

CHAPTER 1

Present from the Beginning: Reformed Dutch Day Schools in North America, 1638–2019

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Introduction

The field of Dutch American studies has been siloed into two congenial scholarly camps: those who research and write about the colonial Dutch and their continuing legacy in New York and New Jersey (the “old” Dutch) and those who do much the same work for Dutch immigration to the Midwest and beyond, which began in the mid-1800s and continued throughout much of the twentieth century (the “new” Dutch). This partition has resulted in a neglect of attention to connections, comparisons, and continuities between these two principal historical periods and regions.¹ Episodes in Dutch American

¹ In 2015 the New Netherland Research Center (NNRC), located in Albany, New York, tasked with scholarship about the colonial Dutch and their continuing legacy, and the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies (AADAS), focused on the Midwestern Dutch, held a joint conference for the first time. One of their goals was to bring scholars from both sides together for professional and personal dialogue. The conference theme, *The Dutch in America across the Centuries: Connections and Comparisons*, was chosen to encourage researchers to consider the connections, continuities, and comparisons between these two periods

history of “old” and “new” Dutch working together—cooperating, sheltering, financing, advising, disagreeing—or not—and of continuities in Reformed Dutch religion and education are examples of such joint and lasting enterprises. This essay surveys the history of Reformed Dutch day schools as one such continuity.² From one perspective, the Reformed Dutch day school in Breuckelen (now Brooklyn), New York, in 1661, and the one in Drenthe, Michigan, in 2019, could not be more dissimilar, from the school buildings to the subjects, curriculum, classrooms, teaching, and just about anything else one would care to consider. From another perspective, there are compelling continuities—

and areas. Yet most presenters stayed within their silos; very few wrote papers that tackled such issues. We ended up *sharing* our different pasts rather than connecting or comparing them; the editors expressed that sentiment in the title of the book that resulted from the conference and regarded sharing our pasts as a first step to connecting them. Most of the papers presented at this particular conference are found in Henk Aay, Janny Venema, and Dennis Voskuil, eds., *Sharing Pasts. Dutch Americans through Four Centuries* (Holland, MI: Van Raalte Press, 2017).

² Throughout this essay, I will use either the somewhat unusual name “Reformed Dutch day schools” or “Reformed Dutch American/Canadian day schools,” even though individual schools hardly ever take a name that includes the word “Reformed.” Most other Christian day schools in North America do include denominational names (e.g., Baptist, Lutheran, Catholic). The reason why “Reformed” is not used in school names in North America is that, except for those who are members of the various Reformed denominations, very few people understand what it refers to and means; for many, the word is associated with penal institutions where offenders undergo reformation. This has led Reformed Dutch American and Canadian day schools to commonly use the generic name “Christian” together with a geographic designation, for example, Listowel [Ontario] Christian School. This naming convention brings to mind a broadly ecumenical and nonparochial community institution to those unfamiliar with these schools and interested in Christian education for their children. That is a positive perception and a worthwhile goal, but it does obscure what they have been for more than a century: denominationally Reformed and ethnically Dutch American/Canadian. Their governance, umbrella organizations, administrators, teaching staff, and students have continued to be largely made up of Dutch Americans and Canadians who are members of Reformed denominations, principally, the Christian Reformed Church.

The other reason for my use of the word “Reformed” in reference to these schools is that, unlike the denominational markers for some other kinds of Christian schools, that word, from the late nineteenth century on, came to refer to a comprehensive Christian worldview no longer restricted to theology, faith, and the church but decisive for every arena in society, including education. Another naming variant for this denominational/worldview combination is “Calvinist.” Some have labelled these schools Calvinist Christian schools. For a succinct introduction to a Reformed (neo-Calvinist) worldview, see Albert Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985). Both the denominational and worldview definitions of “Reformed” or “Calvinist” are, to varying degrees and in different times and places, relevant for these Christian schools.

Dutch ancestry, unifying Reformed confessions, the transmission of Reformed Dutch educational institutions, philosophy, and practices. I will give an account of this history in five periods.

Period 1 (1638-64): parochial/public schools in New Netherland

The schools of New Netherland were replicas of the village schools in the home country. Such schools were present throughout the republic; the Netherlands had achieved high accessibility to elementary education during the seventeenth century, although not all parents took advantage of its availability.³ In nearly every settlement with a church, there was a coeducational elementary (Nederduitse) school. Only cities offered education at and beyond this level in what were called Latin schools, as well as in various private academies, some for particular subjects and training. These elementary schools throughout the country were both public and parochial at the same time. Civil magistrates and ecclesiastical authorities (ministers, church consistories) together governed and administered the schools.⁴ They were public schools in that they were usually the only school in the village or town and its surroundings, open to all children without regard to their religious affiliation or their parents' ability to pay tuition.⁵ They were parochial schools in that both the teacher and the curriculum explicitly communicated the teachings, practices, and theology of the Reformed Church. The balance between such joint civil/ecclesiastical governance varied in time and place. In matters of religion—what was taught as part of religious education, the orthodoxy of the teacher, local supervision—the Reformed Church held sway; in matters of civil authority—financial support, the school building, the powers of appointment, licensing, and admission—the magistrates were in control. Of course, the civil authorities themselves were also Calvinists. The Reformation had earlier replaced the Roman Catholic

³ For the history of schools during the Dutch Republic (1581-1795) see P. Th. F. M. Boekholt and E. P. Booy, "Het Onderwijs voor 1795," in *Geschiedenis van de School in Nederland* (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1987), 1-85; William Heard Kilpatrick, *The Dutch Schools of New Netherland and Colonial New York* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), 19-38; D. Langedijk, "Het Schoolwezen tijdens de Republiek," in *Kort Overzicht van de Geschiedenis van het Christelijk Onderwijs* (Groningen: Wolters, 1947): 5-8.

⁴ Kilpatrick, *Dutch Schools*, 19-25.

⁵ Not many children from indigent families, however, were able to take advantage of this edict of the Synod of Dordt. Boekholt and Booy, *Geschiedenis van de School in Nederland*, 42-45.

governing authorities at all levels with Protestant adherents who introduced and enforced Calvinistic regulations respecting church and school. Teachers were required to be members of the Reformed state church and, following the mandates of the Synod of Dordt (1618-19), to sign the so-called Three Forms of Unity: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt.⁶ Those who would not, were dismissed.⁷

These schools in the Netherlands and in New Netherland were parochial in other important ways as well. Invariably, the teacher of the school also held a paid position in the church; because of his education, he commonly served as cantor (*voorzanger*, in Dutch), lay reader (*voorlezer*), and sometimes as sexton (*koster*).⁸ The cantor would start and lead congregational singing or sing verses solo; as lay reader, the teacher would read to the congregation from the Bible, the confessions, or liturgical forms. The sexton was the property manager of the church and tasked with a variety of services, such as readying the church for Sunday worship. The school (often in the teacher's home) was in close proximity to the church, a reflection of this dual affiliation.

The common, three-part curriculum of religion, reading, and writing taught in these elementary schools also underlined the parochial character of the schools; a large block of in-school learning was devoted to Bible studies, prayer, singing of the Psalms, and studying the Ten Commandments, the Reformed creeds, and the Heidelberg Catechism.⁹ Religious texts would serve as the subject for practice reading and writing. Students might well learn the Bible reading and psalms to be sung at the upcoming Sunday church service.¹⁰ They could be asked to recite Bible passages and parts of the Heidelberg Catechism in front of the congregation. In these ways, the school served the role of what would much later become the church's Sunday school. The dominant

⁶ Ibid., 19. This four-hundred-year-old requirement will be very familiar to today's educators in many Reformed Christian day schools, colleges, and universities in North America.

⁷ The phasing in of the Reformation throughout the Republic, also in regard to Calvinist schooling, took time and generated opposition among the public who clung to their traditional Catholic religious beliefs and practices. Many teachers were Catholics and could not be easily replaced. Catholics ran their own clandestine schools for more well-to-do parents; these were often tolerated by the local authorities and population. Ibid., 17-21.

⁸ Ibid., 67-71.

⁹ Ibid., 33-41.

¹⁰ Kilpatrick, *Dutch Schools*, 200.

surrender of the colony to England in 1664 (fig. 1).¹² They were found in the chartered Dutch villages, towns, and other settlements along the Lower Bay and valley of the Hudson River: Breuckelen, Midwoud, and Boswijck on western Long Island, now the borough of Brooklyn in New York City; Nieuw Amsterdam, Stuyvesant's Bouwerij, and Nieuw Haerlem on the island of Manhattan; Wiltwijck and Beverwijck along the Hudson River, the economic spine of the colony; and in two other areas of emerging Dutch settlement and control, Bergen, in what is now northern New Jersey, and Nieuw Amstel, along the Delaware River.¹³ Nieuw Amsterdam on Lower Manhattan, the largest settlement, also had a Latin School for the higher and moneyed classes, offering a classical education with Latin grammar and texts, logic, and rhetoric as its curriculum.¹⁴

Period 2 (1664 to ca. 1776): Reformed Dutch schools in the British colonies

Most schools in New Netherland were founded during the 1650s and 1660s, late in the history of the colony, when Dutch settlement began to increase more rapidly. The first—in Nieuw Amsterdam—was established in 1638 and the last—in Bergen and Boswijck—just before the surrender to England. Most persisted as Dutch Reformed public schools throughout the British colonial period.

In Flatbush, however, there were no private schools, one school must do all the teaching and meet all the demands. Hence the presence [since 1758] of both languages in the curriculum of the

¹² Ibid., 119-41. Kilpatrick reviews the archival records related to schools (financing, tuition, school building, duties of the teacher, etc.) for each of the chartered villages with a school. See also, Janny Venema, *Beverwijck. A Dutch Village on the American Frontier, 1652-1664* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 148-54.

