

Section One – General Information

Purpose of the School

PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL

The Bethlehem Christian School's purpose of existence is:

... to provide a sound elementary education with high spiritual, academic and aesthetic standards that puts God and His Word, The Bible, at the center. The foundation for a complete education is the Lord Jesus Christ. The student and the teacher must evaluate all knowledge and experience in relation to God's Word. No subject can be taught in the totality of its truth if the Creator, Christ, is ignored or denied. The value system and view of life which underlie any formal educational program should be consistent with the fundamental tenets set forth in the school "Statement of Faith;"

... to impart knowledge and basic skills and the wisdom of the Bible and Jesus Christ. This is essential to the development and growth of the individual in matters spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, and social. An educational program should incorporate the recognition that each of these areas needs to be stimulated and developed fully.

The objective is to provide an education which will challenge each student to strive for academic excellence (Colossians 3:23) and assist each student in his attempt to relate effectively with his Creator, himself and those in the world around him. As a student matures in these relationships he should begin to develop an understanding of how he has been gifted and will begin to take his place in the body of Christ and in society;

... to instill in its students a system of values consistent with the Bible and to educate them in the highest principles of Christian leadership, self-discipline, individual responsibility, personal integrity, and good citizenship. We believe that the Holy Scriptures provide absolute values. It is by diligent study of the Holy Scriptures that one receives the guidelines for Christian living. The committed life of the Christian teacher and other persons affiliated with the school provides a model for the students.

... to assist parents in carrying out Scriptural direction, as found in Deuteronomy 6:6,7: And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up;

NATURE OF THE STUDENTS

SPIRITUAL NATURE

Each student is a spiritual being created in the image of God. Our spirituality is based upon our belief that, in fact, the Bible is the only written word of God. It teaches that every person is a sinner from birth: "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Romans 3:10). Therefore, we are alienated from God until, by faith, we accept God's gift of eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Spiritual

development proceeds to teach that growth in the Christian life depends upon fellowship with God and fellow Christians by Bible study, prayer and service.

Spiritual development proceeds to teach the student to love God and one's fellow man, to manifest fairness, courtesy, kindness, and other Christian graces. Spiritual development proceeds to encourage the student to get along with non-Christians and with Christians who hold differing views (Romans 12:18).

Spiritual development increases by integrating the various subject matter areas with Biblical truth. Students must understand that Christianity is a way of life and that God pervades all areas of life. Learning more about others and about the world can help students learn more about themselves. Since the world and man are creations of God, learning about them without the inclusion of Biblical truth would be an incomplete study.

INTELLECTUAL NATURE

The interchange of knowledge is a God-given characteristic which distinguishes man from the animal kingdom. According to Scripture, God is a rational Being. Because man is created in God's image, one of His noblest features is the capacity to think. We believe that children are most content when they are involved in the learning process; in fact, unfulfilled intellectual needs can be a source of frustration and cause children to expend their energies in unprofitable ways. Students need reasons for their behavior. If such reasons are not provided within the educational framework, the child will invent his own system of thought and behavior.

Bethlehem Christian School believes that God never intended for knowledge to be an end in itself, but always to be a means to another end. We trust that our students will become aware that the acquisition of knowledge carries a solemn responsibility to act on that knowledge and to translate such knowledge into appropriate, productive behavior. Such individuals should become God-revering, upright citizens who will make a positive and decisive impact upon their society.

Intellectual development proceeds to show the student his present civic responsibility and to prepare him for adult responsibility as a citizen of Heaven and of our nation. George Washington said, "True religion affords government its surest support. The future of this nation depends on the Christian training of the youth. It is impossible to govern without the Bible."

Intellectual development of the student can only come about with a solid foundation of broad basic learning skills:

Communication skills:

Abstract and concrete reasoning skills:

Knowledge and appreciation of art and music:

Communication skills include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Bethlehem Christian School believes that communication on the human level stems from the divine model demonstrated by God when He initiated communication with His creatures. In a more mundane aspect, individuals need to develop these skills for the purpose of interaction (individual and societal), cultural transmission, and also self-expression. Much practice and drill exercises are required to develop these skills. The teacher generally

serves as a model; however, various instructional and reference materials need to be employed in the development of language skills.

