reformed Schools are Christian Community Schools

By: John Wynia

Sometimes to emphasize the distinctiveness of Reformed schools, we'll contrast them with the "community Christian schools." Maybe you have a community Christian school in your area. They're usually interdenominational schools that have a missional enrollment policy (i.e., along with the children of believers, they allow children of non-believing parents to enroll), and, rather than teaching from and for a confessionally Reformed worldview, teach from and for what might be summarized as a "Mere Christianity" worldview. In this context, the "community" in community Christian school means serving the broader Christian community and/or serving the local community – the neighbourhood – with Christian education. Many community Christian schools started out as church community schools. They existed to serve a specific church community, but due to a desire to have a greater evangelistic impact in their community and/or as a response to pressure to maintain student enrollment numbers, have begun to move toward full or partial missional-based enrollment.



Questions about enrollment, membership, and support for schools have also been a topic of frequent discussion among LCRSS Member Schools. Through my involvement with school reviews and strategic planning with school communities, one of the most consistent challenges we hear voiced by school boards and educational leaders is the urgent need to promote Reformed schools. One principal summed up his diagnosis of the situation succinctly: "support for Reformed education is dwindling." Considering these challenges we discussed "The Case for Support for Reformed Education" at League Learning Day in April 2022, and over the next few issues of *The Link we're going to focus on school promotion. In this issue, we'll see that Reformed schools are "Christian community" schools.*

Picture this: it's Sunday morning following the worship service and the fellowship hall is humming with conversation. You strike up a conversation with a new family that has recently joined your congregation. They homeschool their children, and at a certain point the conversation turns toward school support. You think about asking them to become members of the school society, but then you hesitate: *They homeschool their children. Why should they support the school? They don't even use it.*

Here's another scenario: Your oldest child is graduating high school, and you're invited to a barbecue with all the other graduating families. The hosts are longtime supporters of the Reformed school, but you overhear them celebrating the fact that they are finally done paying membership fees and can give more of their money, time, and energy to other causes. You wonder: *There are so many good causes to support. Is our school more worthy of their time and money than those causes?*

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Upcoming Events

June 5, 2025
LCRSS Membership Meeting at Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College

August 21, 2025
CARE Day – Curriculum-Focused Professional Development for Teachers

September 11, 2025
LCRSS Directors Meeting at Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College

com·mu·ni·ty

noun

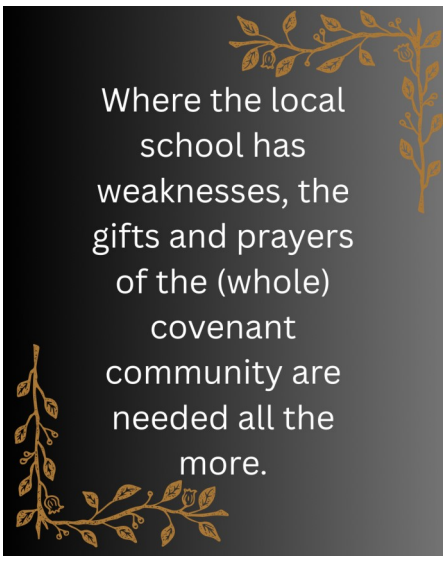
1. a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common.

2. a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.

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Or imagine this: Your school has been having some challenges with hiring staff. There are parents filling in and making it work, but there's not a lot of energy left to support extra-curricular programs and the academic program is struggling. Following the spring membership meeting, you join an ongoing conversation where someone informs you that they are pulling their children out and sending them to the community Christian school because they feel that your school is no longer meeting their children's academic needs. At your next Promotion Committee meeting, you decide to ask the hard question: *How can we ask people to support the school when the school has significant challenges? Why should they invest here?*

These three scenarios reflect three distorted views of Reformed school support. The problem with the first scenario is that it sees the school as merely a service organization for those who happen to have their children enrolled. The second scenario fails to acknowledge the unique priority of Reformed Christian education in the local congregation. The distortion of the third scenario is that it sees Reformed education only as worthy of support when it matches an ideal.



