

ALUMNUS PROFILE: George Petrusma by Patty Schuurman

(NOTE: A shortened version of this profile ran in the February 2016 edition of @TD)

George Petrusma began his high school career at TDChristian in 1975, after leaving Georgetown District Christian School, a place where his dad was principal. He graduated in 1979, one of four kids in his clan.

Now, more than 35 years after leaving TDChristian, George is a seasoned and experienced principal serving at John Knox Christian School in Oakville.

George is a tremendously social person, an exuberance that was already on display during his days in high school. His social and outgoing qualities were valued attributes to the many clubs and teams which he was a part of - including soccer, track and field, badminton, volleyball, students' council president, yearbook and drama.

George was asked two questions. The first was: "What are your memories and experiences of TDChristian?" Immediately, George's response was, "I vividly remember all the pranks!" It was not the History assignment, or the math exam, or the English novel study, but pranks. George proceeded to tell the story of how his buddy hijacked a locker combination of an unsuspecting student in order to allow George to hide in the locker until, to the complete astonishment of the student, a boisterous person leaped out of her locker with a yell and a surprise that made George feel that he accomplished a hilarious endeavour. There were other memories and pranks that came to George's mind, but he kept saying to me, "...but don't write that one down. And don't write that one either..." Needless to say, I have little to report on the matter.

Other memories that George was willing and able to share were those of his teachers. Two teachers, Dick VanDyk and Don James, were the ones George remembers with admiration and inspiration. Mr. VanDyk was George's favourite because he treated people like human beings and gave the assurance that he was on your side. Mr. VanDyk's teaching style was lecture based, and his personality was one that matched George's - which is probably why George has good memories about him. George also has wonderful memories of Don Jones, Arda Rooks and Bill Barneveld. Boring teachers were not George's favourite, but all together, George experienced TDChristian as a place that fostered a healthy culture of camaraderie, growth and belonging.



The second question George was asked was, "What lasting impression did TDChristian leave on you?"

Academically, teachers made George work hard. They had his best interest in mind, and George knew that. George also had an outstanding social life where he had a number of good friends. Spiritually, there was little that George remembered except that TDChristian was a safe and familiar place. Physically, he grew as an athlete and challenged himself against both a friend and "rival," Henry Bergsma. The two of them competed mightily against each other for best times in cross-country. High school volleyball tournaments and various sports teams were big highlights for George.

After graduating from TDChristian, George went on to pursue postsecondary education at Calvin College. His first teaching position was at Durham Christian High School. He then travelled across the GTA to Hamilton District Christian High School where he accepted a position as the vice-principal, only to return to the east end at Knox Christian School in Bowmanville, this time as the principal. After 13 years there, George became the exuberant, social and outgoing principal at John Knox Christian School in Oakville, where he remains today. George lives in Burlington with his wonderful wife, Charlene. God is good!

ALUMNA PROFILE: AT HOME WORKING ON HOMELESSNESS: Kristin Booy by Alice Vanderkooy

(NOTE: A shortened version of this profile ran in the February 2016 edition of @TD)

"Where is home?" It was an odd question coming from someone who works with "street-involved" youth who have no place to call home, and yet oddly appropriate as well. Kristin Booy (class of 2006) has just begun a job as an employment counsellor at Evergreen Centre for Street Youth, where, according to a recent Toronto Star article, "about 150 youth pass through [the] door, a few blocks from the intersection at Yonge and Dundas, the crossroads of Canada's busiest shopping district. It may also be the epicentre of youth homelessness in this country." (Toronto Star, October 19, 2015)

Home for Kristin Booy (class of 2006) began in Tanzania where she attended an international school along with students from a variety of faith and cultural backgrounds. She joined us at TDCHRISTIAN in Grade 9 when she and her family moved back to Canada. From TDCHRISTIAN she moved on to Calvin College, (Grand Rapids, Michigan), doing a degree in Psychology with minors in French and Gender Studies. She and her husband Matt then taught in Korea for two years before returning to Canada where Kristin did her Masters in Social Work at Laurier. They are currently enjoying the vibe of downtown Toronto where Kristin cycles to work, plays basketball and volunteers at the Christie Refugee Welcome Centre. No wonder the question, "Where is home?" is a difficult one for her to answer.