¹³ The maps in this essay were produced as part of the Dutch American Mapping Project; its goal is to publish an atlas of Dutch American history and culture, 1609-2019. Several students from Calvin University (Christina Bohnet, Megumu Jansen, and Matt Raybaud) and Hope College (Isabelle Rembert) worked on the section of this project devoted to Dutch Americans/Canadians and education. They digitized the records and created databases from the yearly directories of Christian Schools International (CSI), formerly the National Union of Christian Schools (NUCS), the principal association for Reformed Dutch American/Canadian day schools. They did the same with the yearly records of several other Dutch American/Canadian Reformed denominations that operate their own Christian Schools. Maps were made from these databases and from published works (such as Kilpatrick's, *The Dutch Schools of New Netherland and Colonial New York*) that included the locations of these schools.

¹⁴ Kilpatrick, *Dutch Schools*, 95-109.

school. The town meeting even followed much later in the use of English, its last record in Dutch being of date April 4, 1775, the first in English a year later . . . [Church] services in English were not introduced until 1792 and even then were confined to the afternoon service. Not until 1805 was English the exclusive language of the church service. For still many years, Dutch was used in the privacy of many of the old families.¹⁵

Ninety-four years after the British takeover, the Flatbush, Long Island, school in 1758 finally had a teacher who could teach in English as well as Dutch. There are records for another six schools established after the English takeover: four in the Hudson and Mohawk Valleys and two in villages that today are part of the Borough of Brooklyn, New York (fig. 2). These records show that they were exactly the same kind of schools as during the New Netherland period and that all the schools in the Dutch villages kept these characteristics (including Dutch as the language of instruction) until the time of the American Revolution.¹⁶ As historian W. H. Kilpatrick calculates:

It appears more or less certain that Albany, Bergen, Bushwyck, Brooklyn, Flatlands, Kingston, New Utrecht, Schenectady, and probably many other villages more or less exclusively Dutch in stock and language kept up schools similar to the schools already studied [New Haerlem and Flatbush]. It is quite possible that whenever was found a village predominantly Dutch in language and of sufficient size to maintain a church (but not necessarily a pastor), there—had we the data—one would find almost invariably a school, public in some sense, controlled more or less by the consistory and taught by the *voorlezer* of the Dutch church.¹⁷

Fig. 3 maps the 102 Dutch Reformed churches, then known as the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church (RPDC) for 1770. Rather than the seventeen documented Dutch Reformed schools, Kilpatrick's calculation would have resulted in five times that number in the Dutch villages in Long Island, Manhattan, northern New Jersey, and the Hudson and Mohawk Valleys during the century after the British takeover.

Here a Dutch way of life was continued without interference; the chartered villages and their surroundings were centered on a Dutch

¹⁵ Ibid., 199.

¹⁶ Ibid., 201-15.

¹⁷ Ibid., 201.

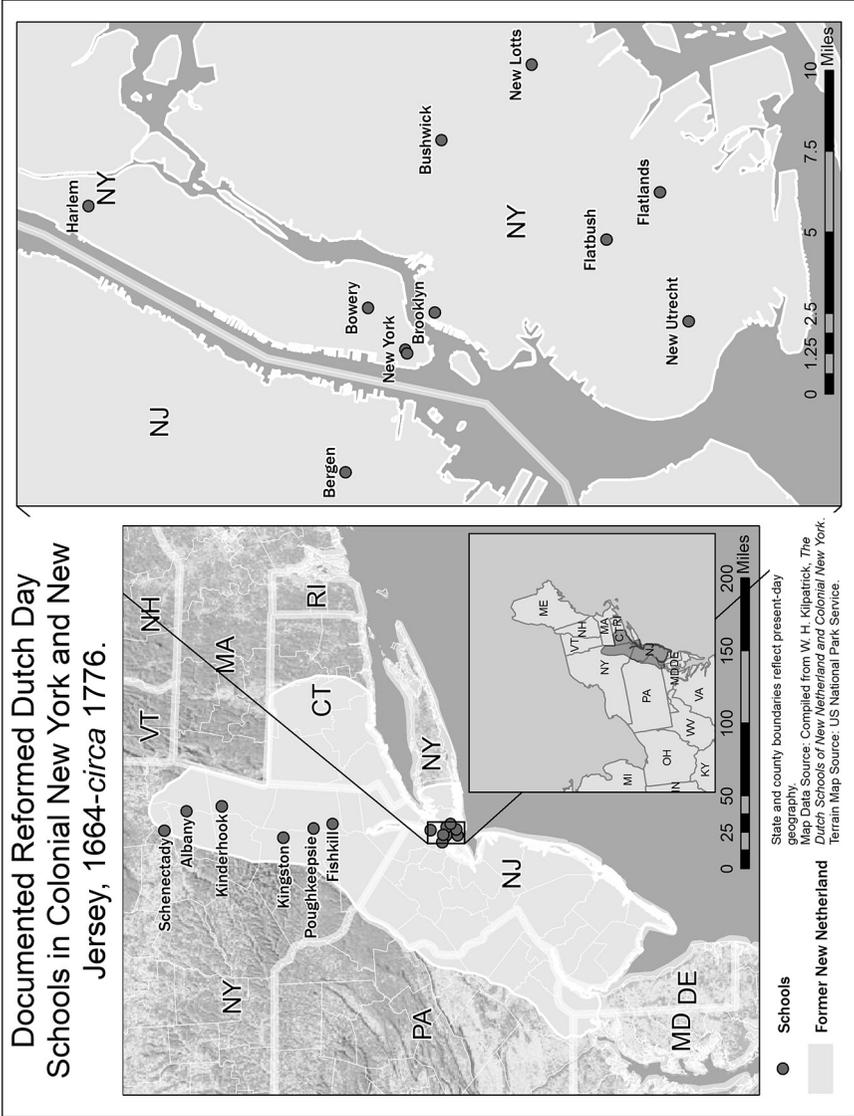


Fig. 2

Reformed church and preserved a Dutch way of life that included a parochial school governed and financed by both church and village council. The Dutch local governmental offices continued with their new English names, such as “constable” and “overseers.” Officeholders were now elected by the people at a public town meeting, called for

Dutch was the spoken language and that of church and school. The close relationship between these two continued: students would learn to read and write in Dutch and become familiar with the Reformed creeds, catechism, and psalms so that they could understand and participate in the church service. As the Dutch population grew by natural increase, and with the arrival of other Reformed believers, such as the Huguenots, new farmlands were occupied, villages founded and chartered, and Reformed churches and schools established.¹⁸

Period 3 (1776-1870): Reformed Dutch American day schools—going, going, gone

It took a very long time (as long a century) for this hegemonic cultural tradition with respect to schooling in the Dutch villages to begin to break down. During the last half of the eighteenth century (the years leading up to the War of Independence and early decades of the new republic), these Reformed Dutch elementary public schools were slowly superseded, place by place, by either nonparochial public schools or, in some towns and cities, by truly parochial schools. I have not found published research on this transition, but what is clear is that the era of the Reformed Dutch public/parochial school—a replica of the elementary school in the Netherlands that had persisted for more than a hundred and forty years in New York and New Jersey—came to an end in post-Revolutionary America.

With the growing power of local democratic governance during this transitional period, the traditional clerical control in the community—led by the minister and the consistory—became increasingly challenged and sidelined.¹⁹ School affairs slowly fell into the hands of the common people and their representatives on the town and village councils. People affiliated with other churches began to settle in these Dutch communities, especially on the frontiers of Upstate New York; they could not be expected to send their children to—or pay for—the local Reformed day school, the only elementary education program in town. After the United States was founded, schools were also increasingly

¹⁸ Kilpatrick, *Dutch Schools*, 201-15. Surprisingly, more than a century after Kilpatrick published this highly original work, very little new published research has been added to our knowledge of these schools, even though a steady stream of Dutch documents has been transcribed and translated. It would require a comparative examination of the records of these chartered villages and of their Dutch Reformed churches. There is a PhD out there for a graduate student in Dutch American history or in the history of American education.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 215

regarded as one important avenue to build a sense of nationhood and citizenship that would transcend ethnic, class, and religious differences and instill democratic values and civic virtues. A parochial, largely ethnic school ran counter to such goals. Once a local village council was entirely responsible for schooling (finances and governance), the Dutch Reformed school closed or became a public school, albeit, still very much Protestant but without much explicit religious instruction. The distinguishing close ties (staffing, Dutch Reformed schoolmasters, Reformed religious education) between school and church were cut. Dutch rural villages could not support both public and parochial schools. In larger centers, such as New York and Albany, there was room for both public and private schools. Here, the Reformed Dutch school could transition into a truly parochial school funded entirely by the church and its parents and, in that way, continue its longstanding educational practices.²⁰

The perceived advantages of public or common schools—for example, free for everyone—led to political campaigns in many states for such schools during the first half of the nineteenth century.²¹ New York State was a very early adopter (1812) of the common school system for the entire state; this made it impossible for parochial schools to receive public moneys; any remaining Reformed Dutch parochial/public schools had to either close or become entirely private schools. From the very beginning, New York State was a stronghold of these common schools.

The decision of the state of New York to establish a common school system statewide in 1812 led to a decisive and surprising reversal of what had been the RPDC's staunch and continuous mandate to form and maintain Reformed day schools. As part of the Classis of Amsterdam of the church in the Netherlands from 1621, as its own classis of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands from 1754, and as a national synod for an entirely separate and independent denomination beginning in 1793, the Reformed community had steadfastly sustained this mandate.

