

# How to Start a Christian School

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

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# Introduction

As you begin the process of starting a Christian school, we at ACSI commend you. You are embarking on a journey that will forever change the lives of the students who attend the school. By changing the lives of your students, you are changing families, the community, the country, and ultimately the world. Your commitment to Christ-centered education will give your students hope for the future and for eternity with an opportunity to realize their full potential in Christ.

The task that lies ahead will require dedication and commitment to months and months of focused planning. This is not an easy task, so it should be one that God has put on your heart to do. The amount of time you take to complete the process is totally up to you. Experience has taught us that there is no substitute for a good start; therefore, we urge you to give this effort the time and energy needed to begin well.

During this time of planning and preparation, ACSI regional personnel are available to assist you in planning and to help you get off to a good start. You will find a rich assortment of resources and services on the ACSI website ([www.acsi.org](http://www.acsi.org)) to help you in the development of your school. Members of the international team at ACSI headquarters are also available by e-mail or phone. We can connect you with a network of individuals at Christian schools in your area of the world who are available to advise you and whose schools serve as a living example of Christ-centered education. Our desire is to see Christ-centered education made available to children in every part of the world.

ACSI has prepared this manual to guide you through the process and to help ensure that your school will have a successful beginning. We are not able to provide you with specific information related to the requirements of your national education system. Make sure you check with the area ministry of education for all legal requirements.

Not all your questions will be answered in this manual, but there is enough information to enable you to make an effective plan and to get a school started. Specific details will be different for each school setting, and you will need to investigate all local needs and requirements. The included checklists should be helpful for you as you continue.

Please don't hesitate to contact us by phone or e-mail. (See toolbox: ACSI Contact List.) We look forward to walking with you on your journey as you start a Christian school.





# Chapter 1

## Getting Started

### **Ten Important Steps for Your Consideration**

God is at work around the world today in exciting ways as the body of Christ is coming to realize the need for Christ-centered schools. There is a rapid rise in the number of Christian schools in Africa, Asia, and Latin America—areas of the world that have become known as the Global South. The Global South has become the new center of the Christian faith. God may be leading you to establish a Christian school as part of the ministry of your local church or mission agency or as an independent Christian school. Establishing a Christian school is all about helping students discover and achieve their full potential in Christ.

A Christian school is usually born in the heart of one person. From that point on, the idea of a Christian school should be nurtured in prayer. The academic education and spiritual welfare of young lives should be given serious consideration. It should be entered into only after definite direction by the Holy Spirit. (See toolbox: Basic Principles of the Christian School.)

As you begin to form questions about getting started, consider these steps:

#### **Step One: Conduct a Feasibility Study**

Good decisions demand accurate information. Before you establish a Christian school, it is important that you evaluate the need for one. A key tool in this evaluation is the feasibility study. Ask the question, Is there a need for a Christian school in our community? The Bible supports such a study by teaching the need for counsel. Solomon says, “Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established” (Proverbs 15:22, NKJV). The Christian school must be established out of a strong commitment to Jesus Christ: “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 127:1).

#### **Step Two: Choose a Task Team**

Choose a task team of five to seven responsible individuals. These individuals should be of a caliber that would qualify them to be members of the first school board. The task team should visit other Christian schools if possible. As you connect with these schools, use the time to further formulate and fine-tune your plan for the kind of school you want to have. Request a copy of each school’s published documents in order to collect information about student enrollment procedures; faculty, student, and parent policies and handbooks; curriculum guides and supplies; and general office procedures. The people you build relationships with at



these various schools are also the ones who can assist you after your school has started. Therefore, ask whether you can call on them for support and encouragement as needed.

### **Step Three: Be Aware of the Legal Issues**

You will need to acquire various forms of government permissions and documentation before opening your Christian school. Make sure you check with the ministry of education in your area for all the details; then follow the required procedures carefully to avoid difficulty from authorities once the school has started. If you are starting a church-sponsored school, be sure to work closely with your church board, church body, denominational leadership, and other groups that need to be involved in the decision to start a school; these groups can also be involved in the leadership and support of the school. If the church approves the concept, an amendment to the church bylaws may be necessary.

### **Step Four: Identify and Focus on Your Target Audience**

Prepare a clear statement of the school's philosophy that identifies the target population. You will also need to prepare a statement of faith, a vision statement, and a mission statement. It is vitally important that everyone involved in the process be in agreement regarding the kind of school to be established.

- What students will you target?
- What grade levels will you offer initially?
- What are the plans for growth and expansion?
- How will you grow or add grade levels? (For example, some schools add a grade level a year.)
- What is the highest grade level you will eventually offer?
- If you begin with an elementary school, do you have plans for a high school?
- Where can the students go for further education after they have completed the highest grade level you offer?

As you start, keep in mind that a host of factors—including your school's circumstances, new insights that you will acquire along the way, and the limitation of available resources—can alter even the best-laid plans.

### **Step Five: Hire School Personnel**

Following the approval of your school plan by the sponsoring group or groups, you are ready to take several important steps. The most important step will be the selection of the head of school (also referred to as the principal, the headmaster, or the administrator) and the hiring of faculty.

- A principal should have strong qualifications. Look for a person with a broad range of administrative skills. Look for someone who is a strong spiritual leader and a wise counselor of teachers, parents, and students. The principal must

be competent in finance, understand school curriculum, and be proficient in marketing and public relations. The quality and effectiveness of your Christian school will be in direct proportion to the caliber of its leader.

- Your teachers should be outstanding Christian individuals—people who understand the spiritual needs of children and young people. They should be true scholars with personal charisma to inspire learning. They must have the training, experience, and credentials that identify them as quality teachers. They should also be people who can inspire the confidence of parents and can work well with their fellow teachers.
- Write a job description for each faculty and staff position.
- Carefully check as many personal and professional references as possible for all school employees.

### **Step Six: Analyze Your Options for School Facilities**

Many schools begin in church education buildings. One reason the Christian school movement has flourished so rapidly is that in developing Sunday schools, churches have built adequate education buildings. Often, with a few adjustments, Sunday school classrooms can be transformed to meet the needs of a Christian school. Church property often can serve as a playground or activity area.

It is necessary to obtain clearance with government agencies regarding the use of church buildings when it comes to health, fire, and safety regulations. Know the legal requirements in your area. ACSI regional or country directors or the leaders of other Christian schools in your area are good resources for answers to questions regarding facilities.

### **Step Seven: Market Your School**

If possible, begin promoting the school approximately nine months before the opening day. As you begin your enrollment campaign, prepare a brochure or flyer that describes your school's ministry, a school calendar of events for the first year, a parent and student handbook, and a registration form.

Do not be overzealous about building a large student enrollment your first year. Be more concerned about bringing together a group of parents, students, and teachers who will help your school establish a positive, Christ-honoring reputation. If the school fails, it takes years to recoup your losses. It is better to enjoy a modest success than to experience a colossal failure.

### **Step Eight: Count the Cost of Educating Your Students**

It is important to determine what the real cost will be for educating the students you target. Don't make the mistake of setting an arbitrary tuition that is based simply on what other schools are charging. One way to estimate the cost is to look at the per-pupil expenditures of your local public school district. Don't buy into the myth that Christian schools can educate children for less money than the public school; the costs are actually about the same. Christian schools just have to determine how the costs are distributed. Usually, some of the costs are absorbed by the faculty, who are often paid well below their market value.

### **Step Nine: Set Your Tuition Policy**

Setting an appropriate tuition policy may be one of the most important decisions you make. This policy needs to be based on the student population you have targeted to serve. If you are serving a low-income population, you will need to offer either very low tuition—based on a sliding scale related to family income—or considerable financial assistance. When setting tuition policy keep in mind that you cannot price your tuition so high that families cannot pay it. At the same time, you should make it a matter of practice not to offer your services free of charge. When setting tuition, keep in mind that you must count the cost. The real cost of educating your students compared with the tuition you charge will determine the success or failure of your school. When you require a personal financial investment in the child's schooling, you increase the value that families place on the education of their children.

### **Step Ten: Establish Sound Financial Policies**

The school must have an income commensurate with its expenses. Be realistic regarding the amount of tuition that is charged, taking into account your target student population and the number of persons the school employs. The momentum of a new school is greatly impaired if a large deficit is incurred the first year or if the school is unable to meet its financial obligations. As was mentioned in step seven, do not be overzealous about building a large student enrollment for your first year. Be more concerned about bringing together a group of quality teachers and administrators who will help your school effectively educate and nurture the students who come to it. This is the reason for your school's existence.





# Chapter 2

## Developing a Feasibility Study

### What Is a Feasibility Study?

The name says it all. A feasibility study is an analysis of the viability of an idea. The feasibility study focuses on helping you and your school task team answer this essential question: Should we start a new Christian school? Every part of a feasibility study is directed toward helping you to answer this question.

Feasibility studies are conducted for a variety of reasons, but they are most frequently used for proposed business ventures. A new school start-up is a proposed business venture. Therefore, you should conduct a feasibility study to determine the viability of your vision before proceeding with the development of the school. Determining early that this new school start-up will or will not work saves time, money, and heartache later.

A feasible Christian school is one that will

- generate adequate cash flow and revenue to withstand the risks it will encounter.
- remain viable in the long term, providing a Christian education for generations to come.
- meet the goals and expectations of its founders. Most likely you are one of the founders; you want your legacy carried on for the foreseeable future.

A feasibility study is only one step in the assessment and development process.

Please take time to review this process by reading the information below to help you put your feasibility study in perspective. (See toolbox: Items for Feasibility Study and Sample Questions for a Feasibility Study.)

### Evaluate Various Scenarios and Alternatives

A feasibility study is usually conducted after prayerful consideration of the idea of starting a new Christian school. The feasibility study will help you and your task team determine specific issues related to the possible alternatives—type of school, location, and group of people to serve—so that each alternative can be studied in depth. This process will help you to quickly reduce the number of alternatives under consideration.

During the process of conducting the feasibility study, you may discover a number of ways of organizing the school that could suit the needs of your community. The feasibility process is like an exploratory journey: you may take several paths before

you reach your destination. If the initial analysis is negative, you need not assume that the proposal has no merit. You may need to consider organizing the school in a different way.

## **Conduct an Informal Prefeasibility Study**

Before spending the time preparing and conducting a full-blown feasibility study, you may want to do some prefeasibility analysis in order to help sort out some of the underlying assumptions and relevant alternatives. Talk with different people in the community—pastors, church members, Christian business owners, and others—on your own. Finding out early that the proposed idea is not accepted and doesn't look feasible will save you time and money. However, if the findings are generally positive and lead you to proceed with the feasibility study, a good amount of your work may have been done. This is a good opportunity for you to understand some of the basic steps for developing a business plan.

## **Conduct a Market Assessment**

Conducting a market assessment will help you determine whether there is really a need for another Christian school in the community. This will help you identify opportunities in the Christian school marketplace. If the consensus is that there is no need or desire for a Christian school, there may be no reason to proceed with a feasibility study. If opportunities are found, the market assessment can help focus the direction of the feasibility study and will provide important information for you and your task team.

## **Reasons for Doing a Feasibility Study**

It is a good business practice and a scriptural principle to conduct a feasibility study. When Jesus was speaking about the cost of discipleship, He said, "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish' " (Luke 14:28-30, NIV). When a Christian school fails, the community is left with a negative feeling toward all Christian schools.

