

The Messenger

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AP Science at WCA

Pam Opeka: Rewards of Teaching

Teaching, as you know, is hard work and requires much faith. Recalling that faith is the assurance of things not yet seen, it's not often that a teacher sees the results of that hard work. A Christian teacher, however, believes that God is, and that He rewards those who seek Him. Recently I was given such a reward; one of my students unknowingly complimented me. She said that when she leaves my class her head is so filled with knowledge she believes she can do anything! Wow! What a compliment! By God's grace I'm inspiring at least one of my students to greatness. I can take no credit, all glory to God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

My favorite thing about teaching Advanced Placement

Dr. Emelia Furlong: Results of an Excellent Program

What was your most difficult freshman college course? If you majored in science or engineering, it was probably chemistry, physics, or calculus. Introductory courses in mathematics and the physical sciences have a high failure rate for college freshmen.

The AP Program in these disciplines at WCA challenges students to develop college-level problem-solving skills while still in high school. Though this is a stretching experience, our AP Chemistry and Physics students get a boost because they have already encountered many of the same problems through the standard math curriculum at WCA. The smaller class size at WCA allows for much more individual assistance in AP science courses than is available at major universities where faculty-student ratios for these core freshman classes often exceed 100:1.

As a result of his hard work at WCA last year, Arpad Korossy placed out of first-year courses in math,

—Continued on next page

Biology is the doxology that naturally flows from studying God's general revelation. For example, I'm filled with awe each time I teach about the neuromuscular junction, its intricate structure and precise function. As we learn more about His creation we learn more about Him, the Creator of that creation. I believe that is how we begin to obey God's command to subdue the earth. The pursuit of science is the study of God's creation in the forms of biology, chemistry, physics and the like.

Here at WCA we not only study, but we humbly criticize what the world is presenting to us as science. We engage the sociobiologist who tells us that we are controlled by our genes, or the evolutionist that says we evolved from a single cell organism. Our goals go beyond filling students' heads with knowledge. We want to prepare them for their next step: college. While at college, their Christian worldview will be under attack. Helping them think through why they believe what they believe will give them the tools to succeed and influence their culture, all for God's glory.

Dr. David B. Kramer: The Future - Constant Improvement

The records already prove that our current AP courses are meeting the needs of our students. But WCA is also committed to finding ways to assure the long-term effectiveness of the AP program.

At the beginning of each school year, we meet with the headmaster to establish the goals to be achieved during the upcoming year. Goals are not limited to the curriculum; attention is also given to the adequacy of the lab and classroom facilities. Continuing education for teachers is also a high-priority item. After establishing goals and guidelines for improvement, follow-up meetings are planned to assure that progress is being made.

Each science teacher comes to WCA with enthusiasm for the sciences he/she will be teaching. Each teacher is encouraged to fan that enthusiasm by taking advanced science courses, and courses related to modeling a Christian worldview.

chemistry, and computer science at the U.S. Naval Academy. Other AP math and science students like Agur Adams and Jana Holiday have found that A's and B's in these difficult courses in college came easier because they had struggled long and hard with the material in high school. Agur even found that his computer programming course at the Naval Academy used the same textbook as his WCA AP course. His fellow midshipmen often came to him for help with the course material. Another WCA AP student, Chris Shoemaker, received a double college benefit from his WCA education: he spent a year in Switzerland studying physics in German, his required high school language.

We are proud of these students for the success they have gained through their hard work, and are glad that we can offer them courses that will develop their appreciation for the order in God's creation, along with their higher reasoning skills.



Alumna is heading to Israel

Esther Adams is a 1996 graduate of WCA who will graduate from the University of Virginia in May with a BA History, MA Education. At UVA, Esther has been a leader with InterVarsity, was the student director for residence life (receiving the Gray-Carrington Award), and was a founder of the Christian Fellowship Council.

