

Editor's mailbox

Dear *ACT Now* reader

I should like to begin by thanking those who took the time and trouble to contact me, even in the midst of writing end-of-year student reports, to let me know that they were unhappy with the 'blatantly one-sided' Brain Gym article in the Summer 2008 edition of *ACT Now*. Each of these individuals began by apologising for being too busy to submit an email or letter for publication, but wanted to let me hear their feedback. This letter is my way of responding to their collective concern that 'a lack of journalistic balance' had led to 'biased coverage'. Please believe me when I say that, as the editor of *ACT Now*, I take matters of balance and bias extremely seriously.

Before I respond to these concerns, however, I would like to let you know that:

- Pages 6–8 of this edition of *ACT Now* contain three items which provide a collective rebuttal of the arguments advanced by Chris Dobson in his 'Brain Gym: a Christian response' article.
- Chris Dobson's article is entitled 'a Christian response', not 'the *definitive* Christian response'. The article expresses the particular viewpoint of the author; it does not reflect the collective views of the committees of the four national ACTs in the UK, let alone the tens of thousands of Christians working in education in these isles.
- Chris chose to share his thoughts, feelings, experiences, insights and concerns with his Christian brothers and sisters working in education. He did so in good faith. I would like to thank Chris for submitting his article for publication in *ACT Now*.
- Writers who submit an email, letter, article, play, poem or story for publication leave themselves open to critique and criticism. Their vulnerability is the corollary of their willingness to share openly with others.

Subject: Corporal punishment

ACT Now issues: Summer 2008

Items responded to: letters by Charles Morris and Norman Wells

Dear Editor

Whilst it is gratifying to read that Charles Morris (*ACT Now*, Summer 2008) remembers my article on discipline (*ACT Now*, Autumn 2004), he has wrongly cited me as being totally against all corporal punishment. I made no such assertion in that article. Instead, I pointed out that physical punishment is no longer permissible in school. My own view, certainly in the parent-child relationship if not the school, is actually closer to that described by Norman Wells (*ACT Now*, Summer 2008).

Alison Wilson

Now, to the matter in hand! As a rule, when *ACT Now* tackles a contentious issue, I tend to make a point of inviting writers from each side of the debate to contribute. A good example of this is the two evolution / creation articles in the Spring 2006 edition. In this instance I was able to find two Christian educators – one on each side of the fence – willing and able to make simultaneous submissions to the magazine. As a result both items appeared in the same edition.

In 2007, I began a search to find two writers willing to advance contrary viewpoints about the educational value of field study trips to aquaria, circuses and zoos. My goal was to juxtapose the items in the same edition. Alas! Even though Christian staff at three zoos promised to write the 'pro' article, nothing materialised. Thus, having received the 'con' article in advance of the copy deadline, I had a decision to make. Should I go to press with the one article I had, or wait for the second to arrive? I chose to forge ahead in the hope that the very act of publishing might encourage a response. It worked! Naomi Webster's 'Zoos: good for education, not for entertainment' (*ACT Now*, Summer 2008) was a response to Freeman Wicklund's 'Human education for animal emancipation' (*ACT Now*, Spring 2008).

This brings me to Brain Gym. Some time ago, I was approached by an ACT member who offered to write a pro-BG article. After accepting this offer, I began to search for a Christian teacher willing to argue against BG. The irony is that whilst the 'con' item was written and submitted in good time, the 'pro' version was never submitted. I decided to proceed (as I had with the zoos debate) with a single, partisan article in the hope that it might stimulate a response. It did!

A colleague recently commented that, as Christians working in education, we find ourselves 'constantly manoeuvring ourselves around the grey stuff'. This sentiment reminds me of the *Church Times* adverts featured in recent issues of *ACT Now* which say 'because Christianity isn't black and white'. Life – including the walk of Christian faith – includes complexity, ambiguity and disagreement. I believe it is right and proper for *ACT Now* to reflect this fact. *ACT Now* readers are united in Christ, and united in the workplace. But this does not mean we all think alike!

I'd like to close by stating the obvious. Editors can only work with what has been submitted, not with what has been promised; not with what ought to have been written. So, thank you Chris Dobson for your article. And thank you Dalwyn R Attwell, Mark Deacon and Geoff Sigmund for your written responses. I thank God for you all.

Rupert Kaye