Indeed, in 1809, three years before New York State adopted the common school system, the General Synod of the RPDC adopted the most extensive and final set of resolutions on the necessity of Reformed

²⁰ Ibid., 147-59.

²¹ Carl Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (NY: Hill and Wang, 1983).

Christian schooling.²² It began with republishing the decree in six resolutions (with words such as “shall” and “must”) as set forth by the Synod of Dordt related to schools, teachers, the poor and education, religious education, and school supervision. It then applied these to the current RPDC, with four resolutions of its own (with words such as “recommend” and “duty”) on the division of each congregation into school districts; the appointment of consistory members as school trustees in each district; the recruitment and examination of suitable schoolmasters by the trustees; the supervision by the trustees of the schoolmaster, especially on the teaching of Reformed doctrines; and the supervision of the schools and the schoolmaster by the pastor of the congregation as school trustee, *primus inter pares*.

Three years later, in 1812, New York State adopted the common school system, and from then on, the RPDC as a body no longer regarded Christian day schools as imperative or essential. It is instructive that the synod’s sweeping attention to Reformed Christian schools in 1809 is entirely silent about financial matters. This suggests that the committee that produced the report did not regard these schools as private, parochial institutions; it fully expected that the customary and historic pattern of the government paying for local schooling would continue and that the Reformed day schools would continue to carve out a place in a public educational system as they had in the past. Public moneys, tuition from parents, and contributions from the Reformed Church would together pay for education.

The New York State legislation for the common school system, however, directed that all public moneys go to the common schools, and that meant the end of public funding for Reformed Christian day schools. In the transition from the 1809 synodical resolutions on Reformed day schools to the next synodical action on this topic, Tanjore writes: “In 1812 the Common School System was adopted in New York State, after which, the suggestions of the Synod of 1809 could not generally be carried out. There is no reference to parochial schools in the Revised Constitutions of 1833 and 1874.”²³ Indeed, there are hardly any further entries under parochial schools in subsequent digests of synodical legislation. In hindsight, it is startling how orthodox the 1809 synodical action was, given the precarious state of the Reformed day schools at the time. But this is clearly the turning point in the RPDC’s

²² Ibid., 478-79.

²³ Ibid., 479.

transition from parochial Christian education as a requirement to that of an option for its members.

In sum, after the American Revolutionary War, with the growing power of local government and the erosion of clerical authority, the expanding denominational diversity in Dutch American communities, and the increasing appeal (also among RPDC congregants) of common (public) schools as builders of the new nation and of common civic virtues—all of these societal changes being external to the denomination—Reformed parochial/public day schools began to weaken and become crowded out, replaced, and eliminated. The implementation by legislation of the common school system completed this process.

At the same time, and in response to these dramatic changes, the laity and leadership of the RPDC began to revisit its generally accepted position on schooling. In the process, the responsibility of parents and the church in the religious education of their children was reemphasized. As a result, the public schools, still overwhelmingly Protestant in staffing and cultural outlook, were lobbied to include prayer, Bible reading, the importance of religion in civic life, and opportunities for different local clergy to provide religious education for their students during designated school hours.

There were those who fought a rearguard action to revive Reformed day schools on the ground that public schools were secular institutions that could not prepare students for their life as Christians. Samuel Schieffelin, a wealthy New York pharmaceutical manufacturer, made sizeable donations to the church's board of education to establish a parochial school fund to establish and support such schools and to publish Christian textbooks.²⁴ During the last half of the nineteenth century, Schieffelin's fund helped support as many as sixteen schools, mainly among the Midwest's new Dutch and German immigrant churches. Synod went along with these initiatives but regarded them as inexpedient and urged its churches to focus instead on instruction of their youth in Sunday school programs. By the early twentieth century, the number of schools helped by this fund had steadily declined, and this program came to an end, and with it, the parochial schools of what had become the Reformed Church in America (RCA).²⁵ By 1957 there

²⁴ Corwin, *A Digest of Constitutional and Synodical Legislation*, 479-83.

²⁵ The RPDC was renamed the Reformed Church in America in 1867, thereby affirming its American home rather than its Dutch roots.

was only one such school—a high school operated by the Reformed Church of German Valley, Illinois.²⁶

Period 4 (1870s-1920): re-emergence of Reformed Christian Day Schools

Immigration from the Netherlands to America amounted to just a trickle during the British colonial period and the first seventy years of the new republic. But after 1846, a second wave of Dutch immigration began in earnest. Between 1840 and 1940, more than two hundred thousand Dutch immigrants arrived, settling primarily in the Midwest.²⁷ They came from a country in the middle of a protracted, century-long, religio-political struggle about education that was not resolved until 1920 when public, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish schools were granted equal, financial public support.²⁸

During the eighteenth century, the Reformed Church of the Netherlands came increasingly under the influence of the Enlightenment; reason and deism had gained the upper hand, rather than, as before, the revelation of the Scriptures and the Reformed creeds and confessions based on them.²⁹ For example, teachers could talk about Jesus Christ only as an embodiment of virtues for students to follow rather than as the Son of God who died for humankind. Reason explained everything, rather than revelation through faith. Hand in hand with rationalism was the principle of tolerance. So as not to offend Protestant, Jewish, or Catholic students, teachers could speak to their class only about an

²⁶ “The Relationship of Public and Parochial School Education: A Statement of the Board of Education, Reformed Church in America” (NY: Board of Education, RCA, 1957), 20. This report was sent to all the churches for study. This is the last comprehensive report by the RCA on Christian schooling. It reiterates the positions held since the early 19th century: Christian schools are not essential but an option; they can easily become sectarian; and RCA members should strive to keep religion in the public schools.

²⁷ Hans Krabbendam, *Freedom on the Horizon: Dutch Immigration to America, 1840-1940* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), app. 1, 361-62.

²⁸ For histories of the struggle for Christian education in the Netherlands consult: D. Langedijk, *Kort Overzicht van de Geschiedenis van het Christelijk Onderwijs* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1947); D. Langedijk, *De Geschiedenis van het Protestants-Christelijk Onderwijs* (Delft: Van Keulen, 1953); Boekholt and Booy, “De Schoolstrijd,” and “Naar een Gedifferentieerd Onderwijssysteem, 1860-1920,” in *Geschiedenis van de School in Nederland*, 132-228; Donald Oppewal, *The Roots of the Calvinistic Day School Movement* (Grand Rapids: Calvin College Monograph Series, 1963), 8-15. Oppewal’s monograph suffers from not consulting the extensive Dutch literature on the topic.

²⁹ Boekholt and Booy, “Naar een Nieuwe Tijd,” in *Geschiedenis van de School in Nederland*, 80-85.

all-knowing supreme being and religious virtues. The public school had become an institution for students belonging to all creeds.³⁰

Beginning with their secession from the state Reformed Church in 1834, political and church leaders of more orthodox Protestant Christian communities resisted this state monopoly on education and the increasingly non-Christian character of Dutch public schools. They persistently advocated for the right to establish and operate their own schools, something that was finally granted in principle in the revised Dutch Constitution of 1848. It took another nine years for a new national education law to be enacted in 1857. It fully funded public schools, made them neutral with respect to religion, and allowed for the establishment of special religious schools (Protestant, Jewish, Catholic) but without any funding or subsidies from the state. For the rest of the century and until 1920, the political fight was about increasing the financial support for these special religious schools; these efforts met with modest incremental successes. The *holy grail*—full financial equality with public schools for special religious schools—was finally granted, first in the revision of the constitution in 1917 and then in legislation in 1920.³¹

After 1857 orthodox Reformed as well as Catholic and Jewish communities in the Netherlands began to establish their own—then largely unsubsidized—schools. In 1880, when Dutch immigrant congregations in the American Midwest were just beginning to found their own Reformed day schools, some 25 percent of students in the Netherlands attended religious schools, then partially subsidized; by 1920, just before the organization of the Reformed day schools in the United States into the National Union of Christian Schools (NUCS), 45 percent of students in the Netherlands attended fully funded religious schools.³²

Nineteenth-century Dutch Protestant immigrants to the United States were very much aware of the battle for Christian education in the Netherlands; many families had lived through its changing fortunes. It is little wonder that in the 1870s, once they had established a firm foothold in their new communities, they began to duplicate the Reformed Dutch day schools. Unlike the protracted struggle in

³⁰ Langedijk, *Kort Overzicht van de Geschiedenis*, 5-8; Langedijk, *De Geschiedenis van het Protestants-Christelijk Onderwijs*, 1-6.

³¹ Langedijk, *Kort Overzicht van de Geschiedenis*, 42-49; Langedijk, *De Geschiedenis van het Protestants-Christelijk Onderwijs*, 325-37; Boekholt and Booy, *Geschiedenis van de School in Nederland*, 218-23.

³² Boekholt and Booy, *Geschiedenis van de School in Nederland*, 221.

the Netherlands to even establish such schools, there were no legal impediments in the New World, although there was plenty of resistance within some Dutch immigrant communities.³³

One condition that worked against the establishment of such schools on the frontier was that the RPDC did not regard Reformed day schools as essential, and therefore, as a denomination, it did not actively work to encourage and establish them. Instead, its members were expected to send their children to the public schools once a school district was established. On the frontier, state control in education was limited at first, and local school boards and public school teachers could more easily implement the wishes of parents when it came to Bible reading, prayer, and religious education.

The immigrant churches joined the RPDC in 1850 which, until 1857, was the only Dutch Reformed denomination on the frontier. Thereafter, it was joined by the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Although Christian education did not factor into the secession of 1857 that created the CRC, many of its members then and in the future were seceders from the Dutch state church (from the secessions of both 1834 and 1886). Within this body of adherents, there had developed a strong commitment to and experience with Christian schools as a reaction to what they regarded as secular public education in the Netherlands and the United States. Once the CRC was established, it began to act on these convictions. In 1870 the CRC General Assembly called upon every congregation—where feasible—to establish a Christian school.³⁴ With remarkable vigor, this new Reformed denomination became the champion of Reformed day schools.

The new Dutch immigrant communities began establishing schools during the late nineteenth century at a notable pace.³⁵ The

³³ Gerhardus Bos writes about the combative opposition to Christian schools among Dutch immigrants in the working-class neighborhoods of Paterson, NJ. Gerhardus Bos, "Schools of the East," *Yearbook of the Free Christian Schools in America, 1923-24* (Chicago: Materson-Selig, 1924), 125.

³⁴ Janet Sjaarda Sheeres, ed. *Minutes of the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 297, Art. 36, General assembly, 15 and 16 June 1870. The article reads: "Primary education is discussed again and the entire Assembly is unilaterally convinced that the school is the place for cultivation of and support for the Church, and that, therefore, it must be the obligation of each congregation to see to it that they acquire free schools and if this is not possible, to provide as much as possible for Dutch and Reformed instruction. The Assembly recommends this most emphatically to each church council and congregation."

³⁵ In 1924 NUCS asked a number of individuals closely involved with Reformed Dutch Christian day schools and its pioneers in the early years in different parts of the country to submit articles to its yearbook. These are valuable first-person

yearbooks of the CRC from 1881 to 1900 list forty-five different schools: twenty-six regular day schools and nineteen supplementary schools. Locally, they were often called Holland Christian Schools or just Holland Schools.³⁶ The supplementary schools taught the Dutch language and the Reformed creeds, confessions, and catechism during the summer (commonly known as vacation schools) and on weekends and evenings during the school year, just as the 1870 CRC General Assembly had recommended. Such extra schooling was feasible for Dutch immigrant communities that were too small, without sufficient resources, or without available instructors to organize a full-fledged day school. As immigrant communities grew, their supplementary schools became day schools, and new supplementary ones emerged in newly established centers.

Fig. 4 maps these forty-five different Reformed Dutch schools. Overall, the regular day schools are where one would expect to find them: in West Michigan, Chicago, south central and northwestern Iowa, and northern New Jersey. The supplementary schools are also found there, but they are also present on the margins of the Dutch settlement zone: Cincinnati, Ohio; Lafayette, Indiana; and New Holland and Ridott, Illinois. Here the Dutch communities were either too small or unable to support a Christian day school. What the map does not show because of its scale—though the yearbooks do—is that the two principal Dutch colonies—Holland, Michigan (and many of its surrounding villages), and Pella, Iowa, had no Reformed day schools in this 1882-1900 period. Unlike the mixed ethnicities of larger cities, these pioneer areas in Ottawa and Allegan Counties in Michigan and Marion County in Iowa consisted nearly entirely of immigrant Dutch populations. Here the district public schools had only Dutch children, Dutch teachers, and Dutch parents; their public schools apparently were a mirror of their populations in language and religion.

Until the turn of the century, the Reformed Dutch day schools were parochial schools, extensions of the church and governed ultimately by its consistory and minister. Beginning in 1882, school

accounts. H. Jacobsma and Henry Kuiper, "Schools of the Middle-West," *Yearbook of the Free Christian Schools in America, 1923-24* (Chicago: Materson-Selig, 1924), 101-22; R. Postma, "The Christian School Movement in Michigan," *Yearbook of the Christian Schools of America, 1925-1926* (Chicago: Onze Toekomst, 1926), 81-102; Gerhardus Bos, "Schools of the East," 123-32; C. Aue, "Schools of the West," *Yearbook Free Christian Schools, 1923-1924*, 133-47.

³⁶ For any given year, these statistics are incomplete; some churches neglected to submit their school information.

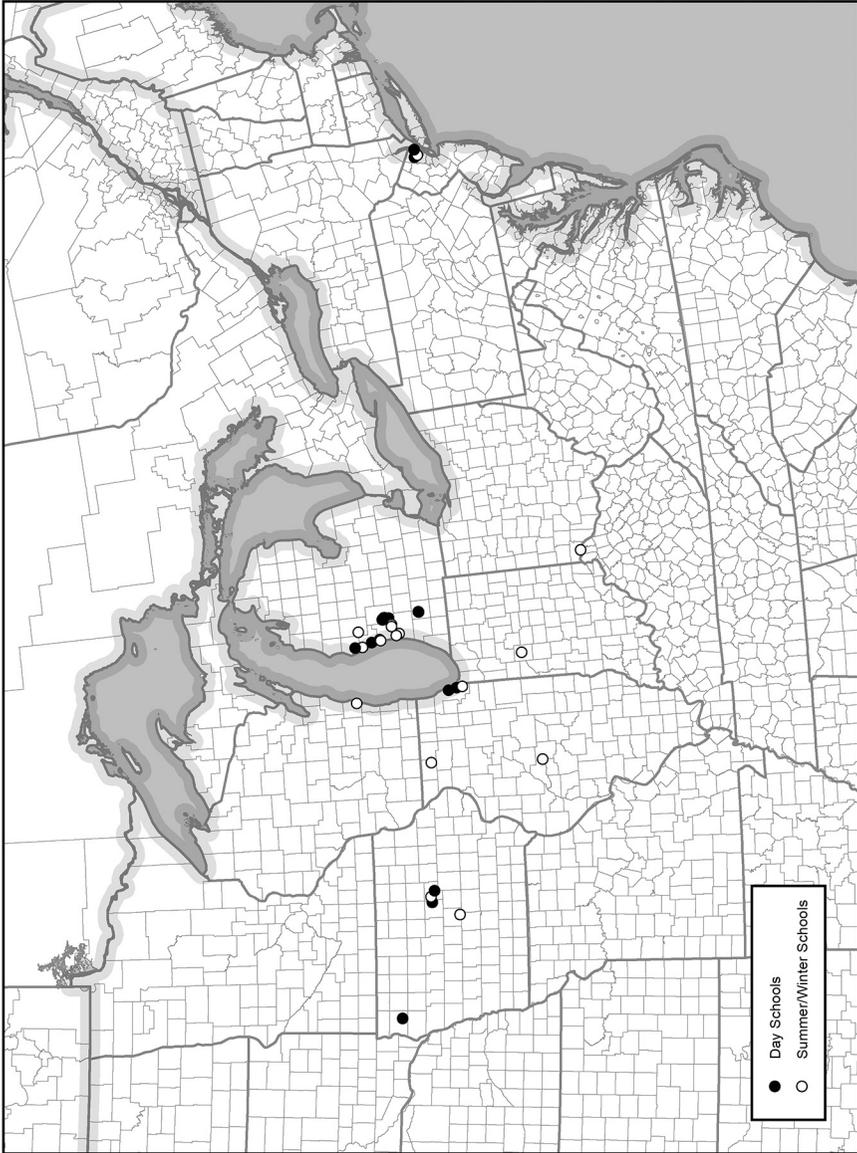


Fig. 4. Parochial Reformed Dutch Day Schools, 1881-1900
(*yearbooks of the CRC*)

statistics were reported annually in the yearbook of the CRC. The schools were oriented to the church rather than the nation, tasked with cultivating its future congregants rather than educating future citizens. Teachers were hired by the church and often hailed from the Netherlands. Especially the smaller schools were regularly housed in the

church itself. The language of instruction was mainly in Dutch; later, in some of the larger cities, such as Grand Rapids and Chicago, there was instruction in Dutch and English. Because the church services and catechism instruction were in Dutch, it was considered important that the children could read, sing in, and understand Dutch, much like the children in the Dutch Reformed communities of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in New Netherland and the English colonies.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the language of instruction in the schools began to change to English. The use of Dutch was considered an obstacle to Americanization and disadvantaged students when they transferred to public schools. As long as church services were held in Dutch, however, some Dutch language instruction remained. For most of the Reformed day schools founded during the late nineteenth century, there were from ten to twenty-five years of Dutch instruction. H. Jacobsma stresses how different the early Reformed Dutch day schools were from those at the time he wrote (1924): “The older schools passed through three periods: namely, first, Holland; second, Holland-English; third, English-Holland; and are now going into the fourth, English.”³⁷ Although there clearly were many fewer years of Dutch instruction during this period when compared to the century of Dutch language usage during the New Netherland and British colonial periods, this does not minimize how culturally “closed” the Dutch American community was during the nineteenth century.

With continuous new immigration from the Netherlands, another form of school governance and organization began to take hold in the Reformed Dutch day schools in the United States at the turn of the century. The belief that schools should be free not only from the state but also from the church and that schools should have their own nature and independence had taken hold among neo-Calvinist Protestants in the Netherlands and changed the governance of Christian schools there. This conviction came over with the immigrants and began to change the Reformed Dutch schools in North America as well. Besides, adopting the doctrine of freedom for schools, principals, and other professional educators, revealed that consistories and ministers were not well qualified to govern schools, often gave them a low priority, and resisted Americanization.³⁸ These new perceptions led to the development of parental schools. Parents and other school supporters became members of an educational society for a particular school and

³⁷ Jacobsma and Kuiper, “Schools of the Middle-West,” 103.

³⁸ Postma, “Christian School Movement in Michigan,” 91-94.

elected a board from its members to govern the school. One can find the first reference to educational societies in the 1901 CRC yearbook.³⁹ During the changeover period, the school statistics in the yearbooks distinguished between church- and society-governed schools. Some ten years later, all the schools were run by societies, and the statistics were expanded to also include the number of society members and the name of the board president. The size of the society provided a measure of how close the community was to establishing a school.

