

# for Parents

February 24, 2008

## Seeing ourselves through the eyes of others

*How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? John 5:44*

At times I have been accused of reporting only the good news about Cornerstone, of being a shameless “cheerleader,” of sounding like a huckster in an advanced state of boosterism. Then my right brain male chemical kicks in<sup>1</sup> and I overreact by not telling any good things at all about our school. Combine this pattern with a sincere regard for the intent of the scripture quoted at the beginning of the article, and you may see how difficult this article is for me to write.

Nevertheless, our teachers are worth bragging about. I often tell people that I have never before administrated a school where I can walk in any room any time with confidence that (1) the teacher will be fully in control; (2) the students will be on task and actively participating; and (3) something edifying will be happening.

Last week we were honored to host two visitors from Rocky Mountain Christian Academy in Niwot, Colorado, a fellow classical Christian school. Dr. Sylvia Robinson, elementary principal, and Mrs. Barb Bulthuis, director of development, spent a whole day on the CCA campus, visiting nearly every classroom and interviewing most staff members. They were encouraged to do this by their administrator, Mr. Brett King, who served on Cornerstone’s accreditation site team last fall. Here are some of their thoughts.

One of their commendations had to do with the level of thinking skills observed in our students. They recounted seeing in one classroom pairs of students assigned to research a topic together. Instead of a worksheet to fill in (which would represent only what a *teacher* finds interesting about a given topic) the students were allowed to come up with their own “interesting facts” on the subject. As the visitors went around the room and eavesdropped on each group, there were excited about two things. First of all, they commented, these are students who are **happy** about learning. Their enthusiasm was evident, and is obviously a strong motivator for success in the activities they were completing. Secondly, they noted, the students were critiquing the sources they were reading, instead of just taking everything at face value. Groups were wondering aloud why certain types of information seemed to be missing from articles, or why explanations sometimes seemed convoluted or inadequate. These critical reading skills will serve them well in our information-saturated, spin-doctored culture.

Another significant impact was made when an older student showed the visitors a copybook he had just completed on life in the Middle Ages. He patiently took them through, page by page, and talked knowledgeably about geography, language, customs, historical events, and famous people. They stopped on several pages to ask for further information, and he never disappointed them. Their summary statement? “That young man has taken complete ownership of what he has learned! That’s what we want.”

In the spirit of the admonitory scripture from John 5:44 (above), “Glory to God!”

<sup>1</sup>Concar and Mestel, “Cherchez la Difference,” *New Scientist Magazine*, 27 April 1996.