

## Featured Articles

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# THE NEW

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Nazarene  
Educators  
Worldwide

To embrace, encourage, and empower through a network of Christian educators.

## Finishing Strong - By Becky Ramsey

When students and teachers come to the fourth quarter of the school year, way too often the focus is the end of school or even what is going to happen after the last bell has rung. Many discussions around the lunch tables or in the faculty lounge are about summer plans rather than on school work or the final semester strategy. I believe as Christians our focus must be to finish strong. Christ has told us that whatever our hands find to do, we are to do it with all our might. (Ecclesiastes 9:10, NIV).



CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

1. To finish strong, teachers must choose the best lessons for the rest of the school days. In my situation, I have lost several teaching days due to new testing procedures required by the state and an exceptionally difficult winter with snow days. I must adjust what I have taught in the past and decide what I will teach in the days to come. I must decide also what will be left undone this year. Choosing which concepts are needed most by my students is often a difficult decision and should not be made lightly or selfishly. I must consider what will benefit the class in the long run and meet the most state standards. Some teachers would choose the lessons by which ones would be the easiest to prepare. However, what are needed is the lessons that will bring the best long-term results for my students' needs. Considering their needs over my convenience is a necessity.

2. To finish strong, teachers must plan for the demands of their struggling students. By this time in the year, a student who faces difficulties is often tempted to give up completely. And, and if I am totally honest, a teacher could be equally as tempted to do the same. That impulse is increased when there is no support from the home as well. It is easy to think, "Well, if their parents don't care enough to help, why am I worrying about this problem so much?" Maybe God has put you as the teacher in this child's life for a reason. He, the God of the Universe, had a plan when He put this child in your classroom, because He thought you would care enough! Continuing a plan at the end of the year is important for these fragile learners. If they see that you (as the teacher) are not giving up, maybe it will encourage them to keep going as well. It does not hurt to lay out a plan for the start of the next year as well. Next year's teacher would welcome a jumpstart on the new school year with some ideas that worked and a heads-up on some things that did not go as well in the past. (Continued on page 3)

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CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE



## God's Love - by Melodee Simmons

We were visiting my in-laws for a combined celebration of my father-in-law's birthday and Easter. My father-in-law was talking about how Jesus' death was the ultimate act of love. God gave His Son to make a way for people to have forgiveness and eternal life with Him. He did this even though people had a history of ignoring God and doing what they wanted. John 3:16 (NIV) says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." To give His Son for the death that He knew would happen was a demonstration of a love that we may not be able to understand. Fortunately, we do not have to understand it, just accept it.

I began to think about the children we are given to care for and teach every day. Jesus gave His life for them, too. What are we doing to show them His love? If we really believe what Jesus did in His death on the Cross, shouldn't we be passing on that love to those children?

Think about all the children we see every day and their families. Are we acting like we really believe Jesus died for them also?

In secular schools you may not be able to talk to the children about Jesus, but we need to be showing Jesus' love through our actions to the children and their parents. Many people don't know about Jesus' love for them; they have never heard the story of God's love.

Through your actions, people can



### CHILDCARE/PRESCHOOL

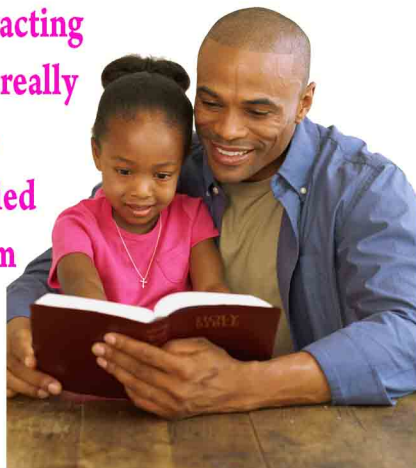
see there is something different in you. Welcome the child with your true happiness that he is there. Even the child who tries your patience is a special child to God; remember that thought as the child is coming into your room, and you will find your attitude toward that child changing. Parents notice when teachers truly care about their child. You never know when an opportunity to share Jesus' story of love will come.

If you work in a Christian school, be sure to tell the stories of Jesus to the children. Help them to know that Jesus loves them. This is something that will stay with them the rest of their lives, no matter where they go or what they do. They should have the knowledge of Jesus' love for them.