From their very beginning in 1638, the Reformed Dutch day schools, as noted, had been parochial schools; that era had now come to an end, but it must be made clear that nearly every education society member was also a member of a local CRC. The schools, although not parochial in a strict sense, were very much denominational. By 1920 the CRC yearbook no longer included Christian day school statistics. NUCS—founded in 1920 to pursue the schools' common objectives for teacher training, textbooks, curriculum, supervision and standards, and relations with local and state governments, among others—took over and began reporting school statistics in its first yearbook in 1922.⁴⁰ Now named Christian Schools International (CSI), the organization continues to pursue these objectives.

Fig. 5 maps all the places (96) in North America that in 1915 had either operating schools/summer schools run by school societies or school societies that planned to open such schools in the near future. Twelve were summer schools. There were fifty-three day schools with societies and seventeen stand-alone societies; unfortunately for our records, another twenty-six places that had a Reformed educational presence failed to report any particulars to the yearbook.⁴¹

The distribution of these schools and educational societies followed the existing and expanding settlement pattern of Dutch immigrants. The schools thickened in the more densely occupied Dutch settlement zones of West Michigan (and farther north), Chicago,

³⁹ *Jaarboekje ten dienste der Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk in Noord Amerika voor het Jaar 1901* (Grand Rapids, MI: J. B. Hulst), 103.

⁴⁰ NUCS, *A Survey of our Free Christian Schools* (Chicago: Matherson-Selig, 1922).

⁴¹ *Jaarboekje ten dienste der Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk in Amerika voor het Jaar 1915* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 128-31. Without historical research on each of the places with a Reformed Dutch educational presence that did not supply information to the 1915 yearbook, it is not possible to determine whether an educational society or a school was present. B. J. Bennink's yearbook of 1917-18 lists 66 schools, all but one with societies. B. J. Bennink, *Year-Book, Schools for Christian Instruction, 1917-1918* (Grand Rapids, MI: n.p.)

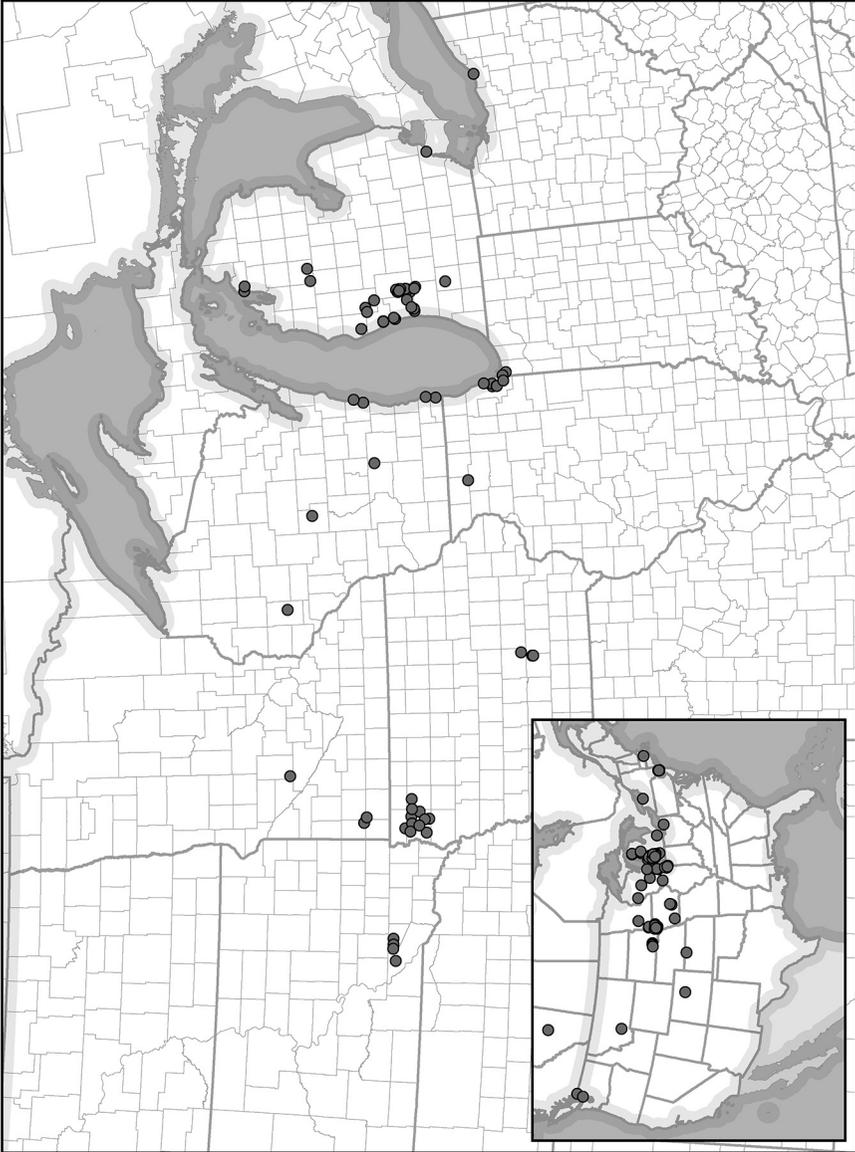


Fig. 5. Reformed Dutch American day/summer schools and stand-alone educational societies in 1915 (*Yearbook of the CRC, 1915*)

and Paterson, New Jersey; a new cluster of schools and societies arose in the corner zone where Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota come together. And outliers, such as Whitinsville, Massachusetts; Luctor, Kansas; Denver, Colorado; Manhattan, Missouri; Lynden, Washington;

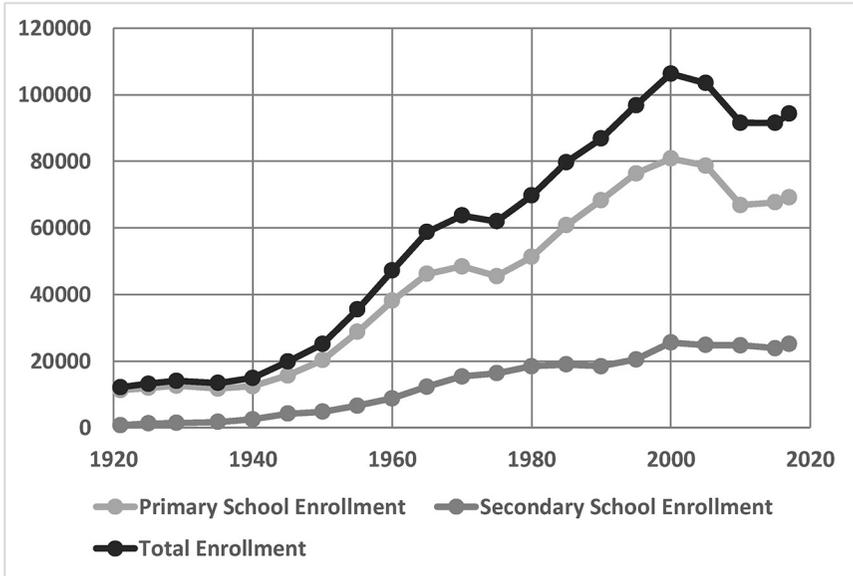


Fig. 6. Enrollment in NUCS schools, 1922-2018
(*NUCS/CSI yearbooks and directories*)

and Edmonton, Alberta, began to give a continent-wide cast to the distribution of Reformed Dutch day schools and educational societies.

This fourth period reversed the decline and near disappearance of Reformed Christian day schools in North America. A new denomination of immigrants schooled in the Netherlands brought the prevailing Dutch model of Reformed Christian education to the United States and by the end of the period had readied it for Americanization.

Period 5 (1920-2000): growth and educational development in an integrated system of schools

The distinguishing traits and history of the Reformed Dutch day schools in the twentieth century have been well documented, debated, and interpreted in a large and diverse body of literature.⁴² There

⁴² An excellent selection of this literature until 1977 is found in Harro W. Van Brummelen, *Telling the Next Generation. Educational Development in North American Calvinist Christian Schools* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986). Van Brummelen's study is the most comprehensive account of the history of Reformed Dutch day schools in North America. See also: Harro W. Van Brummelen, "Molding God's Children: The History of Curriculum in Christian Schools rooted in Dutch Calvinism" (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1984), 419-51; George Stob, "The Christian Reformed Church and her Schools" (ThD dissertation, Princeton

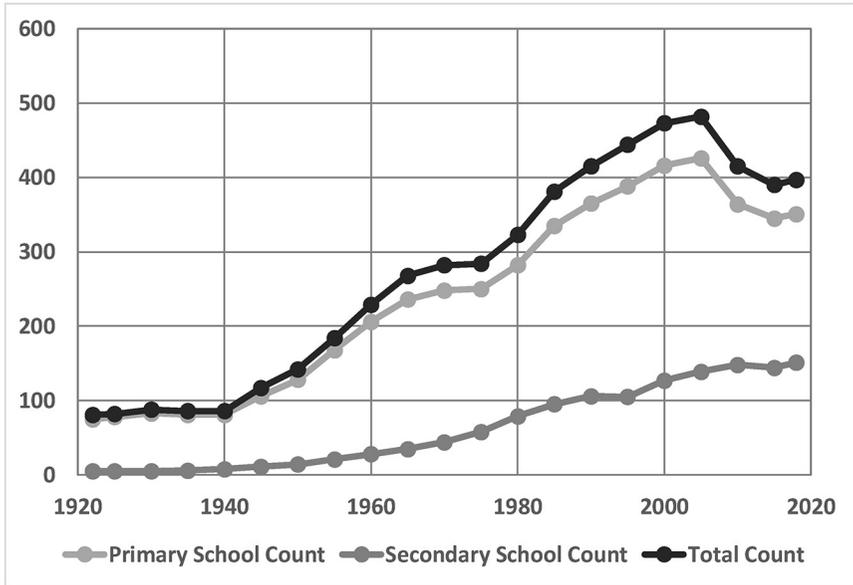


Fig. 7. Number of NUCS/CSI schools, 1922-2018
(*NUCS/CSI yearbooks and directories*)

is no need here to cover that ground except to outline the principal features that stand out in this fifth period in the continuing history of Reformed Dutch day schools in North America. I will touch on four distinguishing features of this most recent period: growth and geographic expansion, the private nature of the schools, educational development, and denominationalism.