After graduation, Esther will pack her bags and head for Tel Aviv, Israel, where she will join the high school faculty at the International School. She will teach Honors History, coach the Model United Nations team, and advise seniors on thesis writing. Esther declined opportunities to teach in the United States or Europe because she is eager to make an impact on students beyond the usual "safe zones." She says, "The world is larger than the United States and Europe; as Christians, we need to be teaching the world's future leaders in all areas of the globe."

WCA Mission Accomplished: another graduate prepared to occupy her place worthily in society, church, and state. Thanks be to God!

NOTES FROM THE HEADMASTER

Can you believe that April is here already? The school year has gone by so very fast, and summer is quickly approaching. Let me use this opportunity to get you caught up on some odds and ends.

Please rejoice with us over the re-enrollment and admissions status, which indicates the stability of WCA. As of this point, we have a re-enrollment of 75%, that is, 271 students out of 359 re-enrolled. In addition, we already have 64 new student applications, while at this time last year we had 188 re-enrolled, and 35 new applications. The official re-enrollment period has passed, and we are in the process of accepting new students. We urge those families who have not yet re-enrolled to do so quickly, before the places are given away.

Over the past months, the administration has been actively analyzing our K-12 academic program in order to assess exactly where we are with our academics. This has included a six-year assessment of our standardized test scores (ITBS), PSAT, and SAT scores. The WCA composite SAT score average for the past 10 years is 1202, while it is 978 nationally, and 1088 for Montgomery County. Some of our students have scored over 1500 out of the 1600 maximum.

You are well aware that the Board Site Committee has been diligently searching for new sites for our Upper School program, since we are fast growing out of our Franwall Avenue facility. In just the past few weeks, we have been examining the option of the Chestnut Lodge property, which is up for bankruptcy right now. This site is located in Rockville just off 270 on Route 28. The Board has approved further investigation. Please pray with us for God's clear guidance both in the final decision as well as the funding. To keep you informed, we have planned several informational meetings and a possible projected Society meeting to deal with this. Those dates are given in another place in this publication. Much has to happen in a short time. It will be exciting to see God's direction.

Recently, I returned from Grand Rapids, MI, where I attended the board meeting of Christian Schools International. It is my privilege to represent our northeast region on this board. This board, made up of representatives of the thirteen CSI regions located in the U.S. and Canada, meets three times a year to conduct the business of the organization, of which WCA is a member. It is such a joy to hear all that God is doing in Christian education around the world. God's Kingdom is being established in God's covenant children. So when you pray for WCA, please pray for all the other Christian schools scattered around the world, as well.

We are having a most enjoyable times at the weekly Parent Coffees (every Friday morning at 8:30). Please, come and join us.

Parents: Two Ways to Be Partners

In the spring and early summer, we ask each family at WCA to consider how the Lord might move them to participate in the completion of our Academy Fund Drive. Your gifts have made a huge difference—a difference that's visible from outside the front door and under your feet in the hallways. It's perceptible overhead, too (the roof may not look different, but it keeps the rain out!). But we still need \$35,000 to cover the costs of this year's capital improvements.

Every single dollar helps get us there. That is the first benefit of including WCA in your charitable giving plan for 2001.

Meeting our future needs also depends on winning the support of foundations and major donors. The percentage of our close-in constituents (parents) who are committed enough to donate is one of the things that most attracts gifts from such sources. Many private schools can demonstrate the loyalty of their constituency easily—because 90% of school parents contribute to the annual fund, even while receiving tuition assistance. And this is the second benefit you confer on WCA when you partner with us in the Academy Fund drive.

The following chart is included to encourage every family to boost the percentage. (Donors are credited in all grades they have children in.)

	% of families who have given so far in 2000-01
Kindergarten	26 %
1 st grade	19 %
2 nd grade	31 %
3 rd grade	20 %
4 th grade	22 %
5 th grade	15 %
6 th grade	24 %
7 th grade	28 %
8 th grade	18 %
9 th grade	32 %
10 th grade	50 %
11-12 th grade	35 %

Riddle:

When does \$5 equal \$5,000?