Each distortion has a correction as well. The school is not just a service provider. It is a beautiful embodiment of the calling described in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 55, where members give of their gifts and talents for the benefit of their brothers and sisters. All members of the congregation should care for, and be invested in, how all covenant children are nurtured in godliness. There are many worthy causes that seek our time and support – mission work, Bible translation, disaster relief, and more – but Reformed education is more than an act of charity. It is an act of covenant faithfulness. In our congregation we have the practice of making a congregational vow following an infant baptism. After the parents have promised to instruct their child in the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, summarized in the confessions and taught in the church, the congregation stands to promise that they will also do their part to pray for the child and to assist in their nurturing in the faith. Reformed schools are a concrete way to live out that vow.

Still, it's easy to get caught up in the rhetoric around supporting Christian schools and then get lost in the reality. On this side of the new heavens and earth, there is not a perfect school. Every school has weaknesses. But this reality shouldn't discourage us: we are not called only to support or invest in perfect institutions. Where the local school has weaknesses, the gifts and prayers of the (whole) covenant community are needed all the more.

Reformed schools are "Christian community" schools that reflect a shared home-and-church responsibility for education. We often cite Deuteronomy 6:5-7 in the context of Christian education, but perhaps we overlook the fact that these words (e.g., v. 7 "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.") are addressed to the covenant community (v. 4, "Hear, ***O Israel***…").

In the end, supporting Reformed education is not just an obligation—it is a joyful privilege. It is the privilege of seeing covenant promises being fulfilled day after day in classrooms where children learn not just arithmetic and reading, but the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). It is the privilege of contributing to the discipleship of young believers who will, by God's grace, become tomorrow's leaders, teachers, parents, and witnesses for Christ. It is the privilege of standing together, as a covenant community, to proclaim to the next generation the glorious deeds of the Lord (Psalm 78:4). Thanks be to God for the gift of "Christian community" schools—and the opportunity He gives each one of us to help them flourish.

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Curriculum Assistance to Reformed Education

By: James Kanis



The Curriculum Assistance to Reformed Education (CARE) Committee is the oldest and, for classroom teachers, likely the most well-known committee of the League. Our mandate is to structure curriculum development and refinement, publish our work, and monitor the suitability of our work in LCRSS member school classrooms. One of the ways we accomplish this is through the two professional development days we host each year - in August and in February. By way of this article, I hope to provide a brief overview of our recent February PD day - one that represents a shift in focus from previous years.

The day was planned at ACRES in the Dunnville area. It was the day following some substantial ice rain in the Niagara region, making the drive to Attercliffe a beautiful one - the trees were still coated in a blanket of ice. Thankfully, the roads were safe, and almost 90 elementary teachers from 15 different LCRSS schools were in attendance.

The topic for the day was unit planning, which is unexplored territory for CARE to some degree. Much of CARE's attention to date has been on the development of conceptual frameworks: documents which provide a rationale, big ideas, and instructional approaches for teachers to consider when planning for a whole course. Conceptual frameworks help to frame an entire course of study. Unit plans, then, bridge the gap between conceptual frameworks and the day-to-day planning, teaching, and assessment that happens in the classroom. This wasn't an idea we came up with ourselves; you, the LCRSS members, helped to guide us in this direction. At the 2024 League Learning Day, one of the priorities that was identified for the League to pursue was unit development through the CARE Committee. This proposal received a high number of votes, suggesting the idea was both 'important' and 'urgent'. As a committee, we decided to develop a unit design template and to plan the February PD day around unit design for teachers.

After some refreshments and devotions, Mr. Mark den Hollander was welcomed to the podium. Mark's presentation was entitled, "A Reformed Teacher = A Unit Designer". In his presentation, he made the argument that unit design is an essential part of our job as reformed teachers. Mark noted that, in an age when it is all too easy to download a unit from the internet, we as reformed teachers must deliberately plan for skills and objectives, but also for approaches that will be effective for student learning.

