

THE MUSTARD SEED

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Faith Mennonite High School

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Editorial

I recently watched a presentation by Canadian philosopher James K.A. Smith called “How (Not) to Be Secular: Responding to a New Millennium.” He offered the following observation: “In Protestant Evangelicalism, we spent the last 30 to 40 years thinking that the way to get people’s attention was being LIKE the rest of the culture. We tried to turn the church into malls and rock concerts and coffee shops – places that people would feel comfortable. We turned the Gospel into this message of self-improvement, something that people would find ‘relevant.’ That was a terrible move because it diminished the thickness of the Gospel and the fullness of communal religious participation to one more market commodity that we’re selling to people who had really already bought a consumer gospel. Jesus became one more thing on the shelf to try to make them happy. That to me is not an encounter with the Gospel.”

Smith’s words reminded me of my experience last November in a Youth & Generation presentation at University of Winnipeg’s Mennonite Studies Conference. Delegates from Mennonite Church Canada and the Canadian Mennonite Historical Society were casually pondering the staggering growth statistics of conservative groups like the Amish and Ontario’s Markham Mennonites. “How do these conservative groups keep their youth?” one Mennonite scholar asked incredulously. “What are they doing that we’re not doing?” I placed a hand over my mouth, curious to hear the conclusions of national Canadian scholars.

Besides the very obvious cultural emphases on marriage and family, I tend to think that conservative groups are able to maintain their youth because they offer youth a chance to participate in community in embodied ways. Conservative Mennonites do not simply fill young people’s minds with Biblical truth; they offer youth ways to participate in community life, which employs their bodies. For instance, the Mennonite youth experience at FMH allows young people to use their bodies to worship God through regular full-bodied singing, through working with their

Are Bookworms Smarter?

The ability to read is one of great value and importance in our society. Imagine not knowing how to read road signs, restaurant menus, or gas station prices! Reading affects many areas in life including one’s vocabulary, language skill, conversations, and emotional intelligence. Reading expands your knowledge of people, places, and ideas that you would not have otherwise known existed.

Learning to read is one of the first obstacles tackled in elementary school and is a skill that is useful for all of life. Reading is beneficial in many ways and gives much potential to the engaged mind. The effects of reading go beyond the initial impression the reader

gets from the material. Studies have shown that the more one reads, the easier it becomes to decipher sounds and syllables. Reading also increases general language skill, vocabulary, and knowledge.

One of the primary benefits of high school students reading books is vocabulary growth. Theorists agree that much of a young person’s vocabulary growth occurs *indirectly*, through reading books, rather than through direct teaching (for instance, a spelling list or vocabulary list). This is because the extent of vocabulary in printed literature is much greater than that of oral language.

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hands in shop-class electives, through sewing and cooking, through community celebrations involving extensive food prep, through missions to Grenada, and through daily communal prayer. A Christian education which affects the heart must employ the head and the hands. It is so exciting to be a part of a community which values and engages the contributions of young people and offers an alternative to religious consumerism: community sacrifice and embodied worship.
Miss Swartzentruber, Faculty Editor

Simply put, there is a significantly greater vocabulary exposure in reading than in daily conversation or speaking in general. In fact, research has shown that the amount of rare words in children’s books surpasses both that of adult conversation and adult prime-time television! Most vocabulary growth occurring after middle school comes by reading and continuing to expose oneself to



more rare words. This is why it is imperative that high school students and adults find time to read even amidst busy schedules.

With an expanded vocabulary, more precise speech will follow. Verbal skills are

increased, and general use of language will continue to climb to higher levels. **Reading also keeps you mentally sharp and slows memory decline.**

Reading a variety of types of literature is a good idea. No matter what genre, books will increase your vocabulary and language skills. While some Christians undervalue reading much fiction, there are benefits of doing so. **Fiction specifically has also been proven to increase emotional intelligence**, which is the capacity to be aware of, to control, and to express one’s emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships sensibly and empathetically. Since emotional intelligence is important in the workplace and in dealing with people in general, reading fiction offers powerful advantages.

Reading is the key to understanding more of the outside world. It affects one’s vocabulary, language skill, conversations, and emotional intelligence. It is amazing how our brains interpret letters to create words with significant meanings which are applicable to our lives. So improve your knowledge by reading more books!
Kelsey Garman & Maria Groff, Editors

Students Speak Out

What classes should Faith Mennonite High School add and why?



**Joseph Stoltzfus
Freshman**
I want there to be a football club. Football is body building and fun!



**Kyle Lapp
Freshmen**
Basic cooking, basic cooking safety, advanced cooking, & gourmet cooking. Cooking is important to learn; you will use it throughout all your life.



**Jesse Beiler
Junior**
3D Engineering. It is useful, and there are many jobs in need for a 3D engineer.



**Katelyn Smoker
Senior**
Shadow art. I want to know how to make art out of nothing.



**Josh Lapp
Senior**
Archery safety and training class because it would be fun, and I’d like there to be more fun electives.