Answer: When the number of donors is what matters, not the amount they donate. WCA needs to demonstrate that 100% of its families share the mission of the school.

Why does this matter to foundations? Because it indicates that there does exist a group of people who think that the mission in question is important.

Which moves me to ask: *Is* is important to you? Do you really consider Christian education important enough to place it on your giving list? Does it matter to you to provide an academically focused Christian school, such as WCA for kids like yours to attend?

—Robin U. Gropp
Development Director

Cheerleading at WCA

Being a cheerleader at WCA for my last two years of High School has been a great learning experience. The friendships formed among the cheerleaders are priceless. Having to work together, especially while learning new cheers, builds a sense of teamwork and trust.

I will never forget all the fun things we shared: the conversations we had in the car on our way to games,

getting lost because the game was in the boonies, or coming to school for an entire Saturday afternoon to decorate the school for Spirit Week, which is among my most pleasant memories. We had the whole school to ourselves, and it was up to us to decorate it any way we wanted to.

Cheerleading played a very positive role and was a major part in my high school career. Go Wildcats!

—Katiana Adrien '01

From *Here* and *There*

Kindergarteners and first graders celebrated the **100th day of the school year** with many different activities involving the number 100.

The second graders wrote in language class about **why they love the USA**. Here are some of their reasons: *It is the land of freedom * You are allowed to praise and worship God in your own way * We are allowed to have Christian schools * I love the American flag * I like the seasons that are in America * I like the smell of flowers * Way, way back, there was a very honest president * Our country is honest and fair * There are good second grade teachers * Our country is free from war * I love America because blacks have freedom and this country is fair to all colors * It is a very kind country to all the black people * I love it and that's that!*

Mrs. Robinson's third grade and Mrs. Vendt's kindergarten classes have been getting together every Friday for "**buddy-time**". The third graders read to the Kindergarteners and work together on a long math project of preparing graphs. It is great to see the gentle relationship between the young and "old" students. Several kindergarteners whisper with excitement as they walk to Chapel: "That's my third grade buddy," and "That's mine."

Third grade held an **Invention Fair** in the school library. Each of the creations included the combination of at least two simple machines. They also had a "Machine" versus "Human" race. The favorite one was shaker verses blender, as real milkshakes were made that the children could sample. The machines won all the races, but the students recognized that machines are made by humans and can do only limited things.

Mrs. Brown's fourth graders were fascinated by the traditional "**owl pellet study**," in which they identified



The teddy bears are ready to carry our children's love to Russian orphans

what animal the owl had eaten by separating and identifying the skeletal remains found in the pellets. They also studied **Africa**, and displayed in their classroom various objects from that continent, and photographs of our African students.

Mrs. Brown's class collected **teddy bears for Russian orphans**. Soon the whole school was bringing in bears. Then the children wrote letters to the orphans and placed them around the bears' necks. Then the bears were taken to Lancaster, PA, where they were supplied with a gospel bracelet and message and shipped to Russia by Josh McDowell Ministry.

Fifth graders assembled the **Maryland cake** again, preparing and decorating it county by county. A "sweet" tradition enjoyed by all the school.

The Upper School celebrated the successful **winter sports season** with a banquet, and they are ready for the new season of baseball, track and tennis.

The Upper School had a **ski trip to Whitetail**. What a treat! We hope to see this to become a tradition.

The student council organized an "**Upper School Winter Party**," in lieu of a Valentine party.

A new high school team is preparing for the **Model United Nations** and the **Model Arab League Conferences**.

Welcome the **new members** born to our school families: a grandson to Mrs. Brown, and a daughter to the Taneys.

The "**Carpool Garden Club**" of parents are responsible for the pleasant landscaping improvement we are all enjoying recently. Thank you!