Coming to Canada (and TDCHRISTIAN) in 2002, Kristin recalls being shocked by a community that was, for the most part homogenous. At a time when the ups and downs of identity development can be difficult, Kristin felt out of place. Seeing snow for the first time from a classroom window, she remembers the astonished reaction of her classmates. "You've never seen snow?!!!" She made a conscious decision to not speak openly about her life in Africa and Tanzania with her peers, choosing instead to fit in as seamlessly as possible.

She describes herself at TDCHRISTIAN as "not yet flourishing". She was an international student who did not identify as such. "Now, as an adult, I realize how I might have done things differently but you have to be gracious with who you were back then," says Kristin. That's her first advice. Recognizing her own struggles with identity, and confronting the question of "Why do I do what I do?" has allowed Kristin to work more effectively and empathetically with youth who feel displaced and are confronted by such difficult barriers in their lives.

Highlights of her time at TDCHRISTIAN were peer counseling, Band and French trips, as well as the friendships of that time. She also remembers having her thinking challenged. "I love to be in the gray!" says Kristin. This is something I learned at TDCHRISTIAN, in classes such as biology with Lisa Verveda and English with Kati Hoogendam. "Sometimes there are no clear answers to the dilemmas of life. It was at TDCHRISTIAN that I was also encouraged to integrate faith and life, to acknowledge a foundational spirituality that guides relationships and connections with others." Working at Evergreen with a population that is so disadvantaged and so defined by their struggles, she seeks to provide strengths-based counseling, and to show her clients that they are deserving of dignity, respect, grace and forgiveness.

Further advice? Don't be afraid to take risks. There's a big world beyond TDCHRISTIAN and it's OK to be continually surprised about where the Lord places you. As well, get an education! Yes, there is a financial cost, but it's the best kind of debt you can have. Finally, recognize that even when we live simply, we have a privileged life compared to many others. As we ended our time together, Kristin shared that she had gone back to Tanzania for a month this past year. This trip helped her to see that although Tanzania had shaped her in many ways but home can't solely be a geographic place. Home is also where your family and friends are. Right now, living in Toronto, working at Evergreen and volunteering at the Christie Refugee Centre nurtures her desire to be in an international context.

"So where is home?" In the end, maybe it's not so much about what we identify as home, but about the sure promise that if we live out our love for the Lord wherever he places us, he will make his home with us. (John 14:23) . Kristin is doing that, one step at a time, certain that the Lord still has some surprises in store for her.



HOW WE DO MATH AT TDCHRISTIAN by the TDCChristian Mathematics Department

Cathy VanderHeide - Doing Grade 9 Math @ TDCChristian

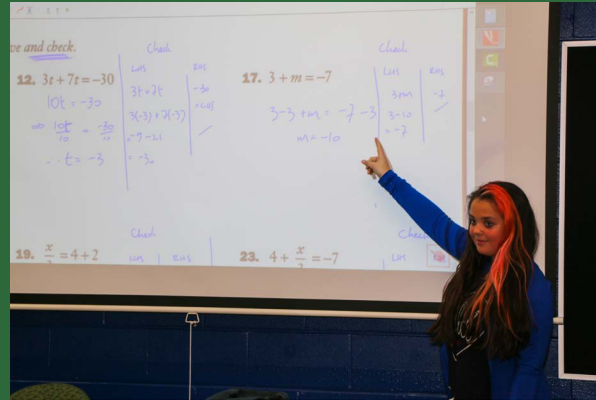
Students come into Grade 9 Math from many different elementary school backgrounds and with a wide variety of mathematical abilities. At TDCChristian, we do not stream students into separate academic and applied classes. Instead, we intentionally establish supportive classroom learning communities where all students are enfolded and encouraged.

We engage in interactive teaching and learning to work out full solutions to problems. Class notes are saved to the class website daily and can be referenced throughout the course. Partners collaboratively practise skills on the whiteboards, which is particularly helpful to visual and kinesthetic learners.

In addition, TDCChristian-made videos are posted to Edsby as a resource that students are able to view repeatedly to consolidate their understanding of mathematical concepts. Unit outlines and course materials are available in the Edsby library. Extra help is also available at after-school homework club on Thursdays.

The Ontario Ministry of Education requires that students be assessed in four categories: knowledge, communication, thinking and application. Assessments for learning are opportunities for students to learn from their mistakes and marks from them usually are not part of the final grade. Assessments of learning do contribute to the students' overall average.

In many ways, Grade 9 Mathematics marks the transition from arithmetic to the study of mathematics. We are less concerned about getting "the right answer" than the process of clearly communicating the steps of a solution. We look for patterns and connections between topics. Students need to synthesize their learning and apply their understanding to new situations. In short, we work together to build in success for all students because "Getting the math" is empowering.