Successful businesses begin with an assessment of the probability of the business' success. Plan and pray for God's clear direction regarding your plans for starting a Christian school. Hard data are more reliable than emotions, and a written feasibility study will provide you with the accurate information you need to make an informed decision.

Additional reasons to conduct a feasibility study:

- Gives focus to the project and helps identify alternatives
- Narrows your alternatives
- Brings to the surface new ideas through the investigative process

- Identifies reasons not to proceed
- Enhances the likelihood of success by identifying some of the conflicting factors
- Provides accurate information for decision making
- Provides documentation that you have done your homework

## How to Conduct a Feasibility Study

If you are considering conducting a feasibility study to investigate the viability of a new Christian school, answering the following seven questions will help guide you through the process.

### 1. Where should you begin in designing a questionnaire?

You need to gather as much statistical information as possible. The following recommendations will help you determine the kind of information needed:

- a. How many members in church congregations have shown interest in the school?
- b. What will be the estimated growth of these churches over the next three years? the next five years?
- c. Approximately how many school-age children are found in the interested churches and in the Christian community? If possible, try to get an estimate of the number of children by grade level.
- d. About how many children are likely to enroll in the Christian school?
- e. How many established Christian schools are already in your community?
- f. How close is the nearest Christian school?
- g. What is the level of interest of parents in your local churches and in the community?
- h. Do you have the support of your pastor and other pastors in the community?
- i. Will prospective parents be able to pay tuition?
- j. What other sources of funding, aside from tuition, will be available to finance the school, especially if the answer to question “i” is no?
- k. Are parents in the target churches informed regarding Christian education? If not, what is your plan of action to inform them? What could you do to interest them in the new Christian school?
- l. What problems, if any, have members of the Christian community mentioned regarding Christian schooling?
- m. Are adequate facilities available for the school? What additional facilities might be required (for example, activity areas, playground, science labs, computer labs)?
- n. How many grade levels will you start with?
- o. What might be the most advantageous location for the school?
- p. Do you have the necessary funds to set up the school without relying on tuition from the first classes of students?
- q. Can you develop an adequate budget for the initial start-up cost of the school?

## **2. When should you conduct the study?**

This important decision should not be taken lightly. It can be a long process; however, you may find that poor decisions made without the information gained from this study are more time consuming and costly.

Before beginning the feasibility study, you need to spend time with your task team in prayer and discussion in order to discern the direction that the Holy Spirit would have you take. Don't jump into the feasibility study at your first notion of wanting to start a Christian school. You need to have a clearly defined idea of one or more scenarios that you want to consider, and you want to have done your homework in the prefeasibility study. Do the scenarios you are proposing have validity? The members of your committee can assist in gathering much of the preliminary information that you will need to begin the process.

## **3. Who will conduct the study?**

Depending on the complexity of the community and the number of churches and organizations you intend to involve in the project, you might want to consider having a consultant from another Christian school or someone from ACSI assist you with the study. Contact your national or regional offices to find out whether they have someone who can help you; if not, perhaps there is someone they can recommend.

If you are selecting someone from the outside as a consultant for your feasibility study, you should carefully outline what you want done. Ask the consultant to prepare a proposal describing how he or she will conduct the study. Determine what questions you want answered by the study. You will want the consultant to prepare a timeline for completing the analysis and to estimate how much the study will cost. Communicate to the consultant that you want an accurate assessment of the feasibility for starting a new Christian school.

## **4. How will you monitor the study?**

Hiring a consultant doesn't allow you to sit back and wait for the consultant to finish his or her work. You still carry a big responsibility: monitoring the process as the feasibility study progresses. You must stay engaged in the process and evaluate the project as it goes along. You will need to understand the issues involved, question the basic assumptions used in the study, and challenge the conclusions of the study.

It can be advantageous for a member of the school task team to work with the consultant. This individual will

- help the consultant understand the project.
- provide the consultant with information as needed.
- function as the liaison between the consultant and the other task team members.
- assure that the study is progressing according to the wishes of the task team.
- represent the committee's desires and interests to the consultant.

- review and clarify what is needed from the consultant.
- monitor the consultant's progress.
- provide periodic reports to the school task team.

### **5. What decision will you make once the study is completed? Should you accept or reject the study?**

Once you have a draft report of the feasibility study, review it to determine whether it is accurate and whether it answers the questions you set out to discover. Is the study complete according to the expectations that you had at the outset? It is possible at this point to ask for clarification, additional data, or analysis. The study will be only as strong as its weakest part. Make sure there are no mistakes in the information because that could affect the accuracy of the entire report.

Before you accept the study you should determine that it

- meets your expectations as a school task team.
- deals with all your relevant issues and questions.
- is understandable and easy to read.
- is thoroughly researched using good research techniques.
- contains all the relevant information.
- meets the conditions of the consultant's contract.

It is critical that all aspects of the study be completed. You are facing a major decision, and you must be confident that you have all the data you need.

### **6. How will you use the results of the study?**

From the beginning you have been moving toward determining whether the new school start-up will be viable. The information you have gained from the feasibility study should provide you with the assurance that you can move ahead and that you can make decisions that are based on accurate information. The information will not be a magic answer, so carefully assess the conclusions of the study. Do you have sufficient information to move forward?

This is a time for concentrated prayer. The decisions you make must not be guided by emotion, but need to be rational and logical. If you move forward at this stage and make a serious mistake, you will have to live with it for a very long time.

Be careful not to make these common mistakes:

- Entering the process with your minds already made up and rationalizing the study results to fit your decision.
- Moving forward with the project and glossing over important aspects of the study; such a course of action could be costly. Don't allow emotionally charged members of the task team to move forward with action instead of deliberation.
- Allowing the task team to become a group of information seekers. A lack of clear direction from the feasibility study may cause a state of paralysis



for some of the members who find they cannot bring themselves to make a decision. This could keep the project from ever getting started.

### **7. How do you utilize the conclusions of the study to the fullest extent?**

The feasibility study will provide some in-depth insights into the various alternatives examined. It should also give you an idea of the strengths and weaknesses of each alternative. The school task team must give careful and prayerful consideration to the issues raised by the feasibility study and should challenge any underlying assumptions that surface. This is the time to be skeptical.

Don't expect one alternative to be readily recognizable as the best one. The study will not be immediately positive or negative. The decision to proceed is not often clear. The results will rarely come out overwhelmingly positive. The study will help you assess the risks and rewards of moving forward with the new school startup. The decision to move forward will be made by members of the committee after they have prayerfully considered and carefully analyzed all the information.

Remember, it is not the purpose of the feasibility study or the role of the consultant to decide whether or not to proceed with a business idea. That decision belongs to the school committee and the project leaders.

## **Make the Decision**

Whether to start or not to start a school is one of the most critical decisions the task team will make. If this is a church-sponsored school, be sure that the pastor and the church board are fully informed and are supportive of moving forward. Once you have definitely decided to pursue starting the new school, there is usually no turning back without a great deal of painful backtracking and loss of community confidence. You will refer to the results of the feasibility study often since it will be a major information source in making this decision. This fact demonstrates how vitally important it is to properly develop your feasibility study.

## **The Business Plan**

Now that the feasibility study is done and the decision has been made to move forward, it is time to develop the business plan. The feasibility study was a means of conducting an investigation toward making your decision; the business plan will outline the steps you need to take in preparing your proposal and moving it from an idea to reality.

You have used the feasibility study to narrow the scope of the project and to identify the best business model. The business plan deals with only one concept or model and is developed only after you have determined that the new Christian school is a viable option to pursue. The business plan is like a blueprint of the project; it describes how you will create and develop the school from concept to implementation.

## Checkpoints

- Seek God's guidance in prayer for the leading of the Holy Spirit in every decision.
- Form a planning committee or task team. If the school is to be sponsored by a local church, the pastor and church board will act as the planning committee, or they will appoint one.
- Visit other Christian schools if possible, and try to obtain copies of their materials. Telephone conversations or correspondence with Christian school directors can provide helpful insights.
- Visit with local Christian leaders and church pastors regarding their interest in a Christian school.
- Gather information on possible locations and buildings. Church facilities or other local facilities might be adaptable to school use.



# Chapter 3

## Developing Your School Board

### **Building a Framework for Stability**

The terms *director*, *board member*, and *trustee* are used interchangeably in the nonprofit world. The term preferred in this book is *board member*. A board member is one to whom certain responsibilities are entrusted, and certainly the board member of a Christian school has a sacred trust.

The staff at Christian schools have a responsibility to teach children the things “we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:3–7, NKJV). Today we are in a great battle for the minds and hearts of our children. Scripture teaches that we are to “see to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ” (Colossians 2:8, NIV).

These Scriptures charge each generation regarding the knowledge of God. Failure to accept this charge results in institutions that have detoured from the desires of their founders (task team). Who is responsible to make sure that a school remains true to its mission and purpose? This sacred trust becomes the responsibility of the school board members.

There are two pitfalls that entrap boards. Some boards become a rubber stamp for the principal/headmaster. Others micromanage and get involved in administrative areas that belong to the principal and the staff. Either extreme results in frustration and can be dangerous. The board’s role is governance, and it is distinctly different from the role of the principal, which is management. This relationship must be guarded, and the role of the board must be kept clear and distinct from that of the staff. Christian education that will have a positive impact on the next generation will require board members and school leaders who labor together. (See toolbox: Code of Ethics for the School Board.)

Research shows that it is difficult to have a strong board unless the principal is

actively committed to making it strong. Also, each board member should be bold in challenging his or her colleagues to address the board's role in the governing process so that it reflects excellence.

## Organizing the Christian School Board

The Christian school board must be committed to develop policy and to be the group legally responsible for the school. The type of board you form will depend on the way the Christian school is organized. Each type of board is responsible to be the keeper of the vision. (See toolbox: Job Description of the School Board.)

- Church school: The school board is elected by the church congregation or appointed by the church board and is responsible for establishing policy, hiring the director, and reviewing the financial reports of the school.
- Board-sponsored school: The members of this board could be the original task team that establishes the school. The board's functions are to establish policy, to hire the principal, and to make sure the financial needs of the school are met. The board should be self-perpetuating and should rotate its membership. (See Term Limits or Rotation of Board Members below.)
- Parent-society school: Parents organize as a group, elect a board from their own membership, and organize a school. The board is usually a rotating board—that is, members serve a three-year term—and others are elected to take their place after they have served one or two terms.
- Mission agency school: The school board is appointed or elected by a mission agency to start and maintain a Christian school to serve the children of missionaries. Such a board can be self-perpetuating or rotating. Members can continue to serve until the mission agency replaces them. The board is made up of missionaries who send their children to the school.

The above types of schools can have a variety of purposes. There are schools that are organized to serve only children from Christian families (discipleship schools). Others have open enrollment and accept students from the community even if they are not from Christian families (evangelistic schools). Others may serve missionary families and be open to families from the expatriate community (international Christian or community schools). (See toolbox: Checklist for the School Board.)

## Term Limits or Rotation of Board Members

- Appoint/elect some members for two 3-year terms
- Appoint some members for three 2-year terms

## Why Should Rotation Be Required?

1. Some prospective board members and current board members do not like the idea of serving indefinitely.
2. Most boards have difficulty choosing not to reelect one board member when most are reelected.

3. Most boards need new members for new cycles of organizational life.
4. Rotation makes it easier to elect people to fit the board's approved board member profile.
5. Rotation opens more slots for highly effective and motivated people who are willing to serve.