Next, John Wynia presented CARE's new unit design template. The tricky thing about unit planning with a large number of schools represented is that each school uses different resources. So, participants were encouraged to focus on developing the concept of the unit plan using the conceptual framework as a guide, without getting bogged down in the details of day-to-day lesson planning, which often depends on the resources available to each teacher.

Participants were then split into two groups, based on a prior survey: Math and Music. A brief introduction to the recently-completed Math Conceptual Framework was led by Ms. Lydia VanVeen, while Mr. Steve De Boer did the same for Music. Participants then began to work with the template to attempt unit design with some teachers from similar grade levels. The work was "interrupted" by a delicious lunch of soup and buns.

Towards the end of the day, the groups shared some feedback on their experiences, both in unit planning with other teachers more generally, and also on CARE's unit design template. Finally, both Math and Music groups came together to collect feedback, reflect on the value of the day, and to close in devotions. We were encouraged by the feedback to both continue our work and to consider ways to further improve our approach.

Overall, CARE was pleased with the day, and we hope teachers were both encouraged and better equipped to consider their approaches to teaching math and music in their classrooms and to further develop their curriculum. We hope to continue to work with unit planning in a future CARE day, having taken into consideration the feedback that came in from the day itself, as well as from others following the day. May the Lord bless our work as we seek to equip teachers to lead students in his ways.

League Learning Day

By: Rachel Vis

On Saturday, March 29th, the LCRSS hosted its annual League Learning Day at Hope Reformed Christian School in Paris, ON. With over 30 member school representatives in attendance, the day was a great opportunity for school leaders to share, collaborate, and become more familiar with school policies related to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). Kent Dykstra, Jason Heemskerk, Mike Nederveen, Kevin Oostdyk, and John Wynia (members of the Ad Hoc SOGI committee) were in attendance to provide an overview of their work over the past few years, and guide the group through some thought-provoking SOGI-related scenarios. Based on information shared on the LLD registration form, only a small number of the schools represented had SOGI-related policies already in place, so this topic was very timely and valuable to the group.



After a short meditation by Jason Kottelenberg to open the day, the Ad Hoc SOGI committee presented their mission statement and recommendations for member schools. The committee recommended that each school create a Statement of Beliefs that is then published and referenced through each relevant policy in their manuals. To illustrate that point, the committee had the participants break off into smaller groups and then presented a number of scenarios for each group to discuss. The small groups were then asked to present their conclusive thoughts on topics such as Non-Member Enrollment, Employment Matters, Transgender Athletes, Student Challenges, Facility Use, and PR Incidents to the larger group for further discussion. The discussions that followed were insightful, and peppered with the grace of the gospel. What a gift it is that we can come together as Reformed Christians to encourage one another in this area as well!

In addition to the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, the "New Reformation Catechism on Human Sexuality" by Christopher Gordon, (which was published in the June/July/August 2022 issue of the Reformed Perspective magazine) was a resource that was referenced frequently during group discussions. There, Gordon tackles questions like: "What does God require of us in making us in His image?" and, " How should the family be maintained to the glory of God?" in order to "bring families, study groups, and churchgoers together around confessional-like statements that address the challenges of our day". Since our member schools serve to assist Reformed parents in the education of their children, it is good then, to once again read and reflect on the confessions that have shaped our churches and schools.

The day was enlightening and encouraging for all participants. Thank you to our hosts, Hope RCS, for the use of their facility, and the excellent lunch, and to all those who participated to help make the day a success!

The Hallmarks of Reformed Education

CONFESSIONALLY GROUNDED	COVENANTALLY FOUNDED	ENMITY SURROUNDED	BOUND IN UNITY
Learning to say “I do” to all that God reveals about Himself in His Word and works	Recognizing God’s claim on children who have received His promises in baptism	Equipping children for service in His Kingdom as prophets, priests, and kings	Working with home and church to tell children the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord