

ACCA Faculty Independent Sessions

Professional Development

Name: Michelle Williams

Date: 3/13/2014

Seminar or Activity: 2 Articles from The Classical Teacher Winter 2013: Informing Ourselves to Death by Neil Postman and The Siren Song of Education Technology by Martin Cothran

What you learned from this session:

For several years, I have been concerned about the role that technology plays in our lives. I have especially been concerned about how technology is affecting children today. I have been alarmed on numerous times to hear of how much access some of my students seem to have to the internet and how many movies and television shows they seem to watch. At the same time, I have seen that technology can be useful in the classroom, and I now have the ability to show things to my children relating to our studies that I couldn't before because of the limits in technology. For example, it is much more effective to show the entire class an image of an historical place or a work of art on the projector than in a book that must be passed around the room.

In Neil Postman's article, he made the point that the amount of information that we are exposed to through technology in its various forms disturbs our concept of an ordered world, and as a result we now live in a world that does not make sense to us on many levels. He states that "there is almost no fact-whether actual or imagined - that will surprise us for very long, since we have no comprehensive and consistent picture of the world which would make the fact appear as an unacceptable contradiction." He uses the analogy of a new deck of cards. As we turn each card over, we pick up the pattern and are able to predict what will show up next. We would be surprised to see a 3 of spades appear after the 4 of diamonds in an unshuffled deck. But in a shuffled deck, we would not expect any card in particular to appear; it could be one as well as another. He further elaborates by comparing the belief system of the Middle Ages to a new deck of cards. "There existed an ordered, comprehensible world-view, beginning with the idea that all knowledge and goodness come from God." On the other hand the situation we are now in is more like the shuffled deck of cards. There is no consistent, integrated conception of the world. He further states that this situation was not caused by computers but rather began with the invention of the printing press. He states that the printing press started a "liberating stream" which has become a "deluge of chaos". Because we have so much information streaming in, our filters or "our defenses against the information glut have broken down". Postman affirms that the computer cannot provide an organizing moral framework. We as educators and parents of the young must provide that moral framework for our children. In the next article, The Siren Song of Education Technology, Martin Cothran refutes the arguments made by Larry Cuban,

a progressive educator who believes that technology should change the role of classroom teachers from their traditional role of one who imparts knowledge, understanding and wisdom to students. He wants computers to enable the teachers to serve as one who "coaches" children as they gather information themselves. Cothran states that one of the most important things that education should do is to order our experience. He states that "there is a natural reality we can apprehend through mathematics and the sciences and an ontological reality which we apprehend through literature and philosophy." Another point that Cothran makes is that the deluge of information causes us to focus too much on everything that is happening now, and as a result we become cut off from the past as well as the future. He sums up his argument by stating that the two functions of technology in the schools is to teach other things and as something to be taught (in other words how to use the computer). He argues that the two things we should be teaching are wisdom and virtue and the computer is not the best means to teach those things. He finished by stating that "the best 'technology' is the liberal arts: the set of language and math skills that allow us to learn everything else."

Would you recommend: Yes

Where to find resource: The Classical Teacher Winter 2013 (The Memoria Press catalogue) I will make a copies for you if you like.

Name: Melissa Hobson

Date: 3/13/2014

Seminar or Activity: Ken Robinson "Educationalist"

What you learned from this session:

"how schools kill creativity"

This TED talk is reported to be the most watched talk of all time. I can understand why. He dynamically explains how children are not frightened by being wrong, but mistakes are stigmatized in adults. Education currently trains this fear into us.

Robinson says intelligence is diverse, dynamic and distinct.

I really loved it and am excited for ACCA's initiatives to bring Art and Music into the everyday life of the school rather than a "special."

Would you recommend: Yes

Where to find resource: Linked to Teacher Resource Page

Name: Lexi

Date: 3/13/2014

Seminar or Activity: Douglas Wilson, "Educating Yourself"

What you learned from this session:

This seminar is a call back to a puritan work ethic and the reading of as many good books as possible. The first half centers on the value of working hard and teaching our children to work hard. Wilson uses a verse in Proverbs about the one who slacks being brother to the one who destroys in order to support abandonment of the modern "convenience store" approach to education (for teacher, student, parent, board...)- the want of immediate satisfaction without rigorous work. He makes the encouraging statement that schools and churches in their beginning stages WILL be lean and hungry for years. With immediate prosperity, the value and necessity of hard work is not learned and you wouldn't actually be building a good school or church. It is our job to be faithful, not successful. He brings up the fact of work not being a result of the fall - it's something for which we were created. Only through hard work will we find value and satisfaction (as opposed to the modern idea of indulging whims and building "self esteem"). I love a quote he used in reference to the teaching of churches (and then applied to education): Soft teaching results in hard people; hard teaching results in soft people.