## An Important Reminder

Active board members should have the option of remaining active, while those not interested in continuing should have an honorable way of saying, "I have completed what was expected of me." If a school board does not have a rotation system, it must be willing to discipline or deal with members who fail to attend meetings or who violate other policies the board has written to govern its behavior.

## Functions of the Christian School Board

### 1. Establish the school's foundational documents.

Your school's journey will begin with mapping out the direction you want the school to go. That process will require the board and the principal/headmaster to be diligent in carefully guiding the future of the school through a series of strategic documents that will provide a compass for the proper orientation of the school. Without these documents the school is likely to wander like a ship at sea without navigational instruments. You will not know what direction you are going or when you arrive. The following suggested documents are the maps that will guide you; they will become your reference points for many of the decisions you will need to make in the life of the school.

- a. *Statement of faith.* Very often people will ask what the school believes, what is taught, and what the school's spiritual background is. The answers you give cannot be vague. To help answer some of these questions, it is good to take some time to write the statement of faith in advance and find a concise way to express it. You will want to include the statement of faith in information provided for parents, and you will want to have the parents sign that they have read it and agree to have their children taught according to these beliefs. (See toolbox: ACSI Statement of Faith.)
- b. *Philosophy of education.* It is important to develop a simply stated Christian philosophy of education that can be shared with parents and local churches. Write down the basic philosophical principles that you feel will apply to your school. This document will be a great help when you give interviews to Christian leaders and when you are recruiting staff. It should state clearly how the school views the child, the teacher, the family, the curriculum, and the foundations of Christian education. This document needs formal approval by the board. There needs to be complete unity regarding this statement. (See toolbox: School Philosophy Statement.)
- c. *Mission statement.* The mission statement of a school answers the question, Who are we? The board must put the mission statement and the core



values in writing, review them, and hold the school administration and staff accountable to them. The mission statement explains what you offer those you serve in order to fulfill your vision. The board should be actively involved in the development of a statement of the school's mission and its core values. This process will give the board a clear understanding of the school. Often schools go through the motions of developing a mission statement and even publish the statement in a brochure, but they fail to use that mission statement as a standard to measure their effectiveness or guide their activities.

School boards, principals, and all staff members need to understand their school's mission and be committed to carrying out that mission at every level. No club should meet, no class should start, and no game should be played without the school's leadership first determining whether that function or activity is consistent with the school's mission and purpose. One of the roles of the board is to hold the principal accountable to make sure the school is mission driven. (See toolbox: Sample Statements of Mission, Vision, and Core Values.)

- d. *Core values.* The core values of the school are the absolutes that guide its operation. They can be thought of as its character. Like the mission statement, core values define the school and are nonnegotiable values that guide a school's daily operation. The principal, guided by the mission and vision statements, should then develop a more complete staff strategic plan. (See toolbox: Sample Statements of Mission, Vision, and Core Values.)
- e. *Purposes and scope of the school.* This document will set the structure for the school. Answering questions such as the following can help in developing this document:
  - Will the school offer education for Christian families only, or will it also admit non-Christian families and thus have an evangelistic outreach?
  - If the school does accept students from non-Christian families, will their number be limited to a certain percentage so that the majority of the students come from a Christian background?
  - Will the school accept students from other religious backgrounds?
  - Will the school be an autonomous ministry serving local churches under the direction of a local board, or will it be parent controlled with parents having decision-making power?
  - Will the school accept government subsidies or regular funding if available? Will the school remain independent of government subsidy and avoid the potential of having to accept governmental advice, control, or accountability?

There are no completely right answers regarding the basic purposes and scope of the Christian school. The planning committee and members of the Christian community also will have opinions regarding how the school should be structured. The important thing is to have a definite plan for the school along with a description of its purposes and scope.

- f. *Accreditation.* The school should acquire a copy of the school accreditation

manual from ACSI. The criteria in the accreditation process can be extremely helpful as the school is being developed. After the school has been in existence for a number of years, it is possible to apply for candidate status and to go through the accrediting process.

## **2. Maintain standing policies on all aspects of governance.**

The following policies should be compiled in one consistently maintained and updated document. (See toolbox: Functions of the Christian School Board.)

- a. Define the goals and outcomes the board has set for the school.
- b. Set parameters to guide staff and volunteers in establishing the programs and activities to accomplish the desired results.
- c. Describe the relationships between the board and the staff.
- d. Define the board's own structure and process—the way it will operate and how it will hold itself accountable.

## **3. Select a principal and hold that person accountable to policies.**

No issue will come before a school board that is more important than the selection of the school's principal. The question is asked, How much does a good principal cost? The answer is, Not nearly as much as a bad one!

The board must agree up front regarding its expectations. It must develop a job description or a position guide that outlines the qualifications and duties of the principal. Then it must conduct a search, hire the most promising candidate, and evaluate that person regularly. Too often boards hire principals who are strong leaders but don't have other necessary qualifications, or principals who have expectations that are very different from the board's. The leader you select should not have to serve in a school where there is internal conflict and where the board members disagree on expectations for the principal. Once you agree on the expectations, experience, and qualifications for your principal, hire the principal and give him or her freedom to work within the policy guidelines your board has established.

## **4. Ensure financial solvency and integrity.**

The school board is expected to set wise financial policies, and board members are expected to model personal giving and to assist as volunteers. The board carries a fiduciary responsibility regarding the financial status of the school; it is entrusted to control property and to act on behalf of and for the benefit of another. This responsibility includes setting the parameters for the school's financial planning, budgeting, risk management, investment policies, and many other financial issues. These parameters should be clearly established and articulated within the standing policies.

Board members should not be selected on the basis of their ability to give financially to the institution. However, every board member should be a giver of record. The size of each gift is not nearly as important as the board member's recognition that the school's mission is worthy of financial support and each

member's consequent willingness to give.