Hope for Hard Times: Navigating Depression

She tries to keep a straight face as she walks through those same doors. The same doors she's been walking through for the past two years. And yet for a split second, she has hope, that someone, anyone, will ask her how she is. But instead, she is greeted with whispers and stares of mockery. She's filled with awful thoughts that can eventually lead to something dangerous.

This exact thing is happening in schools all around the world, but it doesn't end at school. All areas of a teen's life are influenced by anxiety and depression. In 2018, 2.2 million aged 12-17 in the U.S. had a phase of depression which left severe impairment. That's 1 in every 8 teenagers in America. Of these 2 million teenagers, only 20% of these affected teens received care from a professional. Depression is one of the most common mental illnesses in the U.S., and often goes hand in hand with a mood disorder such as anxiety, anti-social behaviors, or substance abuse.

There are a variety of causes of depression in teenagers. Some experts believe that we have set unrealistic expectations for our teens, which puts more pressure on them, whether it be academic or social pressures. Other factors that put teens at risk of depression are trauma and disruptions at home (including divorce or death of parents), abuse and neglect, family history of depression, or untreated mental or substance-abuse problems. Social media has also played a large role in the depression of teens by setting unrealistic images/beauty standards and pressuring them to measure up to photo-shopped images in order to be loved or recognized by anyone.

Symptoms of depression that teenagers and

parents need to be aware of are changes in attitude, behavior, and emotions. This includes feelings of sadness or hopelessness, anger and frustration over small matters, an irritable mood, loss of pleasure in usual activities, loss of interest in (or conflict with) family and friends, low self-esteem, strong self-criticism and focus on past failures, trouble making decisions, use of alcohol or drugs, insomnia, self-harm, social isolation, and sometimes, suicidal thoughts.



The first thing that you should do if you are struggling with these symptoms is talk to a trusted adult. Sharing your experiences with a parent, a teacher, or a youth leader will allow them to connect you to a qualified Christian counselor or healthcare provider. Next, ask your parents or teachers to help you to get organized. Depression can make regular, everyday things like homework look overwhelming. Ask for help in setting (and keeping) reasonable goals. Another healing measure is to spend quality time with friends who are a positive influence on you. And stay active. Healthcare workers cite that regular, daily exercise is one of the most effective means for managing

depression and stress.

On the other hand, if you know a teen who struggles with depression, here are a few ways you can help. First, offer a listening ear. Advocate for your friend or loved one by getting them in contact with a qualified professional. Help them reduce stress by assisting them in getting organized around daily routines and school obligations. Next, make plans to spend time with them regularly. Regular interaction with a supportive friend is a source of encouragement and security for depressed teens. Ultimately, spend time in prayer for the person you care so much about. Encouraging young people to participate in the practices of Bible reading, prayer, and singing can motivate teens to seek lasting fulfillment in Christ.

Depression's impact on our teens is incredible. In a world of broken homes, where children are raised on electronics and treated as objects, the ability to see the value and importance of relationships has been lost. Without the encouragement of true friends and family, each is left on their own to chart their course and find purpose in life. Cold reality hits home when we realize that this reality exists in our Mennonite communities, and our own young people are fighting these battles. It is more than a search for a happy life. It is the struggle to find security and fulfillment. Proper depression precautions and treatment are readily available to us, and should be used as needed. And as Christians, we know where our true security and fulfillment lies. Using the resources we've been given, and helping others as we can, let us continue seeking and sharing Jesus with those in need of our unconditional love.

Kelsey Garman, Linda Stoltzfus, & Ashley Zook

Calendar

Mar	6-8	Quiz Retreat (Black Rock)
	12	Fine Arts Festival
	20	Last Day of Third Quarter
	21	Choral Festival
	22	Reach Convention
	23	Choral Concert 7:30 PM
Apr	1	Report Cards Due
	9	PTF/Business Meeting
	12-21	Senior Trip
	18-22	Easter Vacation
	26	Progress Reports Due
May	9-13	Chorale & ET Tour

Alumni Feature

Samuel Stoltzfus, class of 2011, updated us from El Salvador: "I always dreamed of going to college, but the last of my formal education ended when I left FMH. However, despite not obtaining the education I desired, I was able to learn by doing and grow into my current job as an iOS developer. And in the school of life, God is still constantly teaching me new things. I have numerous fond memories of FMH, but some favorites are Mr. Harrison's hilarious science illustrations, Mr.



Myron reading *Winnie the Pooh* in English class, and Spanish field trips with Mr. Lapp. FMH was a God-given blessing which shattered the limited horizons of this former Amish boy. Serving and living in El Salvador, married to an El Salvadoran, with a job as a programmer is a direct result of the education I received, not to mention the spiritual teaching, which helped me develop Godly convictions and pointed me to Christ."

Photo by Mark Nisly

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