



LAUNCESTON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
in Christ wisdom and knowledge

Vision Statement: To glorify and honour God through Christ-centred education

Core Values: To live in obedience to God; To act with humility, integrity and fairness; To work with creativity and diligence; To encourage participation and teamwork; To be trustworthy and accountable to one another;

Motto: In Christ Wisdom and Knowledge

LCS EDUCATION PURPOSE STATEMENT

The following statement is a twelve point statement of purpose. It does not attempt to describe what happens at present at Launceston Christian School. As a statement of purpose, it sets out ideals with the hope that they will guide practice. It is also hoped that this will be a developing document with worthy examples of practice added from time to time.

1

REAFFIRMING OUR MISSION

The Christian school's mission is reiterated from time to time so that it makes sense to each new generation of teachers, students and parents. Because society is fast moving, ever changing and ethically demanding, curricular goals and day to day practices are constantly examined in the light of the school's mission.

Exposition:

A good Christian school knows where it is going and how to get there. A carefully worded Mission Statement establishes the goals of the school.

To create awareness of the school's mission, questions are asked like: "What are Christian schools for?" To prepare academicians? Workers? Mega Consumers? Culture transformers? Social activists?

These questions boil down to the main question: What is our calling as Christians in this world? The Christian school creates awareness of and preparation for fulfilment of this calling in its students.

Since society is fast moving and ever changing, the Christian school curriculum is re-examined constantly to jettison the non-essential and archaic, while tenaciously maintaining the anchor points.

Practically

* To make such an examination possible, the school's curriculum coordinator or a committee of teachers oversees the entire effort of the school. A five year plan and/or a built-in review schedule requires that the school's practice is constantly aligned with the goals of the school and the needs of the future. Teachers constantly evaluate their own classroom practice.

The Christian school community emphasises the idea of hope. God revealed Himself as the One who loves the world and gave his Son to restore the whole creation. In this age of cynicism and hopelessness the Christian school cultivates a positive, theocentric world view.

Exposition:

We live in a world which is in the grip of fear. The nuclear arms proliferation, the continuing destroying of our natural resources and the ever present tension between the nations create a doom-thinking that can make people despondent.

Over against this doom watch, Christians have to be reminded that the world is not going around and around without meaning. Instead, the whole world is being changed for Christ's coming. He is establishing his Kingdom through the power of his Spirit. That means God is always in control.

For that reason students in a Christian school are taught that our world belongs to God. They have to develop an eye for God's gracious presence in this world. Students are also challenged to respond to such grace.

The Christian school prepares students to become mature citizens of Christ's Kingdom with eyes both on the Lord and on His world. Because the school is a model of its beliefs, all structures, policies, courses and teaching methods are designed to reflect these basic Christian beliefs. The Christian school is not simply a private school staffed and populated by people who go to church, it provides a distinct and noticeable alternative in its educational philosophy and methods.

Practically

- * We should surround children with affirmations of this hope; Praise, singing, prayers and Bible stories encourage children in this hope.

3

ENCOURAGING CONCERN FOR OTHERS

Where Christ is central in our life, children are taught that cooperation comes before competition, service before self-interest.

Exposition

Since moral and ethical learning comprises an essential part of the school's program, its facilities, staffing and scheduling arrangements are designed and arranged to cultivate the values and skills of cooperation and group accomplishment.

A vision is cultivated in the Christian school that is consistent with the Kingdom of Christ and increasingly aware of the urgent needs within the larger global community. Students are encouraged not to seek an existence at the expense of other inhabitants of the planet. Rather they are led to treat all people - including people of other faiths and cultures - as having been created in the image of God. They learn to treat the planet as God's creation, entrusted to their stewardship for future generations. Conflict resolution and the pursuit of peace are consciously and deliberately taught and practised in both classroom and playgrounds, for use in the home and in the wider world community.

Practically

- * collaborative learning should be an element in the teaching strategy used in all areas of the curriculum.
- * community involvement should be a regular part of the program.

The Christian school community offers opportunities and fosters responsibilities to exercise discernment. Students are guided in developing Christian discernment that is based on God's Word and realised under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The concepts of stewardship, justice and compassion are translated into practice.

Exposition

Western education typically intellectualises the learning process. Schooling is often referred to as 'developing young minds'. A more biblical approach would be that you know nothing, until knowledge has shaped and affected behaviour.

Students in the Christian school are given opportunities to show they really know something, to display in their actions that biblical truth and moral principles are realities.

Providing such opportunities has necessarily certain risks.