Forth graders delivering baby items to Rockville Pregnancy Center



Vocation – The Call to all believers to a place of service

Part 3 of 3 of the final article in a series on the distinctive emphases of the Reformed tradition, and how these influence the educational project of WCA. You may find the full series in the Archives of our web site, along with suggested readings on each of the topics.

Introduction

Previously, we saw that God calls believers to a vocation that has eternal significance as well as fulfillment in this life. We suggested that the difference this perspective makes will be seen in a commitment to excellence for the Glory of God, a serious effort to recognize and to equip for vocation, and an integrated approach to knowledge. This final segment suggests two more applications.

Unique Gifts

God's secondary call is unique to each individual. Scripture reminds us, "I have called you by name." We acknowledge that there is a diversity of gifts and abilities; one size does not fit all. Because we recognize the value and dignity God attaches to individual people and their respective callings, we strive to cultivate God-given gifts. We invest the resources necessary to insure that teachers can know and guide each single student.

Education as a Vocation

The Greeks are acknowledged as the educators of the western world. Long after their political influence was eclipsed, they still educated the leaders and shaped the culture of all subsequent western nations. What was behind this lasting influence? They had a consistent theoretical foundation for *why* to educate in the first place, a consensus on a comprehensive curriculum, and a culture they felt should be conveyed to the next generation. But that has changed. Now, we do not have a curriculum we can agree on, our culture is protean, and no effort is made to select or convey the best of an enduring culture. With this inevitably comes the loss of a reason why to have school at all, as predicted by Neal Postman in the *End of Education*. Hints of skepticism about the mission of schools are common in the popular press.

It is fitting in this final article in the series to suggest a larger view of education as a vocation. God is calling His people to replace the Greeks as the new educators of the world. Christians have the basis for real education and the mandate to create a satisfying and beautiful culture. God is leading Christian schools to become the "breeder" institutions for significant education, to make our schools the training ground for cultural transformation. We should aspire to a larger vision of vocation, and expect God's blessing on these truly Reformed Christian schools.

Site Search: The Best Opportunity Yet!

A beautiful site in Rockville, currently the Chestnut Lodge facility, is in bankruptcy court and will have its assets sold off on April 23 at a bargain rate. WCA is aggressively pursuing this possibility. We are holding the following meetings to keep the entire community informed of developments, and to seek your input:

Informational Meetings on the Chestnut Lodge site

Tuesday, April 3, at 7:30 p.m. in the APR

Thursday, April 5, at 8:30 a.m., room TBA (with coffee)

Called Society Meeting

(assuming we are still in the running for the site at that time)

Thursday, April 19, at 7:30 p.m. in the APR

We are also making information available in the entry hall at school.



PROMISE TREE



We hope that you are planning to attend our Promise Tree Auction on Saturday, April 28, to support our tuition assistance fund. This event has grown tremendously in the past couple of years, and is an evening you will not want to miss. Last year, we raised a record \$23,175 for the tuition assistance fund, sold 212 items ranging from \$2 to \$3,000, and enjoyed warm fellowship with one another.

We have made an extra effort this year to divide some of the items into smaller units so that there are more items to bid on for all budgets. We have received many fabulous auction items, which will be listed in our Auction Catalog that will be mailed to current school families and teachers by April 17. If you would like an extra copy of the Catalog, please call the school office at (301) 649-1070, and we would be happy to mail one to you. If you have an item or service you would like to donate, please call Jean Visy at (301) 924-4906, and your donation will be included in the Addendum. Don Dean, a former WCA parent and board member, will be our auctioneer. A dessert buffet and catered cappuccino bar will be available for you to enjoy. We would like to thank ALKS & Associates; Allseasons Plumbing; GDSS; Lerch, Early & Brewer; and Llewellyn Realtors for their generous support in underwriting this year's Promise Tree Auction.

Please come and be a part of this memorable evening. There is no admission charge, so please invite your family and friends—it is a great way to introduce others to our WCA community!