Good leaders surround themselves with good leaders who are able to look further into the future than do others. You want a board that is able to help you build toward the future. You are involved in a next-generation ministry. You are to tell the next generation the words and deeds of the Lord “that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:6–7, NKJV).

### **5. Require periodic external audits.**

Sometimes board members can become so intimately involved with making decisions that operational details (financial and program records, legal matters, school structure, etc.) can become out-of-date or inaccurate. These core issues need to be reviewed periodically by specialists in a given area. Such an audit of the various documents and agreements of a school will strengthen its integrity while helping it operate within appropriate Christian and legal parameters.

### **6. Help represent the school externally.**

Board members must realize that they can act with the authority of board members only when sitting around the board table. Board members communicate with parents and key constituents by listening and reporting. When approached by parents about school issues, discerning board members will direct those parents to the appropriate school staff member. It is the board members' responsibility to represent the principal well before others. Board members are as much extensions of the ministry as is the principal.

### **7. Encourage and nurture the principal/headmaster and staff.**

Being principal of a Christian school is at times a lonely job. It is hard to have time with friends. The principal cannot have a casual conversation about the school. When the school is mentioned, it is as if the principal is fully on duty. He or she needs friendship and encouragement primarily through good policies, fair compensation, and a show of support. Board members need to stand with the principal.

The principal serves at the direction and will of the board. The principal's performance is usually reviewed annually, and significant importance is given to that annual review. Some schools have adopted multiyear contracts that provide for annual reviews with their principal. Clearly defining the role of the board and the role of the principal, along with having an annual review based on criteria that are mutually agreed upon, will produce the consistency of leadership that is needed in a school.

An experienced principal with longevity will give a school a great advantage. It is the responsibility of the board to determine a fair compensation for its principal. The board must realize its responsibility to pay a fair wage. The Scriptures are clear that “the laborer is worthy of his wages” (Luke 10:7, NKJV). The board

should also consider other benefits based on the local economy and the types of benefits offered for similar positions in the general workforce. Provisions in addition to salary show the kind of sensitivity that school boards need when considering compensation for their principal.

#### **8. Evaluate and improve itself as the governing board.**

Board members need to be students of Christian education! They should read information sent from the school, attend board training seminars when offered by ACSI regional staff, evaluate their board effectiveness, and be willing to change as needed. The board should schedule an annual retreat—a time when they get away for one or two days to pray together, conduct some form of professional development for growth, and spend time in fellowship with one another. Growing with the principal is essential because all relationships deteriorate when one partner grows and the other does not.

#### **9. Follow the guidelines for an effective board meeting.**

As a group of individuals charged with overseeing the operation of a Christian school, board members need to meet on a regular basis. However, just coming together at a set time and place does not guarantee an effective meeting. There are certain guidelines that boards can adopt to ensure that their meetings are harmonious and productive and that they do not drag on indefinitely. (See toolbox: An Effective Christian School Board Meeting.)

#### **10. Evaluate your board according to this sample framework for effective governance.**

- a. A board governs and holds the legal responsibility for the school. It speaks with one voice through written policies.
- b. Board functions are different from—and do not overlap—staff functions.
- c. Individual board members have the opportunity to fill these three different roles:
  - A board member meets with the board in its regular sessions.
  - An implementer serves on a committee that meets outside the regularly called board meeting. This is a clearly defined role and for a set time frame or task.
  - A volunteer serves as a chaperone on a field trip with his or her child or helps at a school event—always in an unofficial capacity.

NOTE: The school board members and the school staff members need to be clear about which role they are filling and when it is appropriate to fill that role.

- d. Board committees help the board do its business; they speak to the board, not for the board. They should not supervise staff or get involved in staff tasks.
- e. The board chairperson is the manager of the board, not of the staff. The chairperson has no independent authority to set board policies. The chairperson helps the principal interpret board policy and provides the best communication link between the board and the principal.
- f. Other board officers help accomplish board functions but do not act as staff.

- g. The board hires one person, the principal/headmaster. He or she is accountable to the policies of the board. The principal hires all other staff.
- h. The board's ongoing standing policies should be kept in one organized document within a meaningful framework. As mentioned previously in this section, these policies basically
  - define the goals and outcomes of the organization.
  - set parameters to guide staff and volunteers in carrying out activities that are to bring about these results.
  - describe board and staff relationships.
  - define the board's own structure and process.
- i. The committee and board discussions at every meeting center on developing, reviewing, and modifying these standing policies.
- j. Board-requested measurements and tracking data from staff help the board monitor how well the organization is achieving its ends.
- k. The principal/headmaster works within the board's standing policies to develop other procedures and regulations regarding personnel, program, finance, student discipline, and other issues, and then publishes these procedures and regulations in handbooks and manuals.
- l. Some board members fill their volunteer roles by providing leadership and help to the organization's programs, often working under the authority of principals.
- m. The board must be accountable for constantly improving itself. (See toolbox: Duties and Responsibilities of the School Board.)

Serving on the board of a Christian school can be a pleasant and rewarding experience, and indeed it should be! Board members enjoy the privileges of being a part of the school's ministry and of having an influence on the lives of children and young people.

## Checkpoints

- Determine the type of school you will have.
- Develop a job description for the board.
- Articulate clearly the responsibility of the school board that has been placed in authority over the school.
- Establish all reasonable and proper foundational documents (for example, mission, vision, core values, and philosophy).
- Accept as a primary responsibility of the school board to select the principal.
- Consider board membership an honor that provides an opportunity to serve God.
- Recognize that the board holds the legal responsibility for the school.
- Recognize that the financial integrity of the school is the responsibility of the board.





# Chapter 4

## Hiring the Principal and Teaching Staff

### **A Primary Responsibility of the School Board**


The first vital duty of the school board is recruiting and hiring a strong Christian educator to lead the school. The board, along with the principal, prayerfully sets careful standards for the selection of teachers who will be winsome examples of the Christian life to their students as well as competent instructors of a biblically integrated curriculum. Parents and others in the community will measure the school by the quality of the principal and the faculty. (See toolbox: Checklist for the Selection of School Personnel and The Application Process.)

