Cart they returned. The pain came and went and with it Tamara's strength. Tamara's child was born at dawn. Caleb had stopped the wagon to give what aid he could. Premature, tiny, perfectly formed, the little boy, was the child of Lastdawn.

This child was the last Beni ever to be born in Time. This was also the Firstdawn. Tamara lay a-dying, cradled in Caleb's arms, the babe clasped to her breast. Her eyes were hollow and dark with the battle she was now fighting with her last Enemy. Caleb was singing to her, one of the Oldsongs from before Lastimes.

This is where they were when Time came to an End. Giving thanks while the world ended, their child in their arms, praying for deliverance. They watched as He Who made all things came to gather His sheep, the Son of Man. This was one story of a handful of His many children.

I bid you take heed.

VIEWPOINTS

It used to be that most parents did not begin thinking about formal training for their child till he neared his fifth September, when it would be time to start kindergarten. Nowadays, with preschool having become a common phenomenon, many parents wonder, when a child reaches the ripe old age of 4, whether they would be doing him a disservice to deprive him of the opportunity for some kind of schooling before he starts regular school. Were they to ask for advice in the matter, they'd almost surely hear as many and as apparently cogent arguments for it as against it. Part of the reason for that, probably, is that what is good for one child might be a waste of time for another. In the end, therefore, it's the parents themselves who must decide what is best for their particular child. We thought, however, that a presentation of the more general pro's and con's might be of some assistance in deciding what's best in individual situations. We asked Marilyn Schipper and Elaine Faber therefore to share their views with us in this space. Mrs. Faber, second grade teacher at Heritage in Hudsonville, contends that a limited preschool experience can indeed make for a smoother and happier transition from home to school. Mrs. Schipper, who teaches kindergarten at Hope School in Grand Rapids, argues that, rather than hurrying our children off to school at the earliest possible age,

we should prefer instead to keep them home as long as possible, giving them up only for the formal education which requires special expertise. Here they are.

Preschool: YES

Elaine Faber

Attending preschool is an excellent way for young children to become acquainted with the school routine which will be a major part of their life for many years to come. Leaving the home environment, interacting with other children, and the doing of activities related to learning are not always easy for those who have not had some prior experience with a school-like setting.

An experience in preschool can help make the transition from the home to the school a smooth and gradual one because the preschool program is similar to kindergarten in many ways, yet on a more limited scale. The child leaves the home to be with other children to be instructed by a teacher. With preschool the hours are shorter, perhaps two mornings per week. The groups are smaller, usually about ten children. There are no textbooks. Academics are not taught as such. The program is less structured, yet organized and directed toward the furthering of child development in the skills related to readiness.

We have all heard much about readiness and know that it is important for success in school. There is another term used now. It is pre-reading competency. For the mastery of any given task, there are pre-requisite skills to be learned. So to with school. Children must be able to sit still and attentively, they must be able to follow a sequence of directions, and they must be able to manipulate materials with a minimum of frustration to become competent in school. When these readiness goals are learned in preschool, it makes the job of the kindergarten teacher easier, and it is also more pleasant for the child.

Preschool also provides many experiences that further growth in language development. The use of language is an ingredient crucial for communication in oral and written instruction in and out of the classroom. The Bible lessons, songs, stories, fingerplays, books, Show-and-Tell time, and field trips are all opportunities that can motivate and stimulate the use of new words and ideas. Activities are used which appeal to the five senses, again helping to establish a foundation on which to build further learning.

A preschool program that concentrates on the goals of furthering child development is to be preferred to that of keeping the child in the home where things are much the same from day to day. While there are many situations and materials in the home which mothers could use, they are often busy and have many interruptions and distractions. The preschool program is planned for and can focus on the needs of the children for an extended period of time. When mothers have children in preschool they often become quite involved and learn from the preschool and continue the concepts taught there.

The preschool setting also makes it possible for children to interact with other children on a regular basis. Those who are shy can gradually get to know others. In preschool the groups are small and children are not so quickly threatened by the larger group that they would meet if thrust into a kindergarten. All are encouraged to share and respect the rights of others.