We can expect that the students' moral behaviour will often be sub-standard. Their frequent failures should not be criticised in a discouraging way. Students have to be nurtured.

Competence in normal living, as in piano-playing or car repair, develops best when opportunities are plentiful and real, when advice is relevant and sincere and when forgiveness and a new start are the rewards of grace.

In the Christian school students are encouraged to express their own ideas and to make their own choices. The teachers give deserving students more freedom and responsibility as they mature. The result of this process is growth in both confidence and independence.

Central to moral behaviour is discernment - the ability to make informed Christian choices, to see in a way that many in contemporary society do not. As Christian school students face current issues, they are increasingly equipped to marshal evidence, to think through an issue, to weigh reasons for choices, to decide courageously and to act.

Practically

- * Teaching such discernment calls for questioning as a prime teaching method. But this questioning is done in an atmosphere of love never ridicule. The teacher's "What do you mean by that?" and "Why?" do not pose a threat but are gentle invitations to support a choice and to self-consciously make moral decisions.

To best frame such inquiries requires a rediscovery of the meaning of "idolatry". Christian teachers and students are constantly attuned to its cultural and institutional presence. They critically discern its place in hearts, in schools and churches, in political systems and in national or community allegiance. But they go beyond targeting easy marks - skin

magazines, rock music, profanity in movies - and wrestle also with culture-wide idolatry as expressed in such deeply embedded phenomena as sexism, militarism and economic exploitation. All this means that Christian school teachers and students read more, reflect more and risk more - hoping to accomplish something with their lives that will live on for the glory of God. This hope cannot be realised without prayer for wisdom and discernment.

Modern life - especially through the media onslaught - dulls the capacity to feel genuine emotions, to think long, arduously and critically. The Christian school experience preserves in students the ability to feel and express the full range of God-given emotions - wonder, shame, passion and joy. Christian schooling insists there is meaning in life to discover and there are important choices to be made.

Exposition

A flat-souled person is one who is saturated with stimuli but who, having no criteria for how to respond, reacts to every-thing the same way, with uncritical acceptance. These are the people whose goal is amusement, whose ethic is "if it feels good, do it", whose god is themselves, or whose icon is the TV. Flat-souled people find they need madder music, stronger wine, faster cars or bloodier movies. To them profit, convenience and comfort become the main purpose of life. Every person, also every Christian student and teacher is powerfully influenced to be just such an uncritically accepting person. We all to a degree become flat-souled.

The Christian school serves up an antidote to the uncritical acceptance of popular culture. Christian schooling preserves healthy innocence; it does not rob children of their childhood to get them to be mature and responsible. Instead, its teachers help students focus on culture and equip them with a 'discerning stance'. They enable students to evaluate culture according to biblical norms.

However if we only use our critical stance to fight the forces that flatten souls, we will lose in the end the battle for the hearts and the minds of our students. The allure is too great and the influence too powerful. The Christian school must therefore be a symbol of Christ's alternative - restoration, reconciliation, peace and joy. The task of the Christian school community is to keep that alternative before the students, to be a living witness to its superiority.

6

PARTICIPATING IN A CHANGING WORLD

As enormous changes continue in the twenty first century - environmental threats, social upheaval, technological wizardry, economic restructuring - the Christian school experience equips students not only to live in such a world, but also to participate in it as witnesses; bringing the authority of God's Word to bear on all human affairs.

The Christian school curriculum is designed to involve students in addressing real life problems. The Christian school stresses the idea of vocation, of calling, of whole life stewardship. Our world belongs to God! Therefore all aspects of life - career, family, leisure time - come under His Lordship. Students learn that they have God given responsibility.

Exposition:

We educate for an imagined future. The present secular educational system seems to prepare for a future that consists of ever increasing levels of consumption.

The Christian future expectation is based on the Biblical promises about Christ's coming Kingdom of everlasting peace and harmony. A beginning of that peace has already begun in the lives of God's people.

The world is faced today with an enormous threat of environmental breakdown. The Christian school raises an awareness of the problems in its students and seeks to be a witness of Christian ecological understanding and action, replacing exploitation with stewardship, and militarism with peacemaking. Such action is taken not simply because of the seriousness of our predicament, but because it is ethically and spiritually mandated. It is a God given calling to work in and to preserve our world that belongs to God.

The Christian school opens the eyes of its students for the world outside. They have to participate in that world in an open way in order to be a positive witness - showing through their integrated lives that they have been redeemed by Christ.

