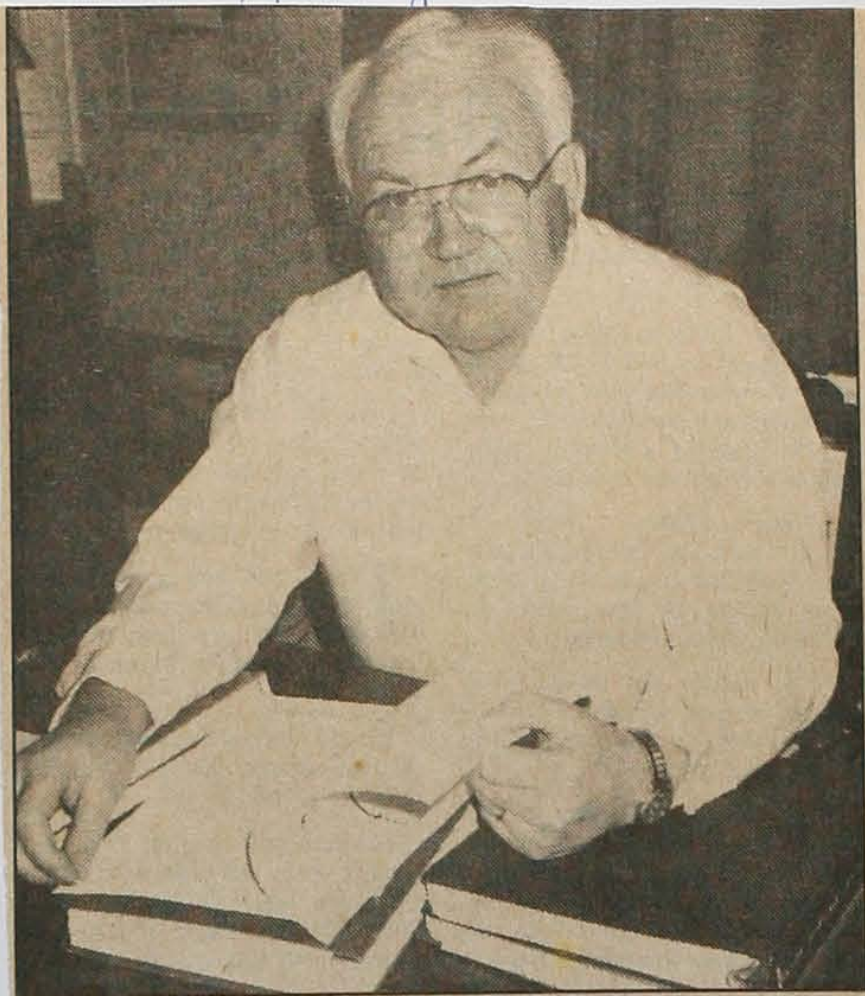


July 5, 1989



Sun Times photos by Mary Redmond

A.J.V. (Red) Leeder

Others interested in Bruce board's Morals and Values

By MARY REDMOND
Sun Times staff

CHESLEY — Many public school boards who want to keep using The Lord's Prayer are now scrambling for other secular and religious sources to balance their opening exercises.

Since education ministry regulations changed in January, opening exercises can no longer give primacy to any one faith.

But in Bruce County, a Morals and Values program with wide-ranging opening exercises and curriculum-related material has been in place in elementary schools since about 1980.

Other Ontario boards have recently asked for the packages but earlier requests had already come from boards in other provinces and even in the U.S., superintendent Don Carroll said recently.

Grey County schools are already using parts of the program.

And 97 per cent of Bruce County parents who completed a recent survey wanted Morals and Values to stay much as it is.

The survey is part of a program review the Bruce board launched before the January changes to the Education Act.

"We're reacting to what's happening in the midst of trying to update our own materials," review committee member A.J.V. Leeder said recently.

The former Warton Public School principal helped produce the original program, and he's come out of retirement to work on revising it.

The committee's report and any new added material should be ready next spring.

The first few minutes of opening exercises are just the most easily identified part of Morals and Values.

Each unit studied by students in the regular curriculum includes a values component.

Leeder stresses that "values education" has always happened in the classroom without being formally written into the curriculum.

But about a decade ago then-chairman of the Bruce board Lloyd Ackert of Lucknow was seized by the idea of creating a values education program.

He launched long, comprehensive rounds of meetings with stu-

dents, parents, teachers and clergy in 1978.

"From one man's vision came a whole exercise in trying to mutually agree on what is important," Leeder said.

The committee produced a list of 100 accepted topics for values discussion running alphabetically from adversity to zeal, and including subjects like fault-finding and sharing.

Those were used as the basis of opening exercise programs and the added curriculum material.

About five to 10 per cent of readings that became part of opening exercises came from other faiths including, for example, verses from The Koran.

The exercises use Bible verses but also draw on sayings from famous people and proverbs from other cultures.

And the daily stories are most often non-religious examinations of values at the level of the student: primary grades hear stories about animal characters while senior grades have more abstract readings.

The program now contains three yearly cycles for kindergarten to grade 4 students and three more cycles for Grades 4 to 8.

The new committee will likely add extra cycles so no one would have to repeat and perhaps add some material especially for the middle grades, Leeder said.

A 38-year veteran of the public education system, Leeder thinks of the time spent developing the program "as probably one of the most rewarding and meaningful experiences of my career."

"There's nothing more significant to people than their spiritual roots and their desire for community," Leeder said.

And in 1989 the review committee must continue to respect the strong Christian community in Bruce County, Leeder said.

"Our pathway takes us within the parameters of Ministry guidelines and the deep desires of our own people."

Leeder says it's essential that students in public schools are exposed to material addressing common human values.

"Then maybe society will be in a position to survive against the things that would tear it apart such as bigotry and lack of understanding."

Vol 19
Pg 75