### **Recommended Hiring Guidelines**

#### **1. Spiritual qualifications of the principal and teachers**

- a. Is a genuinely born-again Christian who gives evidence of growing in faith and is a member in good standing of a sound, Bible-based church
- b. Has a working knowledge of the Scriptures
- c. Is an exemplary spouse and parent (1 Timothy 3:4, 12)
- d. Has a shepherd spirit in caring for those under his or her charge (1 Peter 5:2-3)
- e. Is a firm and fair disciplinarian who tempers discipline with compassion (Proverbs 3:12, 22:6)
- f. Understands and practices the “one anothers” of Scripture (reciprocal living), otherwise known as “body life” (see Ephesians 4:1-16)

#### **2. Academic qualifications of a principal or teacher**

- a. Has a sound academic college record, preferably including a teaching certificate and Bible courses
  - b. Has an understanding of the philosophy of Christian education and its distinctives and has the ability to integrate that philosophy into the life of the school
  - c. Has successful teaching experience in the classroom, preferably in a good Christian school
  - d. Has the willingness to grow professionally through in-service sessions, reading, and graduate study as these opportunities are available
- 

### 3. Professional qualifications of the principal/headmaster

- a. Evidence of the gift of leadership with a good record in leading a school—preferably a Christian school
- b. Evidence of administrative skills and a willingness to continue to grow professionally, including plans for graduate study in Christian school administration
- c. Evidence of the ability to work well with the board and to implement board policies with skill and loyalty
- d. Evidence of the ability to communicate effectively with the constituent groups of the Christian school

### 4. Personal qualifications of a principal or teacher

- a. Good health
- b. A gracious, courteous, friendly, and likeable disposition
- c. Ability to communicate well
- d. A servant spirit; ability to work under authority without letting pride and self-interest get in the way
- e. A spirit of diligence, promptness, and organization
- f. A good sense of humor

### 5. Job description of the principal/headmaster

- a. Overall goal: The principal will carry out his or her duties and responsibilities to the glory of God and thus to the ultimate benefit of the school's entire educational program. The principal will plan, coordinate, and supervise the program and personnel to promote overall fidelity to the school's Christian philosophy of education in order to have an impact on the educational and spiritual welfare of each child.
- b. Performance responsibilities
  - 1) *General administration.* The principal will serve as the chief administrative officer for the operation of the Christian school and will be charged with the responsibility for implementing the policies of the board.
  - 2) *Spiritual, personal, and professional leadership.* The principal will be responsible for the overall spiritual, personal, and professional leadership of the school. The principal is also a leader in the area of personnel relations to promote and maximize the educational benefits for each child.
  - 3) *Curriculum and instruction.* The principal will exercise leadership in developing, achieving, and maintaining the strongest possible educational programs and services for the students.
  - 4) *Children's services and pupil personnel.* The principal will be responsible to plan with the faculty for the welfare of the students in their spiritual and academic growth, their physical well-being, and their learning program.
  - 5) *Business administration.* The principal will set up procedures and practices to ensure an efficient and effective business operation. The

principal will be responsible for developing and implementing the budget with fiscal responsibility.

- 6) *Other administrative responsibilities.* The principal will be responsible for establishing and maintaining good public relations with the various public groups with whom the school comes in contact.
- c. General administrative responsibilities of the principal/headmaster
  - 1) Lead the academic/supervisory team and, by his or her interest and spiritual commitment, carry forward the objectives of the academic school program. The principal serves as a leader in curriculum development and in staff recruitment and development.
  - 2) Supervise classroom instruction and evaluation through classroom visitation; assist teachers in self-analysis of teaching methods, pupil relationships, and curriculum content with the goal of improving the quality of instruction in both content and philosophy.
  - 3) Be responsible for overseeing the school chapels and faculty prayer meetings or delegating this responsibility to others.
  - 4) Conduct appropriate administrative and other staff meetings as needed for maintaining and improving the quality of the academic program and for coordinating the overall school program.
  - 5) Make administrative decisions that are necessary for the proper functioning of the school's academic program.
  - 6) Administer the school in conformity with board policy and in accordance with the laws of the state, provided that those laws do not violate the Scriptures on which the school was founded.
  - 7) Be responsible for the development and application of administrative regulations and take leadership in implementing the school program.
  - 8) Meet with the board chairperson to prepare the agenda for each board meeting, attend all board meetings, and participate in all deliberations of the board unless otherwise designated by the board chairperson.
  - 9) Serve as an ex officio member of all committees of the board.
  - 10) Review and approve curricular plans, including goals and objectives, from each teacher in the school.
  - 11) Direct the practices and procedures of teacher and principal in-service training, discussions, visitations, and college courses.
  - 12) Be responsible to lead the faculty in implementing board policies for pupil discipline; administer discipline when it is deemed necessary and fitting.
  - 13) Interview all prospective academic personnel; maintain and keep current all personnel files and records for the school.
  - 14) Administer employee contracts and board policies in such areas as salary, placement, sick leave, fringe benefits, in-service training, and grievance procedures.
  - 15) Assist in resolving problems that arise over a family's failure to understand a child's need for special services that are, have been, or should be provided.

- 16) Be responsible for maintaining cumulative records of each student and for filing data in accordance with the requirements of the school and the state.
- 17) Be responsible for the scheduling of classes for all students; arrange for proper report card distribution.
- 18) Serve as public relations leader of the school, overseeing the improvement of relations with the various public groups with whom the school comes in contact.
- 19) Collect and compile all data and perform or delegate any studies that may be needed.
- 20) Prepare a proposed annual operational budget for the school.
- 21) Encourage and approve field trips and extracurricular activities that create good learning situations.
- 22) Screen and approve all assembly programs and dramatic productions, making sure they are consistent with the philosophy of the school.
- 23) Develop and implement all graduation activities. (See toolbox: Application for Principals/Headmasters.)