7

PREPARING FOR LATER VOCATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

In the Christian School, students learn a core knowledge base and develop essential life skills. The core knowledge base includes the story of God's people as found in the Bible and church history, the central realities of the natural world, the basic expressions of the larger culture, and a sense of history, - all seen through 'the spectacles of Scripture'. In our Information Age, the essential life skills include reading, writing, mathematics, communication through various media, finding and critically processing information and independent learning.

Exposition

The Christian school staff carefully chooses what it labels "essential" and "core". the guiding question to be asked is "If the purpose of education is to train students to take their place in the world, what is that world like these days?".

Christian school teachers are aware that traditional schooling is in danger of providing students with too many facts and no indication of which one matter.

In our Information Age in which facts come to us instantaneously, the need to cram heads full of facts has been displaced by the need to teach students to find, interpret and evaluate information.

The Christian school stimulates independent learning. The students are given the initiative, the tools and the ability to seek out the educational remedies available in the school, the local library or the larger community.

The Christian school also encourages interdependent learning, learning that takes place in relationship with others.

Such an approach to the curriculum requires adaptability and flexibility on the part of teachers. Many teachers were taught a curriculum twenty years ago, whereas their students need a curriculum that will equip them for living twenty years hence. In the Christian school such a gap is recognised and closed.

Because the Christian school is accountable for its curriculum offerings, it first clarifies on what grounds it will be held accountable.

The skills and knowledge base offered by the Christian school remain in line with the school's statement of purpose. Students are first of all taught what it means to be committed to Christ. Then they are equipped to serve Christ, having accumulated the tools, the knowledge and the dispositions to be His people in the world.

The Christian school protects students from their complacency - or that of their parents - by helping young people to discover, define and apply their

personal gifts. The best possible performance - on the part of both students and teachers - is not just appreciated. It is expected.

The plea in Christian schooling is to educate the whole person, the individual who bears the image of God and who belongs to Christ. For that reason the Christian school seeks a Biblical understanding of economic theory and activity, one which strengthens communities, protects the environment, and values people over profits and comforts.

8

ATTENDING TO EACH STUDENT'S INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

The Christian school pays attention to and affirms each student's developmental level. This approach focuses on a student's physical, emotional, intellectual, social, aesthetic, and spiritual growth process, not his/her rung on the K-12 ladder. Pedagogy is first of all effective and meaningful for the student, not convenient and manageable for the teacher.

Exposition

In the Christian school students are not treated as interchangeable parts. Each has a different learning style, and learns at a different rate, each is also motivated in a different way to a different degree.

In the Christian school the uniqueness of every student is valued and nourished through individualised learning programs, cooperative learning and attention to each student's needs and interests via coaching and counselling. Such an approach requires more work on the part of the staff but it is meaningful work.

Central to the Christian school's mission is the development of every child of God's positive self-image or self-esteem. The school community helps the student answer such questions as; "Who am I?"; "Where do I fit in?" and "How do I serve?".

By this method the student learns not to concentrate on the question how he performs in the school system, but how he develops his personal qualities and possibilities.

The Christian school community, on the other hand not only accepts but also cherishes each youngster. The children find comfort in what they are, not in what they are expected to be.

Since students are image bearers of God they are to be taken seriously - as eternal creatures - and hopefully, as those redeemed by Christ.

Attitudes, dispositions, and feelings shape a child more than facts. The Christian school, through its curriculum, practice and common life ensures success in some form for all students. Although every child is ensured of his or her worth, self-esteem must never be allowed to become egotism and self-centredness.

The key to a healthy self-concept in young people is to keep their eyes off themselves and on God and others. We discover our true and best selves in service to others.

The curriculum in the Christian school reflects the diversity, complexity and richness of God's world. These facets are engaged and explored by teachers and students. As a "community of scholars", they examine different ages, cultures, geographical areas, beliefs and lifestyles.

Exposition

There is no excuse for boredom. People who are good at something are usually happy. People who think their work is important are apt to be pleasurably engaged in it and find it rewarding. But too often students and teachers are found to be listless and enervated. School for them is merely something that has to be done. It is a job, nothing more, and therefore it occurs on the edges of life.

The Christian school environment fosters schooling/education/growth as exciting, worth pursuing and deserving of celebration. Education is recognised as God-given, it is a calling. Because students should not find their call to learning as boring, the Christian school considers exciting learning to be a moral obligation.

Teachers in Christian schools know that the learning process is varied. It consists of sights and sounds, abstraction and details, practice and correction. The most potent forms of learning are often "extra-intellectual" and out of school. They are found in those experiences that shape students dramatically, giving energy, commitment, motivation and determination that can sustain efforts for a lifetime. The Christian school staff invents such experiences and makes them an integral part of its curriculum.