William Groot - Pascal, Cayley, Fermat Classes

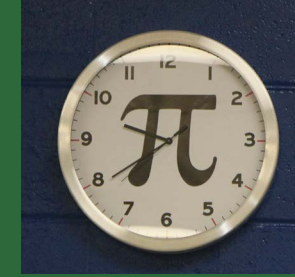
In the mid-90s, the school's administration made a concerted effort to think of ways to enhance the learning opportunities at TDCChristian. Grade 9 Pascal Math emerged from those deliberations. The idea was to expand the curriculum to include more problem-solving – especially looking for and finding different ways to solve a problem. The focus would be on experiencing the breadth and beauty of mathematics rather than as a tool to learn useful methods for potential use later on in one's studies. Too often, high school mathematics is seen as a means to an end - a linear pursuit. The new math classes would help students experience math much more intuitively and integratively, and especially help students make connections to other branches of mathematics. Finally, it would be a way for keen or talented students to sharpen each other's abilities and push them to new levels of learning. The class names were based on the names of the contests put out by the Centre for Education in Mathematics and Computing at the University of Waterloo. Writing these contests, along with several others, remains a key part of the program.



The first Pascal class in 1998 consisted of students who exhibited mathematical talent, had excellent math grades or really wanted to be challenged in mathematics. Continuing the program into Grades 10 and 11 with Cayley and Fermat classes ensued in following years. With the advent of four levels of Grade 11 courses (workplace, college, university/college, and university) in the early 2000s, the Fermat program was stopped. However, in 2015, we celebrate the 18th Pascal class and the 17th Cayley class. Our aim at TDCChristian is to continue challenging students to grow as mathematical problem solvers.

David Hagen – Grade 10 Mathematics and the Flipped Classroom

In Grade 10 Mathematics, we begin to focus on the connections between algebra and geometry. Much of the Grade 9 curriculum focuses on building algebra skills, but now we put a picture to that algebra. In Grade 10, students are also introduced to the Flipped Classroom. This style of learning flips the class-time and the homework. For homework, students watch and take notes on teacher created videos that give the instructions required to learn the topic. The next day, students will then do their "homework" in class. This allows group interaction and additional instruction from the teacher. While this style puts the onus on the students to watch the videos, students benefit from being able to pause or rewind the teacher, re-watch the lessons at test and exam time, and easily catch up if they miss a day of school. As part of the curriculum, students get a chance to enter into the fantastic world of Trigonometry and begin their journey of working with functions with an in-depth look at Quadratics.



Mark Fluit – Data Management and Authentic Work

As a part of the Grade 12 Data Management course, students are to carry out a major project. Early in the semester, students in this course are challenged to find a project that can help them engage in their community, whether that be our school, church, or local businesses. The collection of a large amount of data (at least 1000 data points), and the rigorous analysis of the data are requirements for this project. Over the years students have developed genuine projects like creating a quality spreadsheet for a food bank, receiving feedback on a business endeavour, and collecting feedback from the youth at a church on their youth group. Students have also collected and given valuable feedback for the school through surveys on the TDCChristian Mentorship program, International Block, Assemblies, and Student Culture. Many of these projects have been used to not only complete an assignment, but have empowered students with valuable information to improve our school, their church, and businesses.

John Templeton – The Department Working Together Toward a Common Goal

Working with the other members of this department is a blessing. We learn from each other and we help each other with the work of lesson planning and assessment writing. This kind of working together is what our school is all about. TDCChristian's missional statement is that we are committed to "learning for service in the light of God's word." It might be tough to believe that math can be used for service. Mathematics, as a discipline, serves the subjects of Physics and Chemistry because of their need to use math in their investigations.

Biologists are increasingly using mathematics in their study of living systems. For example, Oncologists are developing mathematical models of tumour growth in an attempt to ascertain more effective treatments for cancer. Society relies on mathematics so much so that a course like Advanced Functions is "necessary" for the majority of students hoping to move on to university. I can't say that Advanced Functions is necessary for life beyond high school, but a basic level of mathematical proficiency is needed even if, for example, math is only used to manage one's finances. As a department, our hope is that in our work together we can help our students catch a glimpse of the power of mathematics to bring good to society. At the least we hope to help our students lose any fear they may feel toward math, and to have the knowledge and skills so that they are ready to use math when the need arises.