For centuries, mankind has relied on concrete and abstract thinking skills which have enabled him to explore many aspects of mathematics, the sciences, and technology. Bethlehem Christian School believes that when students are introduced to these two basic types of thinking they will be able to understand significant technological discoveries of the past as well as develop the potential to contribute significantly to future achievements. Experimentation, teacher demonstrations, research projects, and guided discussions where thinking skills are exercised are a significant part of our curriculum.

Creativity is part of the revealed nature of God. When one considers the endless variety of creatures, sounds, and artistic hues, it is evident that God intended to develop a creative and artistic aspect in man. Throughout the ages, art and music have served as vehicles of expression for man and have also inspired him to see higher aspects of the world around him. We believe that the Bethlehem Christian School students should be afforded the opportunity to discover and develop talents in these areas, both as a performer (artist) and as a consumer. Directed instruction in art and music, as well as exposure to concerts, museums, and other resources expand the students' artistic horizons.

PERSONAL NATURE

The self-image of a child significantly affects his personal development. The early foundations of self-image are established during the pre-school years, primarily by the family unit. This early self-concept will be reinforced, altered, or enhanced by the educational environment. It is important that in this environment the student has a sense of belonging which allows him to experience achievement, success, and failure, secure in the knowledge that he is loved and accepted by God, his peers, and his teachers.

We believe it is our responsibility to teach each student that:

As an individual, created by God in His image, he has intrinsic worth, and has been given unique talents and abilities which are to be discovered and developed;

He has a free will and is capable of and responsible for making choices which will determine the direction of his life;

As he matures he must assume more individual responsibility for self-discipline, personal integrity, and recognition of the needs of his fellow man;

God has a purpose for each life, and a principal measure of a successful life is one in which that purpose is fulfilled.

SOCIAL NATURE

Bethlehem Christian School views society not as a large collection of self-sufficient individuals, but rather as a proving ground for human interaction and relations. As Christians, we are indeed "our brother's keeper." Within this framework, the student should learn respect for the feelings and opinions of others. He should also become aware of the responsibility, privilege, and rewards of service to his fellow man. This concept extends from the student body to the local, national, and world communities. As the student's concept of the world expands, he should increase his knowledge of various cultures and develop an appreciation and respect for the worth of all people. On the individual level, one should remain cognizant that skill in personal interaction is not innate, but must be learned and refined. We

recognize that the student's future will be significantly affected by his ability or inability to accept and work with other people.

The student, as a social being, must learn to recognize and function within hierarchical relationships. Scripture instructs that, in such relationships, God placed individuals of His choosing in positions of authority. As a student develops he should learn to recognize and submit to those whom God has placed in authority over him, and not to abuse authority entrusted to him.

PHYSICAL NATURE

The human body has been given by God and must be developed by structured exercise, formal and informal games, and free play as is pertinent to each grade level. Since the body involves mental as well as physical aspects, coordination of the two is a goal of our physical education training.

An awareness of the parts of the body, their intended function, and knowledge of what is needed to maintain good physical condition and to stay healthy needs to be part of the curriculum.

A student must learn to control his body. I Corinthians 6:20 says that we have been "bought with a price" and should therefore glorify God in our bodies. Romans 12:1 tells us to "present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." The body is "the temple of the Holy Spirit." (I Corinthians 6:19). It is therefore important that the students learn to appreciate their bodies and perceive them with a loving Christian attitude as will be pleasing to the Creator.

NATURE OF SCHOOL RELATIONS

TEACHER AND STUDENT RELATIONS

The teacher has an "in loco parentis" relationship with his/her students. This is an awesome responsibility which requires a strong commitment to Christ. It is through the enabling of the Holy Spirit that the teacher can channel Christ's love to his/her students.