Practically

- * Consideration should be given to interdisciplinary approaches, out of class room experiences, field trips, student and teacher exchanges, educational travels, meeting other cultures.

The Christian school is a community in the Biblical sense. Covenant, not contract builds community in the Christian school. Community will not arise if people are simply trading money for services. Trust and cooperation characterise student, staff and community relationships. The principle of community - Christian love in action - means worshipping, sharing, encouraging and celebrating with Christian joy and hope.

Exposition

We live in a 'community-poor' world. Selfishness and exploitation characterise human relationships more than cooperative service and healing fellowship.

The staff, students, and parents associated with the Christian school actively cultivate Biblical community through open communication, understanding and acceptance.

They celebrate their community which arises out of a common purpose and commitment. This caring and celebrative tone is so infectious that visitors to the school immediately sense it.

Since in most families, churches and workplaces, people are called upon to work as members of groups, Christian school teachers prepare students for a future in which cooperation and collaboration are valued and team play is important.

The church (including non-parents, because they too are members of the covenant), the home and the Christian school together are responsible for leading the child to discipleship, that is, both hearing and doing the Word. As the child is made increasingly aware of God's presence and God's will, he or she will therefore act as a steward of creation and reconciler of people to people, and people to God.

Practically

* In this area there is the potential danger of "religious overkill" or "supersaturation". When students are saturated in religious language and instruction, especially if such are presented in superficial and intellectualised terms, the result can be half-stifled yawns and glazed over eyeballs. In such situations, the adults may have successfully inoculated the children against authentic Christianity. To prevent this, parents, teachers, and pastors will constantly put forward this danger in discussions with the ultimate goal of having all programs and policies cultivate in children a healthy spiritual alertness, vitality and commitment.

The Christian school curriculum allows for teacher strengths and artistry to be fully utilised. The teachers are facilitators, guides, coaches, and models at several levels, they are not simply dispensers of knowledge. They are worthy faculty members - curriculum creators, community members, change agents - as well as good teachers.

Exposition

As professionals, teachers in Christian schools are given the freedom (and responsibility) to exercise their expertise and artistry. In this way teachers are mentors and guides, models of the way students should learn and live. Great teachers have three loves, love of God love of subject matter, and love of students. Teaching is a vocation, not just a job. This means the heart of good Christian education is the teacher who loves the Lord, the learning experience and his students.

Practically

- * Often the best schooling experiences are those when the material is new to the teacher as well, when teacher and students together explore and discover new ways of thinking and working. If teachers and learners can discover truths together, the excitement and enthusiasm generated makes learning a memorable experience for them all. Then, beyond subject-matter content, it is the learning process being taught and modelled.
- * Teachers seek opportunities for growth, by planned reading, travelling, continued academic work conferences and consultations with "experts".

The administration of the school make professional enrichment plans an important part of their teacher-evaluation system.

Teachers for example present to their administrator an annual plan for reading, scholarship, course work, elementary research, conferences, travel and so on. After discussion and agreement, the teacher works with the school Board to complete a reasonable set of these educational experiences - for the purpose of bringing back to the school both a revitalised teacher and specific program improvements.

The school Board should find ways to reduce work load and stimulate personal growth while maintaining financial efficiency.

The Christian school community continuously seeks a more excellent way by planning and structuring for change. This effort requires time, money, and good communication. Administrators provide leadership and teachers have ownership. Worthy ideas are kept under discussion by all involved. Commendable practices are emphasised, undeserving ones are de-emphasised.

Exposition

Any structure tends to remain what it is. This applies to people too. Many feel threatened by change because it makes their world less predictable. Change moves us out of our comfort zone and through zones of uncertainty.

The Christian school's mission is continually examined so that a comfortable system is not mistaken for the best system.

Actually there is no broad choice offered - no option of whether to change or not. We are changing constantly. The real question is whether we will control change by making our specific choices deliberately and consciously and moving in responsible directions - rather than blindly suffering the potential cataclysmic effects of a changing environment.

The school's staff members operate as agents for change, they do so with a clear understanding of how change occurs.

Practically

- The change process begins with an examination of any gap between the school's goals and its practices. If the gap is widening, mechanisms for change and adjustment are put in place. While those seeking change allow others to save face, those sceptical of change allow others to take risks. As tolerance on the part of everyone involved is secured, all are able to fight gracefully, to disagree and still remain in community.