The first of these traits was the overall sustained geographic expansion and remarkable numerical growth in enrollment and number of schools (elementary and high schools) that marked this period. Fig. 6 graphs the primary, secondary, and total enrollment from 1922 to 2018.⁴³ Total enrollment increased from around 12,000 to 104,000 students, with elementary school enrollment around six times that of high schools in 2000. Growth was sustained throughout the entire period, with the exception of the early 1970s, which marked the end of both the baby boom and high immigration, both of which had benefitted school enrollment. The rate of growth in elementary

Theological Seminary, 1955).

⁴³ Calvin University and Hope College students scanned the summary tables in NUCS/CSI yearbooks and directories into Excel to produce these and many other maps and graphs.

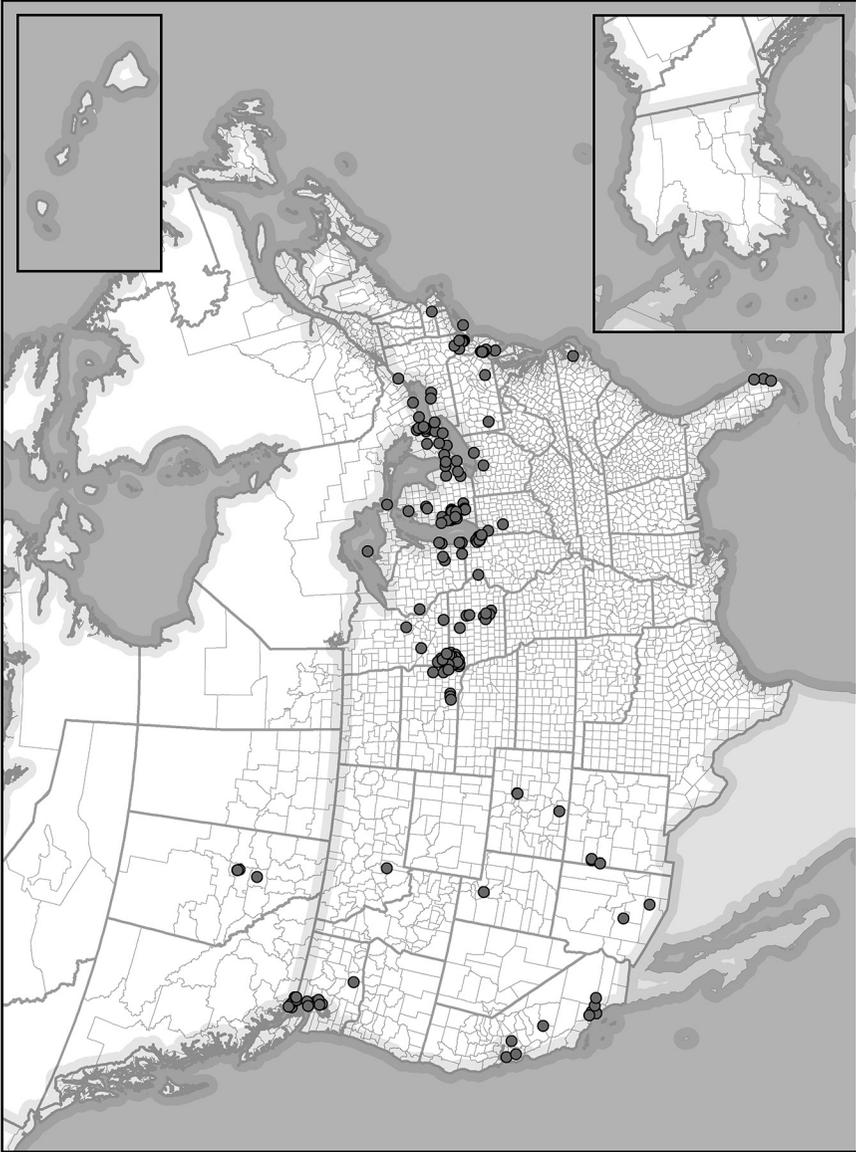


Fig. 8. Schools in NUCs, 1960 (*NUCS directory, 1960-61*)

school enrollment was consistently higher than that of high schools, a reflection of the lack of availability of high schools in outlying areas and their higher minimum enrollment requirements. The total number of schools also climbed steadily from fewer than a 100 (fig. 7) to more

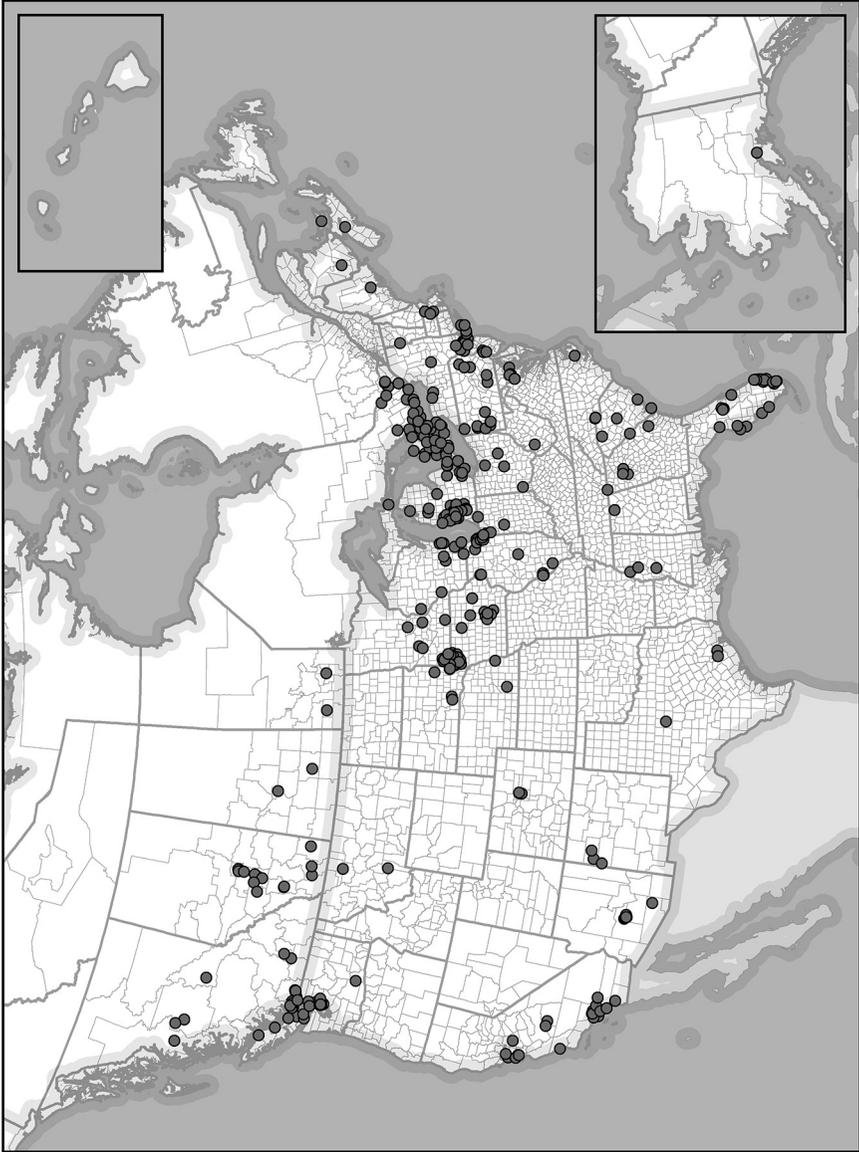


Fig. 9. Schools in the National Union of Christian Schools, 1990
(*NUCS directory, 1990-91*)

than 475; especially the high schools grew from just a handful in 1922 to more than 125.⁴⁴ The arrival of post-World War II Dutch Reformed

⁴⁴ In the face of more junior high and middle schools and the increasing diversity of grade ranges in individual schools in recent years in general, we stayed with

immigrants and their settlement in new areas (southwestern Ontario and California, for example), the postwar baby boom, and the mandate of the CRC for Christian education, all figured into steady increases in both enrollment and number of schools.

A comparison of the 1915 geographic distribution (fig. 5) of Reformed Dutch American and Canadian day schools (and societies) with that of 1960 (fig. 8), shows there was significant additional densification of schools in the established core areas of the Midwest. Both the Northeast and the West Coast of the United States now showed clusters of schools oriented to major conurbations. Entirely new was the appearance of a thick constellation of schools (both urban and rural) in southwestern Ontario, the result of high, post-WWII, Dutch immigration into the province. Elsewhere, there was a smattering of additional schools in the southwest and the initial appearance of schools in Florida. The additional schools in new areas were associated with the relocation of Dutch Americans and the arrival of Dutch immigrants. The school societies and enrollments were closely connected geographically to Christian Reformed congregations.