With all Jesus has done for us, can we do anything less than to share His love story with the little children that were so important to Him? He made time for them; He told the disciples to let them come to Him. This may be the only time in their lives that they hear this. I don't want to be responsible for a child not hearing of God's love. Do you?

**Think about all the children we see every day and their families.**

**Are we acting like we really believe Jesus died for them also?**



## Perseverance to the End of the Race - By Beula Postlewait

We could compare a year of teaching to completing a race. At the beginning of the year (race), there is the excitement and energy of new students and new expectations. We hope the year will be the best year of teaching in our experience.

Hebrews 12:1 talks about "running the race with perseverance." Webster's Dictionary defines persevere as: "to persist in a state, enterprise, or undertaking in spite of counter influences, opposition, or discouragement." Take note of the key words "in spite of."

What are the "in spite of" conditions that bog down our enthusiasm during the spring months?

1. Weariness. During the spring months, our energy levels sometimes lessen. If the school year started in July or August, your energy level and enthusiasm may need a boost.
2. Interruption of your normal routines for testing can be frustrating.
3. End-of-the-year field trips can be interesting and fun, but they also bring stress as you take students from the safe environment of school to a public place.
4. Final grading of students' work and end-of-the-year conferences can be stressful.
5. You repeat a concept or set of instructions that you have told the students every month (some more often) since the school year began, and the students still look at you like they have never heard what you said.
6. Students procrastinate the completion of special projects or assignments though they have been given numerous warnings.
7. Contracts and assignments for the next school year bring a special kind of stress.

What would you add to the list?

The spring months can be a test of your perseverance. The definition says we persist in spite of the obstacles and stress. How do we persist? Isaiah 41:10 says: "So do not fear, for I (God) am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

God bless you! Persevere in His strength!



PUBLIC SCHOOL

## What I Love (and Don't Love) About Common Core and Standardized Testing - By Marilyn J. Dominick,

It's that time of year again here in New York State – time for Standardized Tests for Grades 3 – 8 in English, Language Arts, and Math. Since the adoption of No Child Left Behind, Standardized State Testing, and more recently Common Core Curriculum, the debate between fans and foes on these subjects has been hot and heavy. Both sides articulate strong positions. Where do we as Christian educators fit into all of this? I'd like to take this opportunity to share my thinking on these topics, not to force my views on anyone, but simply to "editorialize" a bit in order to share my heart.

While spending 34 years as an educator and more than that as a parent/grandparent, I have seen many initiatives crafted to improve student achievement in our country. In fact, I used to joke that I would retire when I saw things come around for a third time! From the birth of our great nation, we have been known around the world as the "idea" people. We have led the world in innovation, technology, and application of knowledge and skills. What we have not done well is performance on "standards" that are recognized as important "rote" learning. And, there is wide variation from state to state within our country regarding what is taught

colleges, and of course, their acceptance is highly competitive. Often, their family's financial resources play into this system. Those who do make the cut perform very well and are very thankful to be selected. Others are trained in less rigorous programs, if at all. Here in America, we offer a free and appropriate education to ALL students. Some excel, but not all.

- We underestimate the impact of poverty and ethnicity in our culture as that plays out in public education. In the reports on failing schools, these two factors are hardly mentioned. Most high performing public schools are blessed with high income families who have placed a very high value on education and have communicated that to their children. Students in poverty have many more challenges than those with more resources. (I note here that the Church may consider doing much more for these families – for instance, sharing resources, supporting parents in their efforts, offering academic assistance, and volunteering to help their schools.)

So, what's good about trying to standardize education in America by introducing a common core curriculum? In my opinion, where a student lives should not matter in regard to the quality of the education he/she receives. But, that is not the reality, unfortunately. So, setting a standard of excellence is not a weak concept. Common core intends to do that. So why, then, do educators, and many others balk at the idea?