Lagging development in one or more areas is not always recognized by the parents. Preschools can help point out the areas of concern. When this is not recognized until kindergarten, it can cause frustration in both children and parents, for it is often viewed as failure. A second year in kindergarten, even though it shouldn't, leaves many with a negative feeling. A preschool can catch some of these difficulties; and with a variety of activities and materials, it can further readiness with an emphasis on continual growth according to each child's own rate with a minimum of concern about whether he will pass or fail. A second year in preschool does not bear the same stigma.

While not all children need readiness programs, I would say that all those who go would certainly benefit for the added dimensions it gives to learning. It can be an enriching and worthwhile experience that gives children confidence upon entering kindergarten.

Not just any preschool should be chosen. It must be one with values, attitudes, and beliefs consistent with our Reformed view of covenant child-rearing. Only then can we be assured that our young children are being trained in the fear of the Lord. □■□

Preschool: NO

Marilyn Schipper

In order to discuss preschool at all we should begin with a definition. The only definition I can come up with is this: *pre* means before in time, and *school* means the process of being educated. The *Webster New World Dictionary* of 1964 does not have a

definition for the noun preschool. This tells us that preschool is a relatively new term. In times past, this nursery school was for young children whose parents worked or for the very rich who could not be bothered with children around during the day.

My first argument against preschool comes from this lack of definition. A preschool can be anything that comes before kindergarten and therefore is poorly defined. As the word is poorly defined, so is the purpose. Why do we have preschool? Is it to get some formal education to prepare our child for kindergarten? Is it to be sure our child is at the head of the class when he gets to kindergarten? Is it a nursery school to babysit our children? Is it a status symbol for parents showing how concerned they are for their child's education? Is it a bridge to build between home and school?

Because preschool is not well defined there can be a variety of things taught. Some teach only social behavior; some teach letters and numbers; and some emphasize motor skills. Each preschool has its own set of standards, developed by the parents and the leader involved in it. Many times the father doesn't even become involved but leaves the duties of running the preschool to the mother.

The fact that some preschools teach the numbers and letters can hurt the kindergarten. When a concept is formally taught too many times, a young child will think, "I had that before. Kindergarten is nothing new. I don't have to apply myself." Poor study habits are then formed. Yes, many children know numbers and letters before they start school, even without preschool, but the formal presentation always seems exciting to a child the first time. They have never really thought through those letters before. I do not think our children have to be taught subject matter at an earlier age; in fact I believe we push our children too fast already. Children have a definite potential and when they reach this peak they level off anyway. Why push?

The task of educating children belongs to the parents, and it should be given to others only when it is beyond the realm of the home. Motor skills and most social behavior *can* be taught in the home by the parents, especially day to day by the mother. Children don't have to be sent to preschool to do messy projects; but mother will have to take some extra time and patience for these experiences. Mothers can also "trade" children for a part of a day to expose children to other children and other situations. This is also extra work, but parents should be willing to give

up their children only for the formal education that they can not handle.

Preschool can also be a baby-sitter for mothers on the go. Here again the child belongs with his mother as much as possible. When he gets in school he will be gone for so much of the time that a mother's contact with her child dwindles rapidly. A mother should be jealous of the time her child spends with others.

Preschool has become a status symbol. (Do you feel your child can't get into the best kindergartens without it?) Parents panic if they can't find a preschool for their child. In connection with this I have been asked if I can tell if a child has gone to preschool. My answer is that most often I can not. I do not know what the child would have been like if he did not go, so I really don't have basis for comparison. But I do know, after a few weeks of school, many parents are surprised how well their child has settled down and become interested in kindergarten. Therefore, even if we think it is a bridge between home and kindergarten, there are only a few children who need that bridge.

We try to make our children grow up too fast now. Why not let them enjoy the feeling of that safe, warm, comfortable, familiar home-life for the first five years of their lives.

CURRENT ISSUES

Textbook Controversy Continues

Brian Dykstra

In October a federal judge in Tennessee ruled that textbooks used in one of the school districts of that state violated the Constitutional right of religious freedom for a group of fundamentalists. Similar cases are being heard across the country. The November 17, 1986 issue of *U.S. News and World Report* states: "A judge in Mobile is studying a request to remove 45 books from public schools on the ground that they preach 'secular humanism,' which challengers describe as a religion of 'situation ethics' that has no place in classrooms. In Washington, D.C., the Justices will hear arguments next month on a Louisiana law that gives creation-