Thirty years later, in 1990, further notable regional changes in the distribution of Reformed Dutch American and Canadian day schools had become apparent (fig. 9). In Canada, the Prairies—especially Alberta—and the Maritimes had gotten on the map. In the United States, two new regional bands had appeared, one with mainly relocated urban Dutch Americans south of the established settlement core, from eastern Pennsylvania to southern Illinois. The other band of new schools grew largely without Dutch Americans, from North Carolina to western Mississippi. This second band broke new ground; here schools of other Christian communities committed to Christian education had joined NUCS. Elsewhere, in the already-established zones of Dutch American (Florida and along the West Coast) and Canadian (Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia) settlements, the number of schools continued to increase; in the West, the cluster of schools in northwest Washington state and southwest British Columbia is noteworthy. The more dense, core area of Reformed Dutch American and Canadian day schools,

elementary/primary schools (pre-K to 8) and secondary/high schools (9-12, or 9-13 for some years in Ontario). The classification of any school in NUCS yearbooks and directories was made on the basis of its grade range belonging more to one than the other type. The reporting of school systems with multiple schools or campuses with more than one school also presented challenges to counting and classifying schools.

from northwestern Iowa to eastern Ontario, was by 1990 surrounded by a continent-wide, lower-density distribution of schools.

A second defining trait of the Reformed Dutch American and Canadian day schools in this period of its history is their status as privately funded schools. In spite of compelling arguments made for confessional pluralism in public education and follow-on equal funding by local and state/provincial governments, the schools in the United States were and have remained fully private, funded entirely by parents, church communities, and philanthropists. In this way, these schools are very different from their sister schools in the Netherlands, which had achieved equal public funding by 1920. The Canadian western provinces have, by contrast, indeed provided increased funding for independent schools, including NUCS/CSI schools.⁴⁵ There were those who called for either a path to financial equalization with public schools or, more modestly, tax credits and subsidies for particular public educational services. The strict separation of church and state in the United States, the presence of other denominational systems of religious schools (such as Lutheran, Baptist, and Roman Catholic), and concerns about possible governmental interference that might come with public funding, however, all kept Reformed Dutch American (and most Dutch Canadian) day schools private. This trait would have a significant impact on their place in the larger national educational enterprise compared with the Dutch public/religious schools from which they came. They, along with all other religious and independent schools, would not become part of the publicly funded school system with equal opportunities for all Christian parents to enroll their children. This limited these schools' overall Christian education impact on society.⁴⁶

A third and multifaceted defining trait of this period in the history of Reformed day schools was the drive for professionalization and educational development. It proceeded along a number of fronts: organizational (by geography and function), curricular, teaching, teacher education, and publications. This drive largely paralleled similar developments in other school systems in the twentieth century.

⁴⁵ Adrian Guldemon, *Inspired by Vision . . . Constrained by Tradition. Conflict, Decline and Revival in Christian Schools in Ontario* (Ancaster, ON: Monarch Educare Solutions, 2014), 110-13.

⁴⁶ For works that examine the position of equal funding and financial aid for NUCS/CSI schools, see John A. Vander Ark, *22 Landmark Years, Christian Schools International, 1943-65* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 119-39; Gordon Spykman et al., *Society, State and Schools. A Case for Structural and Confessional Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981).

What had been a loose assemblage of schools without much contact and concerted effort steadily developed into a more integrated and professional system with local, regional, and national organizations and leadership. When schools transitioned from parochial to parental governance in the first decades of the twentieth century, Dutch American communities established societies for Christian education that fostered leadership, sponsored speakers and other promotional activities, and, together with the schools themselves, served as an informal educational network for Reformed Dutch communities. In 1917 and 1918, for the first national directory of Reformed Dutch day schools, Christian educational pioneer B. J. Bennink compiled profiles of every school and their society, as well as data on board members, tuition, enrollment, teachers, grade range, and so forth. This directory preceded the establishment of NUCS in 1920 and was superior to the rather unreliable summary tables in the yearbooks of the CRC.⁴⁷ In 1922 NUCS/CSI began publishing its own directories and until recently had continued to do so. The directories and NUCS itself also helped establish the perception that this was a system of schools found throughout North America with common aims and practices, part of the Reformed Dutch world. When a Dutch American or Canadian family moved into a community, they looked not only for a Reformed church but also a Reformed day school.

Before the founding of NUCS in 1920, regions and urban centers with a concentration of Christian schools had already established organizations for teachers, principals, and board members to meet, present, discuss, and cooperate on common issues. For example, the Society for Christian Instruction, based on Reformed principles, was established in 1892 by a group of Michigan schools; later it became the Michigan Christian School Alliance.⁴⁸ Similarly, New Jersey, South Dakota, Iowa, and Chicago early on had principals' clubs, alliances of Christian schools, and teachers' associations.⁴⁹ Soon after its founding, NUCS began organizing annual national conventions of delegates and other educational professionals; it set policy for the organization, developed an *esprit de corps*, facilitated networking, and made it possible for those with similar educational responsibilities to engage around particular topics and issues at a national and international level. The keynote addresses, given by church and educational leaders in the

⁴⁷ Bennink, *Year-Book, 1917-1918*.

⁴⁸ Postma, "Christian School Movement in Michigan," 90.

⁴⁹ NUCS, *A Survey*, 83-84.

Dutch Reformed community, cut across a broad swath of foundational educational issues. These were regularly published either in NUCS yearbooks or in separate NUCS convention papers for the benefit of the entire educational community.

As schools opened in other regions of North America, professional organizations soon followed. The 1970-71 NUCS directory, for example, lists fourteen teachers' and fourteen principals'/administrators' associations, ranging from California to Florida and from the Canadian Prairies to Pella, Iowa.⁵⁰ The Christian Educators' Association (CEA) began as a Michigan organization in 1924 and today still organizes conferences throughout the Midwest. NUCS/CSI itself also divided North America into administrative districts, each with its own board. In sum, a highly differentiated organizational structure was put into place that, when all was said and done, also helped teachers, principals, and board members deliver more effective Reformed Christian education to a growing number of students.

Educational development on other fronts was also required. Teacher education for Reformed Christian schools was clearly a high priority. Reformed Christian colleges launched teacher education programs, and their graduates staffed NUCS/CSI schools, as well as other Christian and public schools. Scholars at Christian colleges and other educational leaders worked to develop and articulate a Reformed philosophy of and *raison d'être* for Christian education that gave it coherence and meaning.⁵¹ NUCS/CSI, together with sister organizations, helped schools attain accreditation and teachers receive certification and continuing education. News and issues related to Christian education became regular rubrics in CRC magazines, such as *De Wachter* and the *Banner*. For Christian school parents and school supporters, there was *Christian Home and School* (from 1922) and for educators, the *Christian Educators' Journal* (from 1961). These publications shared news about NUCS/CSI schools and their educational issues with parents and educators and published professional articles, literature reviews, and curriculum evaluations.

Although there was consensus throughout this fifth period of Reformed Dutch day schools on the importance of the Reformed

⁵⁰ NUCS, *Directory 1970-1971* (Grand Rapids, MI: n.p., 1971), 200-202.

⁵¹ See, for example, John L. De Beer and Cornelius Jaarsma, *Toward a Philosophy of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: NUCS, 1953); Henry N. Beversluis, *Christian Philosophy of Education* (Grand Rapids: NUCS, 1971); Van Brummelen, *Telling the Next Generation*; Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Educating for Responsible Action* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans and CSI, 1980).

confessions and theology for education, there continued to be divergent and contested interpretations of the nature and purpose of Reformed Christian education. Earlier Dutch American immigrant communities often followed a more pietistic and theological path in Christian education with an emphasis on Bible study, devotions, and spiritual formation; these practices often went together with cultural abstinence and isolation. Later Protestant Dutch immigrants were raised in and more often followed a neo-Calvinist orientation, one of cultural engagement. When applied to education, this approach meant delivering the Christian perspective in all subjects throughout the curriculum; such education prepared students to be Christians engaged in society. The Reformed day schools in Canada, in general, embodied more of this engaged orientation. The shifting middle ground between these two stances—pietism versus engagement—supplied much of the internal debate in Reformed day school discussions.

If the lifeblood of a Christian school is the Christian teaching of a Christian curriculum, then the NUCS/CSI staff and related writers prepared a spate of Christian curriculum units and textbooks over the years for every subject, along with appropriate teaching methods. These were piloted, published, and adopted by many schools both within and outside of the organization.⁵² This was new and pioneering work for Christian educators. Twentieth-century day schools required teaching a growing list of subjects, something that Reformed Dutch American and Canadian day schools had not done before. Instruction in science, history, literature, languages, government, and geography with a Christian curriculum was uncharted territory. After three centuries, the lines between the church and school education in the Reformed world had to be redrawn, leaving schools with less responsibility and time for ecclesiastical matters and more for teaching about the wider world. The subjects of Bible and religion were still there, but they were less closely tied to the church; much more curricular space and time was devoted to learning about the fullness of God's world and humanity's place in it.

One last defining trait of the Reformed Dutch American and Canadian day school system was the impact of denominationalism.

⁵² Van Brummelen, in *Telling the Next Generation*, 305-8, includes a list of NUCS/CSI curriculum materials; Van Brummelen, in "Molding God's Children," 423-33, lists curriculum articles published by NUCS/CSI writers and curriculum units developed for NUCS/CSI schools. See also, Harro Van Brummelen, *Steppingstones to Curriculum. A Biblical Path* (Seattle: Alta Vista College Press, 1994), and G. Steensma and H. Van Brummelen, *Shaping School Curriculum: A Biblical View* (Terre Haute, IN: Signal, 1977).