His/her responsibility is many-faceted:

Role model
Leader
Problem-solver
Disciplinarian

His/her students should desire to emulate him/her even as the teacher has desired to imitate Christ. As a leader, the teacher should be able to integrate his/her Christian philosophy into his/her lifestyle and the curriculum. As a problem-solver, he/she should guide his/her students to discover for themselves the Christian course of action in a given situation. When the teacher functions as a disciplinarian, it is his/her aim not to provoke unduly, but rather to exercise the student unto godliness.

TEACHER AND PARENT RELATIONS

God has given the responsibility for the child's education to parents. Parents must not abdicate this responsibility but authorize the teacher to assume an "in loco parentis" role during school hours.

The teachers confer with parents on the academic and social progress and the spiritual growth of the students on a regular basis or as the need arises. Parents are informed about what they can and should do in their child's education. Parents and teachers share many similar values and strive to instill these in the child.

TEACHER AND TEACHER RELATIONS

The teachers of the school consider themselves part of a team devoted to assisting each other in meeting the needs of the students. Each teacher brings a unique combination of background experiences and talents. As a unified body, they promote the pursuit of academic excellence and social and spiritual growth for all the students. They also work toward the best interests of the school.

The teachers are unified through their common belief in Jesus Christ as Savior. There are "many members, yet but one body." (I Corinthians 12:20).

TEACHER AND SCHOOL RELATIONS

The teacher as an employee of the school is regarded as a role-model of a committed, knowledgeable Christian for the student, parents, and the school community. He/she is of vital importance in the entire process of learning and in interpersonal relationships in the school. The teacher is the catalyst, the one who brings the truth and the one who lives it. There must be evidence in his/her life that he/she has established a foundational Christian philosophy of life for himself/herself and is putting it into practice. His/her life is looked upon as a "Living Curriculum."

The teacher is expected to uphold the policies and procedures set by the Board of Trustees and the Administration, to be loyal to the school's purposes, and to contribute to its growth and development. These expectations also apply to the administrative staff. The faculty and the administration regard themselves as a team, serving the school community in love and working toward the common purpose to glorify God in all things. This unique relationship should serve as an inspiration and challenge to all who observe the school both from within and without.

NATURE OF THE PROCESS

ADMINISTRATIVE

The school is owned and operated by an incorporated, nonprofit Association. Membership in the Association is open to any person who professes belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior and is in agreement with the Association's statement of purpose and faith.

The management of the school, along with all business and affairs of the association, is vested in a Board of Trustees. Board members are elected by and from the membership of the Association. The majority of the Board members must be parents of students attending the school.

The Board of Trustees, elected by the Bethlehem Christian School Association, is the policymaking body of the school. Input into the making of policies is received from the Administrator and other standing committees of the Board of Trustees as required. The committees of the Board are advisory in nature, their recommendations being subject to agreement by and approval of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees is responsible for the appointment of all staff positions with the recommendation of the Administrator and the tabulated opinion of the Education Committee when appropriate.

The implementation of policy is the responsibility of the administration as authorized agent of the Board.

Bethlehem Christian School business management functions are carried out by members of the Board.

All students, parents, and teachers have a right to approach the Board of Trustees on matters relating to policy or its implementation by observing the proper channels of communication, as outlined in the Parent and Student Handbook.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

We believe that true education must develop the spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, and social aspects of life. We feel that students should be made aware of both Christian and non-Christian viewpoints in the various subject areas. It is our position that no subject matter has been totally explored if Christ, the Creator, is ignored.

We espouse the “back to basics” approach to education. It is our goal that students become proficient in the language arts, as well as computational and reasoning skills in mathematics and the sciences, (natural, physical, and social). It is our firm belief that opportunity must also be provided to foster creativity and develop the artistic talents in the students. The curriculum of Bethlehem Christian School is developed in accordance with these beliefs and objectives.

