

## **Two Teachers**

*I was attending a parent-teacher conference for my teenage son at his Christian high school, and spoke with two of his science teachers. They were sitting about ten feet from one another, and I spoke to one immediately after the other. I was struck by the contrast in the two conversations.*

*The first teacher introduced himself, found out which student was ours, and turned to his grade book. He ran his finger down the list of names until he found my son's name, then ran his finger across the list of scores for the semester's activities and read each score aloud. Finally, he read out the percentage for the semester, commented that our son was doing very well academically, and asked if we had questions.*

*The second teacher also introduced himself and identified our student. He then sat back and paused. He then told us that he appreciated our son's contribution to science class. There was another student, he told us, who sat right behind our son in class. This other student had some learning difficulties, and often found it hard to follow longer science classes. Our son, the teacher told us, had been finding good, non-disruptive moments to turn around and make sure that his fellow student understood what was going on. "This was important," the teacher continued, "because this semester I have been emphasizing to students that part of being a Christian learning community is looking out for one another's needs, and not just pursuing our own success."*

*Both teachers seemed very competent, and our son did well in both of their classes. But each left me with a very different sense of what might have been included in his learning.*

For discussion:

- Based on these two conversations, how would you describe each teacher's vision of their task as a science educator?
- Do you see building a mutually supportive community as part of the job of a science educator? Why or why not?
- Do you think it likely that the second teacher was teaching science less well? Or could he have been teaching it better? What leads you to either conclusion?

Teaching FASTly (FAST = **F**aith **A**nd **S**cience **T**eaching) means teaching in a way that allows both faith *and* science to remain in play in learning, each with its own integrity, neither canceling out the other, yet connected. It means looking out for *all* of the ways that faith and science can be in conversation, not just the few opportunities to take positions on controversial questions. Teaching FASTly means approaching students as whole people, with beliefs, commitments, character, feelings, and relationships, and not just as recipients of knowledge. The resources at [www.teachfastly.com](http://www.teachfastly.com) are not a replacement science curriculum, but an invitation to think about a way of teaching. They offer practical suggestions for teaching FASTly.