Reading at WCA

Washington Christian Academy has, since its inception, consistently supported a “developmentally appropriate” educational program for our students in Nursery School through Kindergarten. What do professional Early Childhood educators at WCA mean when they speak of a “developmentally appropriate program”? How might such a program look in actual practice? How would this classroom differ from any other? To answer these questions, we need to have an understanding of the educational tasks that must be accomplished by a child of 3, 4, or 5 years of age.

Growth and development of the brain and the concomitant personality of the child will progress during these crucial years at a rate unrivaled by any other time in the life of that child. Teachers of young children bear a great responsibility—not only teaching skills, but also helping to shape children’s attitudes toward school and learning for the rest of their lives. At WCA, we believe that a program that is developmentally appropriate for young children incorporates, through structured play, activities which promote the child’s language, social, and three-dimensional math concept skills; auditory attention span; problem-solving abilities; motivation; interpersonal relations; and many other skills and abilities. And, of course, in fulfilling the mission of WCA, we strive to integrate all of these activities into the greater context of the Christian world view.

New information must be tied to a child’s previous experience for learning to take place. A developmental classroom, therefore, is activity centered, drawing directly from the child’s reality. Integrated theme learning permits students to “live their lives” in the classroom just as they do outside of it. This integrated type of learning incorporates art, music, drama, and physical education into the center of the classroom, as integral components of the curriculum, not as frills or extras. Development in areas such as reading, math, writing, and social studies flows naturally out of this sort of approach. For example, words cannot be learned in isolation by “teaching reading.” Students must be able to see a connection to the world they already know for the usefulness of interpreting print to have meaning.

At WCA, our goal is to help our students form attitudes toward school that exude joy in the process of learning, and an excitement at the acquisition of knowledge that helps them build their understanding of the world God has created for them to enjoy.

So...do we “teach reading” in our Early Childhood program at WCA? Of course we do—through physical activity (directionality, eye-hand coordination, left-to-right progression), through conversation (developing

vocabulary and comprehension), through project work (listening skills, self control to maintain attention, and ability to sort and classify information), through language experience stories (understanding that speech is written down, learning to observe and discriminate information, and developing sequential memory and understanding), through teachers’ reading aloud (becoming familiar with different types of literature, and developing listening skills and verbal reasoning ability), through music, art, and drama (to develop rhythm and timing, eye-hand coordination, and tactile discrimination), and through the seeking of learning opportunities in everything we do.

—Carol A. Parent
Lower School Principal

See our web site for the full version of this article.

Strategic Planning Update

The strategic planning committee is continuing its efforts to prepare a document to focus our march into the future. We are working toward preparing a draft version of what we would like WCA to continue to be, including changes that would enhance our future in service to Him. We are very aware of how God has richly blessed WCA in the past and what challenges remain. We are discussing areas ranging from curriculum and programs (sports, theatrical, etc.), to staffing and facility requirements.

We will soon be seeking additional input from our constituencies. If you have immediate input or would like to assist the committee, please contact Brian Vander Haak or any other member of the committee.

—Brian Vander Haak

To Ponder



“ . . . the classic formulation goes like this: Before Adam and Eve fell in the Garden, man was able to sin—and our first parents converted that ability into reality. Since the Fall, we are not able not to sin: our inevitable direction is toward wrong action and wrong understanding. Once we are converted to Christ, we still have natural dispositions, but we are graced with a new ability: we are sometimes able *not* to sin. And our hope is in heaven, where God will complete the work He has done on us, and leave us not able to sin.”

—Marvin Olasky: “Journalism and Sin” *World*, Aug 7, 1999

Coram Deo

What is your only comfort in life, and in death?

That I belong—body and soul, in life and in death—not to myself, but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, who at the cost of His own blood has fully paid for all my sins and has completely freed me from the dominion of the devil;

that He protects me so well that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, that everything must fit His purpose for my salvation.

Therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him.

Heidelberg Catechism, First Question and Answer