The curriculum is developed to meet the educational and spiritual objectives of the school. Materials are chosen to satisfy these goals. Subject matter is logically and sequentially presented and developed level by level. Concrete experiences provide a foundation for learning abstract concepts.

Emphasis is placed on the relevance of the subject matter to everyday living experiences. Classroom demonstrations, field trips, and audio-visual aids enhance the learning process. Children should learn to translate knowledge into practice, to find solutions to their problems and experiences.

Since communication between teacher and students and the general learning environment are improved as class size is reduced, we endeavor to keep the class size as small as is financially feasible. Generally, students are grouped in classrooms according to chronological age, but for instructional purposes are grouped homogeneously according to grade level, but for some instructional purposes are grouped homogeneously according to ability and achievement. Individual instruction is offered on a one-to-one basis or in very small groups by the teacher and assistant teachers.

The Administration and faculty of the Bethlehem Christian School is responsible for the development of the school curriculum, which is then subject to approval by the Board of Trustees. The curriculum is reviewed annually by the faculty.

The curriculum is eclectic in that both secular and Christian publications are represented in the resource materials utilized in the school. Resource materials are selected by the faculty and subject to approval by the Administration and Education Committee if so indicated.

TEACHING

Classroom teaching combines a variety of organized and spontaneous activities and experiences. Teachers instruct by using the materials specified in the curriculum, pertinent outside materials, and by drawing from their own experiences. Although the teaching approach is generally that of a formally organized presentation, the students are encouraged to apply their knowledge and to raise questions during discussions. The freedom exists to pursue issues or activities of a tangential nature as long as it will enrich

the learning experience and will be consistent with the school's standards and code of conduct. Spiritual principles are integrated into subject matter and topics are viewed in light of Biblical truths.

Present knowledge becomes the basis for learning in future lessons. Therefore, certain concepts and skills must be mastered before progressing to new materials.

The teaching process also moves from teacher-directed classroom activities to a teacher-guided, independent pursuit of knowledge. Students in the higher grades can be expected to do more studying and to work on their own. A principal aim of the teaching process is to educate students to pursue and discern sacred truth and secular knowledge.

EVALUATION

The Bethlehem Christian School encourages informal, affirmative, and positive evaluation in its school community. The Holy Scripture encourages us to edify and build up the body of Christ and one another by speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Teachers, students, and parents are repeatedly encouraged to demonstrate positive attitudes. Negative, destructive judgments and criticism are considered undesirable and unacceptable. All staff members, students, and parents are expected to prayerfully evaluate themselves daily in light of the Holy Scripture with Jesus Christ as the measure of all things.

Formal evaluation of the teacher measures how successfully he meets professional standards and fulfills the spiritual, emotional, academic, and physical objectives of the school. This evaluation is performed once a year by the administration. Before evaluation is conducted, each teacher is given the opportunity to informally evaluate himself utilizing established criteria. Results of the evaluation process are communicated to the teacher.

The student's formal evaluation is carried out by the teacher according to fixed standards. Three grading systems are employed, namely, one for Kindergarten pupils one for primary and one for middle school students. Formal reports in the form of report cards are sent to the parents quarterly. In addition, mid-quarter progress reports are issued.

Various modes of formal testing are used to evaluate the student's understanding and the acquired skills in each subject area. They include teacher-designed written and oral tests, book reports, oral reports, class participation, homework, assignments, and any form of written, oral, artistic, and musical expression of creativity. We believe that complete objective evaluation must include measurements of progress based on national norms. Standardized achievement tests are administered near the end of each school year.

We believe that special testing, including psychological testing and testing for learning, speech, and related disabilities may be required to understand special educational needs of individual students. We have an Instructional Support Team system in place, where we work closely with the Northampton Intermediate Unit #20, local school districts, and parents to obtain these types of evaluations. Admissions testing, in the form of ability testing, is administered by Bethlehem Christian School to all Kindergarten students, and to other students whose transfer records are incomplete.