The second half of this seminar centers on the importance of reading in order to educate oneself. He states that our current world is dangerously vulnerable to lies because we are so detached from history. And in order to avoid chronological provincialism, we must be given to old books and learn to read intelligently, cultivating humility of mind and surrendering to God all of our assumptions, prejudices, and mental habits and be willing for Him to teach us anything He wants. This wasn't so much a session of me learning a bunch of new or practical skills to apply in the classroom as it was an encouragement in continuing on in the rigor of the present and motivation to continue reading those good books. I think it's worth a listen.

Would you recommend: Yes

Where to find resource: resource shelf in Michelle's room

Name: Laura Keesee

Date: 4/10/2014

Seminar or Activity: ACCS seminar, Easing the transition from Christian to Classical and Christian by Sharon Miller

What you learned from this session:

I did not really learn anything new but was affirmed in knowing much of what we are doing in terms of continually learning more about classical Christian education and working to give parents understanding, was what was being encouraged in this seminar.

Would you recommend: No

Where to find resource: ACCS conference website

Name: Rachael Keesee

Date: 4/10/2014

Seminar or Activity: Dr. Christopher Perrin: On finishing the year strong

What you learned from this session:

This podcast is about keeping students motivated late in the school year. They spoke of the misconception that education stops when formal education ends. If teachers are indeed teaching students to cultivate wonder and love to learn then students will not stop learning over the summer. The summer is an opportunity for students to further learn what they have been taught to love in school. For example if a student has found a love for music during the school year he may spend his summer learning to play an instrument and attending concerts. While another student may develop a great love for poetry and use the summer to attend reading and plays. Younger students will enjoy nature first hand going for hikes and exploring because they have been taught to love what God has created.

They recommended making school more reflection based instead of worrying about getting to the end of the text book. For students to truly master a concept they need time to reflect instead of rushing to the next topic. They suggested reducing the curriculum so that students have a chance to truly master each topic. For example when studying Shakespeare they recommend reading several of his works and not to just read one book over a couple weeks and expect students to learn to enjoy it. Once students start to master topics they get a hunger for mastery. They also suggest making the classroom a more inviting atmosphere, like a art gallery, a nice restaurant, or a home. Instead of having white walls, fluorescent lighting, and plastic poster making the classroom somewhere that people want to be.

In summary students will not be as eager for summer if their formal education is reflective, enjoyable, and rewarding rather than it just being another motion causing stress or anxiety.

Would you recommend: Yes

Where to find resource: CiRCE Audio Library

Name: Lexi

Date: 4/10/2014

Seminar or Activity: "Toolbox of a Grammar Teacher" - Matt Whitling

What you learned from this session:

This was a pretty basic overview of the kind of students we teach in the grammar stage (their natural tendency to memorize ridiculous amounts of facts) and it highlights the three most important tools for the grammar school teacher to wield (in order to accommodate that natural tendency): singing, chanting, and sound offs. He

also gives three ways to aid in our students' acquisition of facts and rules: make practice pleasant (not fun), build in consistent review, and never think there is a substitute for hard work. I think this would be a good seminar for someone who is not very familiar with the nature of the grammar stage. I did not really learn anything new, though I did appreciate some of his descriptions and little nuggets of information along the way. Our classrooms should be "rigorously pleasant," he explains – both cultivating an enjoyment of learning, but also an ethic of hard work. He also briefly mentions curriculum guides, stating that if our goal in the grammar stage is to teach facts and rules, then the way the guides are created needs to address facts and rules. He says that the way in which the objectives are stated can highly influence the way teachers perceive their job. He also claims that it is a healthy sign if a first year teacher looks at the curriculum guide and is overwhelmed by all the students need to know. If this is true, ACCA's fourth grade guide must be pretty healthy. And this leads me to a great concluding nugget – "Don't judge what they can handle by what you can handle."

Would you recommend: No

Where to find resource: audio seminar - teacher resource shelf in Michelle's room

Name: Donna St.Hill

Date: 4/11/2014

Seminar or Activity: The Over-Mothered, Under-Fathered Generation by Tim Moon

What you learned from this session:

This article challenged me to give fathers an opportunity to be a part of their child's education. When given enough time to plan, they actually want to be involved in what is going.

Tim Moon explains that men are able to encourage risk taking and not take their child's failure personally. Christian education is designed to prepare students for the real challenges of life. Mothers are working on letting go of the need to nurture well pass the grammar years. Fathers understand the discipline needed to lead and provide for the family no matter the cost. The transition that takes place from the grammar years where there is more nurturing to the adolescent years where there is the continued lessons of perseverance through difficulty fathers play an integral role in shaping.

"Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see" Neil Postman
I am excited to have more dads coming with us on our next field trip to the Renaissance Festival.

Would you recommend: Yes

Where to find resource: <http://www.accsedu.org/filerequest/3558.pdf>