(Continued on page 4)



Picture above found at [www.tneagleforum.org](http://www.tneagleforum.org)

## Finishing Strong - By Becky Ramsey

(Continued from page 1)

3. To finish strong, we cannot leave the academically gifted to just coast at this time of the year. Many times teachers allow the gifted to take care of their own needs rather than challenging them to the next level. We let them be satisfied with mediocrity instead of stimulating their minds to seek for something more. We must find ways to make learning enticing for them and then have them challenge the rest of the class with their enthusiasm.

4. To finish strong, we also have to make sure that our attitude towards these last days remains positive and that we are just as excited at the end of the year as when we opened that brand new box of crayons on the first day of school. We might need to plan some special events and things to look forward to during those last few weeks and days. Planning fun events always helps to keep spirits headed in the right direction, both for students and for teachers.

No matter what, when I turn out that last light as I leave my room at the end of the year, I want to be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7, NIV). Sometimes, organizing a classroom the right way is a "good fight." And way too often, I feel as if I am in the middle of a "rat race" to get everything done that an "efficient" teacher would do!

But more than anything, as one who loves the Lord and feels a calling to this position as a teacher, I want to keep the faith as I serve in my classroom. What I do in my classroom is not merely for a paycheck. What I do is to please the One who has called me to serve. If I please Him, then my parents, my students, and my administration will be satisfied with my work. I want to ---FINISH STRONG---these last two months. Help me to do so, Lord Jesus. Amen.

and expected. The responsibility to provide a free and appropriate public education for ALL of our citizens has been given to each state, along with autonomy to decide what that should look like. Some states do a better job than others, but none of us do really well when compared to other nations. Why is that? I offer to you two reasons:

- Excellence and equity are not compatible with each other when we talk about educating an entire population. In most high performing nations, not everyone is provided with a high quality education. Only the strongest students are accepted into high schools and



## ***What I Love (and Don't Love) About Common Core and Standardized Testing - By Marilyn J. Dominick***

(Continued from page 3)

Many states, including New York, have adopted a scripted delivery system of the curriculum. Excellent teachers do not need a script, but may be forced to use it anyway, undermining their autonomy and actually weakening instructional delivery. Teachers new to the profession and/or those who need the support of such a script may actually increase their effectiveness with this same scripted curriculum. As with most initiatives, there is good with the not-so-good. Over all, the scripting may support mediocrity, while limiting our most excellent instructional practices. It is a solid truth that, when a rich curriculum is presented with instructionally sound methods, the tests will take care of themselves. No need for stress, right?

In the testing arena, assessment is a necessary element of good education. We've known for a long time that what is tested is indeed what is taught. It gives us something to reach for, and it's good to know the standard we need to achieve. However, witnessing first-hand before the tests the angst and stress of my 9-year-old granddaughter and the tears of my precious daughter – in – law, who lovingly teaches fourth grade in the inner city, is indeed heart wrenching. So much emphasis is placed on the testing, including prep classes for parents and teaching our children “tricks” to use during testing, that we lose a lot of valuable instructional time. Not a fair trade off, and it definitely does not necessarily serve students well. Teachers, instead of being free to offer their students the gift of adequate time to really grasp the concepts being taught, are forced to cover material at a sometimes outlandish pace. This often results in a very shallow knowledge which is not mastery at all. Then, subtract the instructional time it takes for teachers to be out of the classrooms to score the tests and be trained on how to use the results, and we see a vicious cycle emerging. No wonder the test results have been disappointing!

So what shall we do? As Christian educators, we are called upon to do our very best at everything we do. To the Glory of God, let us do the very best we can to teach effectively, assist our parents as our partners, and provide our students with confidence and the best set of knowledge and application skills possible. I realize my article is short on specific solutions to this situation. The one unchanging principle is that most teachers have taken on the challenge of doing the very best for children because they want to ensure a bright future, full of opportunity for their students. Most educators I have had the pleasure of knowing want to get it right and are in the classroom for all the right reasons.

I propose to you that the best solution of all is PRAYER! Pray for:

- God's leading in all of this!
- Christian educators around us who are doing their best through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Our students and the challenges they face every day, both in school and out.
- The families we interact with, that they may see Jesus in us and trust us to help.
- Our churches, including retired educators who sit in our pews, to be constantly seeking ways to support our schools.
- The educational systems – school boards, State and Federal Departments of Education, legislators, administrators, etc. who make organizational decisions.