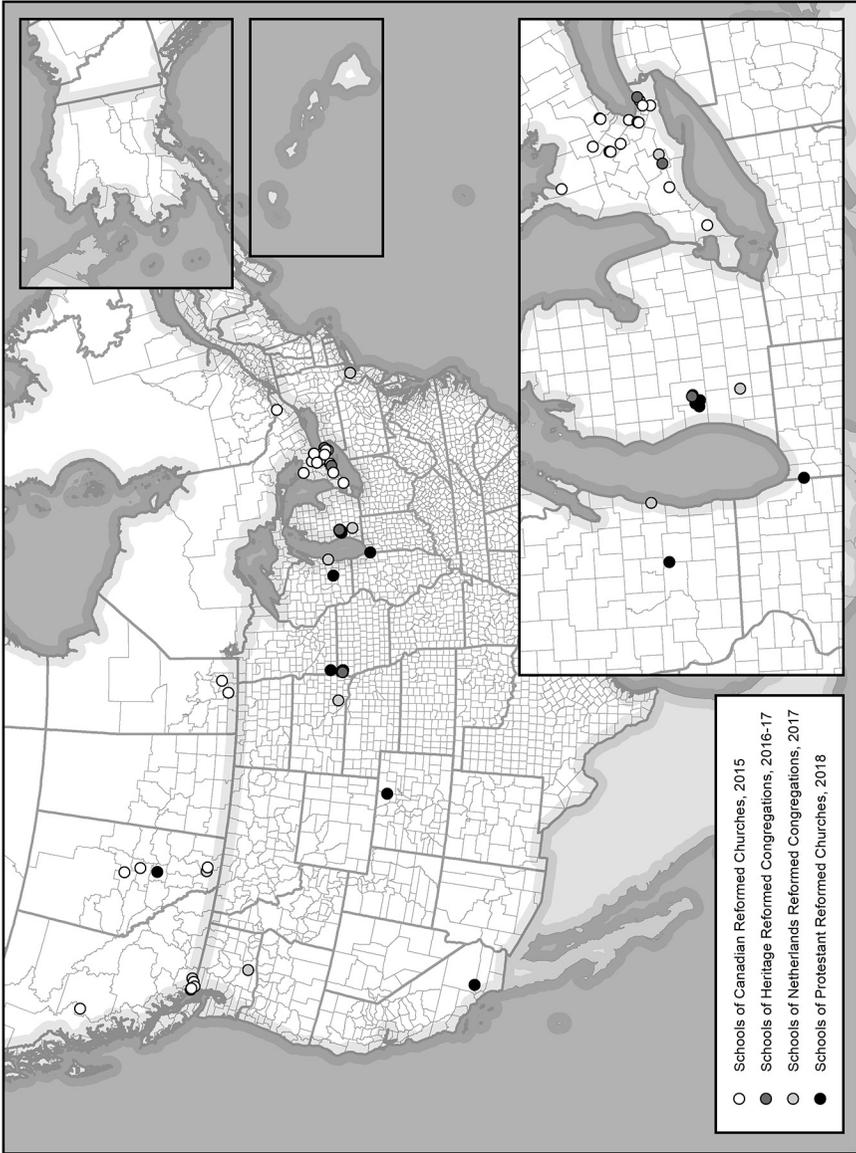


Fig. 10. Reformed Day Schools of the Smaller Dutch Reformed Denominations, 2015-18 (*yearbooks of the Dutch Reformed denominations identified on the map*)

From the beginning, NUCS planned to be a big, inclusive tent for students from all the different Dutch Reformed denominations. Because the CRC was the largest such denomination with strong

support for Christian education, students from the CRC dominated the enrollment throughout the period. In 1937 the split in enrollment among Dutch Reformed churches in NUCS schools was 85 percent CRC, 7 percent Protestant Reformed Church (PRC), and 5 percent RCA. Thirty-three years later, in 1970, this split was still over 77 percent CRC, 4 percent RCA and less than 1 percent PRC.⁵³ Similarly, the teacher corps and the leadership of NUCS and of local schools were overwhelmingly CRC. NUCS and local schools worked with all Dutch Reformed churches and families to recruit students; they booked a lot more success with the CRC. In spite of the demographic weight of the CRC on enrollment, NUCS/CSI, its member schools, and other educational organizations were able to develop their own educational domain independent of the CRC.

Especially after World War II, denominationalism began to leave other marks on Reformed Dutch day schools. Several smaller, more theologically conservative denominations began to establish their own school societies and schools: among these were the PRCs, the Netherlands Reformed Congregations, the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Heritage Reformed Congregations, and United Reformed Churches. This had a significant impact on NUCS-related school enrollments. For example, as the PRC established its own schools, PRC enrollment in NUCS schools fell sharply. The United Reformed Church—seceded from the CRC in 1996—kept its associations with existing schools and established some new ones. Fig. 10 maps the recent distribution of schools for four of these smaller Dutch Reformed denominations. Most notable, of course, are the Canadian Reformed schools clustered in southwestern Ontario and scattered in the western provinces. Altogether, the distribution of these schools is coterminous with the outlines of Dutch American and Canadian settlement geography. In the larger Dutch American and Canadian population centers, there were enough adherents of these smaller denominations to establish congregations and schools.

Although these schools are not parochial in governance, their connections to local churches and denominations are quite close. Information about the schools is commonly found in the yearbooks of the denominations. Students are mainly, although not exclusively, drawn from the congregations of these individual denominations; teaching staff and boards are even more closely affiliated with the denomination and specific congregations. The desire to maintain

⁵³ NUCS, "1970 NUCS Decade Survey," *1970-1971 Directory*. (Grand Rapids, MI: NUCS, 1971), 243-66.

their Reformed theological emphases and lifestyles is the main reason for operating their own schools and system-wide educational organizations. The Protestant Reformed Schools (15 in 2007) have their own Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies, and its Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute holds annual conventions and publishes its own magazine, *Perspectives in Covenant Education*. Similarly, the schools (more than 20 in 2000) of the Canadian Reformed Churches have their own League of Canadian Reformed School Societies, the Canadian Reformed Teachers Association, and the Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College.

This fifth period in the history of Reformed Dutch American and Canadian schools is the most heady and groundbreaking. On the one hand, it mirrors the developments that were taking place in all elementary and secondary school systems in North America—professionalization, curriculum and textbook writing, teacher education, and networking by way of professional meetings and conferences. On the other hand, the period demonstrated that an immigrant and postimmigrant Reformed Christian educational system could grow, expand, professionalize, thrive, and transform itself in and for North America. It could go head-to-head with any other system of schools to give students skills and knowledge for their place in society and the world. It could shape students' spiritual formation and life by means of a Christian lens on the world through Christian teaching of Christian curricula in all subjects.

The twenty-first century: the making of a new chapter? More Protestant and less Reformed, less ethnic and more diverse

During the first two decades of this century, total enrollment at CSI dropped by more than ten thousand students, from 104,539 in 2000-2001 to 93,969 in 2017-18.⁵⁴ This decline was and continues to be fueled by a variety of interlocking factors. Demography is one: the membership of the CRC—the principal enrollment source for CSI schools—has fallen from 316,000 in 1992 to 228,000 in 2018, a 28 percent drop. The decline in birth rates is a large part of this falling membership and declining CRC enrollment in the schools: 6,192 children were baptized in 1988, 2,834 in 2018.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ CSI directories, 2000-2001 and 2017-18.

⁵⁵ Neil Carlson, "Church Decline? Blame the Baby Bust," in *Charting Church Leadership*, blog, 12 Oct. 2015, patheos.com. The data shown in the blog has been updated several times, most recently for 2018.

A number of additional factors are relevant to account for the decline in the enrollment in CSI schools. The real cost of a quality Christian education has continued to increase and take a larger share of a family's budget. Reformed Christian schooling from pre-K to college has become unaffordable for a large percentage of families; they now have to make decisions about which level of Christian education is optimal for their children. The homeschooling movement has become an alternative for Christian parents, also in the context of these rising costs. In the United States, many parents who have chosen CSI schools because of their dissatisfaction with the quality and security of the public schools have moved over to selective charter schools with good reputations and attractive programs. More theologically conservative Reformed parents—often with large families—have enrolled their children in the schools of the smaller correspondingly conservative Dutch Reformed denominations. And operating at a deeper cultural level is the inevitable de-ethnicization—the hollowing out and erasure of Reformed Dutch American/Canadian identity, meaning, commitments, and comportment through intermarriage, assimilation, and neglect.

All together these factors have led to a decline in the percentage of students in CSI schools from the CRC. In eastern Canada (Ontario and the Maritime provinces), for example, the percentage of CRC members supporting Christian schools declined steadily from 1960 to 2010, reaching 47 percent in 2000 and 30 percent in 2010. At the Reformed day schools in eastern Canada, the percentage of students from other than Reformed churches has steadily increased in the schools since the 1980s, reaching 48 percent in 2010.⁵⁶ The exact numbers will be different in other CSI regions and schools, but these two trends—declining CRC and increasing non-Reformed enrollment—are setting the stage for a new chapter. Were it not for these new students, smaller Reformed day schools could not remain viable.

To further promote mainline Protestant enrollment in Christian education, consideration needs to be given to broadening the confessional basis for teachers, parents, and educational organizations beyond the Three Forms of Unity to include other ecumenical creeds. The well-honed and widely respected Christian philosophy of education and Christian curricula developed in the Reformed day school movement can also rest on such creeds and be accepted by non-Reformed parents. Other mainline denominational school systems (Lutheran schools, for example) may well be invited and pulled into

⁵⁶ Guldemon, *Inspired by Vision*, 105-6, table C-3.

such a mainline Protestant Christian school coalition. Although the more narrow denominationalism of the conservative Reformed schools will remain part of the Christian school scene, CSI can take the lead in charting a path to a less denominational and more ecumenical system of Christian schools. Reformed day schools as such may disappear; their contributions to Christian education, however, will endure through their tried-and-true practices and materials, parents, educational leaders, and teachers.