I pray that we as Christ's Church will engage with education as partners to make a real difference! We are much stronger working together than in isolation. Let the Church arise!!!

## ***Global Focus: Human Trafficking - Protecting Children in Ukraine and Armenia - By Jimmie Presley, reporting by Nazarene Compassionate Ministries***

[Editor's note: Nazarene Compassionate Ministries Kid's Clubs and Child Development Centers (CDCs) help to educate, feed, and provide spiritual information to many children in other regions of the world. Human trafficking is a serious problem in our world today. Children need to know about the problem and know how to protect themselves and their siblings.]

In small, rural towns throughout Ukraine and Armenia, a sinister problem has been spreading in otherwise modest communities. The tragedy of human trafficking has become an all too common issue there as parents struggle to find work and children have limited access to education and other opportunities for healthy child development.

Ukraine and Armenia are source, transit, and destination countries where children, women, and men are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Often, they're lured by false promises of legitimate employment.

The lack of economic development and limited employment opportunities in these areas is grim. The majority of children who participate in Nazarene Compassionate Ministries Kid's Club programs in Ukraine and Armenia come from disadvantaged backgrounds, including poverty and parents who struggle with drug or alcohol addiction. In addition, many are left behind after a parent goes to search for work in another country and never returns. (Continued on page 5)

## Global Focus: Human Trafficking - Protecting Children in Ukraine and Armenia - By Jimmie Presley, reporting by Nazarene Compassionate Ministries

(Continued from page 4)

Children and youth in these vulnerable circumstances are particularly susceptible to the trap of empty promises of an easy way out, putting them at risk for becoming victims of human trafficking.

The issue is daunting, but through education and prevention activities, NCM's child development ministries in Ukraine and Armenia are working to help prevent youth from falling prey to traffickers. Addressing the problem of human trafficking is a main focus of youth camps that are planned as a part of the Kid's Club ministry. They start with awareness because trafficking is something that isn't typically talked about in the culture.

"No one seems to believe that it [human trafficking] may relate or affect them in any way," says Andriy Tahktay, NCM coordinator in Ukraine. "And what we are trying to do is explain to children and teenagers that this problem could happen to anyone."

The most vulnerable youth are those who don't experience love in their lives and believe they're in a hopeless situation.

"Some of the kids we work with have very low self-esteem, especially the girls," says Iryna Galisevich, who serves as NCM's child development coordinator in the Commonwealth of Independent States. "What we try to teach is that God created each of them; therefore, they have tremendous value. And they should not trade their value for anything else."

The camps include workshops, videos, and small-group discussions. Games are also used to explain precisely what slavery is, talk about its reality today, and explain how people become slaves and ways they can protect themselves against it."

"For most of the participants, the information was something new and something they had never heard before," said Anna Artsrunyan, NCM coordinator in Armenia. "The participants started to understand more about the issue and started a serious discussion."

By explaining the dangers and pitfalls of becoming victims of trafficking, the youth camps provide a new level of awareness. Camp organizers have also encouraged youth to spread their knowledge to others who may also be vulnerable.

This article originally appeared in the NCM Magazine, Spring 2015 Edition. For more information about Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, go to their website, [www.ncm.org](http://www.ncm.org).



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**INSIGHTS FROM ABOVE**  
For April  
Perseverance to the End of the Race  
By Beula Postlewait  
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God bless you! Persevere in His strength!

**USING THE INTERNET TO COMPLETE SCHOOLWORK AT HOME**  
By Beula Postlewait - NEW Council Member  
The children in schools today experience a totally different environment than their parents did when they were in school. Technology has invaded the classroom and has changed how children and youth complete their assignments at school and at home. There are advantages and disadvantages for relying on the Internet to complete schoolwork at home. Read more.

**IS IT TESTING TIME AGAIN?**  
By Lance However - NEW Vice Chair and Public School Representative  
Regardless of your familiarity with, position in, or educational program you are a part of, you have likely heard of the high stakes testing that is likely taking place in your local educational system. While the tests, content standards, and delivery makes headlines, it is important to have a good understanding of what is involved in testing and how it impacts our students. Read more clicking [HERE](#).

**A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

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