## **6. The teacher application**

- a. The appearance of the form and the comprehensiveness of the data needed are important. These factors tell the prospect something about your school. Pertinent questions should cover the following items. (See toolbox: Application for Teaching Staff, Application for Support Staff, and Sample Reference Forms.)
  - 1) Name, permanent address, telephone number
  - 2) Current address, telephone number, fax, e-mail
  - 3) Date of availability
  - 4) Church membership and offices
  - 5) Personal testimony of Christian experience
  - 6) Colleges/universities attended and degrees earned
  - 7) Academic major and minor and grade point average
  - 8) Graduate study, if any
  - 9) Courses in Christian education philosophy
  - 10) Teacher certification or teaching credentials
  - 11) Teaching experience
  - 12) Practice-teaching evaluation
  - 13) Grades or courses qualified to teach
  - 14) Grade level or course preference
  - 15) Extracurricular choices
  - 16) Musical ability, if any
  - 17) Conviction on such practices as using drugs, tobacco, and alcohol
  - 18) Agreement with the school's statement of faith
  - 19) Reason for leaving current position
  - 20) References: personal, academic, spiritual life
  - 21) Remarks

- b. The completed application needs careful evaluation by the administration. If the applicant is not suitable, he or she should be informed promptly and graciously. If the applicant appears promising, references and university transcripts should be obtained. Careful evaluation is imperative. If reference material seems vague or evasive, follow up with a telephone call.
- c. If the references are favorable, the teacher candidate should be asked to come to the school for a personal interview. It is proper to reimburse the prospect for expenses involved in coming for the interview. Many schools will pay 50 percent of these expenses. The interview is a very significant element in the hiring of teachers.
- d. The teacher candidate should be interviewed by the principal and other members of the administrative team.

## 7. Interviewing procedures

- a. It is important that the teacher candidate be made to feel at ease, and that the interview be conducted amicably. Key questions should be used that will give a good, clear profile of the teacher's character and competence. Probing questions are in order, for there is much at stake.
- b. Suggested questions:
  - 1) How did you become a Christian?
  - 2) What Bible training have you had?
  - 3) Do you know how to lead a student to Christ?
  - 4) Have you ever led a person to Christ?
  - 5) With what Christian ministry have you been involved (for example, Sunday school or Christian camp)?
  - 6) What evidence do you see that God has given you the spiritual gift of teaching?
  - 7) What is your church background and present membership?
  - 8) Do you agree with the school's statement of faith without reservation?
  - 9) Do you hold any other doctrines not included in the school's statement of faith?
  - 10) Give a summary of your educational background.
  - 11) Tell about your practice-teaching experience.
  - 12) Summarize your teaching experience.
  - 13) What are your extracurricular interests?
  - 14) What is your grade or subject preference?
  - 15) What are the basic differences between a Christian school and a secular school?
  - 16) Why do you feel led of God to teach in a Christian school?
  - 17) On what basis would you require discipline in the classroom?
  - 18) Are you a good disciplinarian? (Note: an inability to discipline is the greatest cause of failure among Christian schoolteachers.)
  - 19) What are your convictions on the use of wine, liquor, tobacco, drugs, and various types of entertainment?
  - 20) Why do you want to leave your present position?



- 21) Are you willing to continue your professional growth with additional study?
- 22) Do you understand the salary scale of this school?
- 23) Are you looking for a Christian school in which to invest your life, or one where you can get experience to prepare for another job?
- 24) What is your view of the inspiration of the Bible?
- 25) What is your view of the theory of evolution?
- 26) What is your view of the creation of man?
- 27) Do you have questions to ask of us?

## 8. Key recommendations

- a. When in doubt, don't! If, after earnest prayer and counsel, a doubt about hiring a candidate persists (even though some of the qualifications look good), this hesitation may be an indication for turning the applicant down. Panic sometimes sets in when the school year looms close, and the temptation comes to act in haste to fill a spot. Hasty decisions often bring dire results.
- b. The principal ensures that all board policy guidelines have been fully met.
- c. A telephone call to give the good news to the applicant is in order. The call should be followed with a letter of welcome that has the contract enclosed.
- d. Sometimes, even with all the care in screening and evaluating candidates, a teacher may be hired who doesn't measure up to expectations. The principal should work with the teacher to develop a performance improvement plan with a specific timeline for evaluating progress. If the teacher fails to improve sufficiently, the school should not renew his or her contract. There is a temptation to procrastinate and to hope the problem will resolve itself. The longer the procrastination, the more painful the decision becomes, and the more damage is done to the students. Often these teachers are fine Christians who are just not effective in the classroom. The most gracious and loving thing to do is to let the teacher go. This process should be handled with gentleness and true compassion.

## Conclusion

It is an awesome responsibility to build an effective Christian school team. The decisions and choices made will affect generations of students positively or negatively. The Holy Spirit must be depended on to guide the school administration into all truth and to give discernment in the strategic decisions that are made. The crucial need is for principals and teachers to be willing to invest their lives as "kernels of wheat" in the Christian school so that the harvest in the student body may be abundant. "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you ... not by compulsion but willingly ... being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2-3, NKJV).

The principal/headmaster is the key person in the Christian school. The quality of the school is related to the spiritual gifts, personal qualities, professional competence, and diligence of the principal. He or she is the person most accountable for the progress of the school.

## Checkpoints

- Establish all appropriate personnel policies (for example, staffing qualifications; salary structure; personal, spiritual, and academic qualifications).
- Write job descriptions for the principal, teaching personnel, and support staff.
- Establish appropriate documents for hiring (for example, application forms, interview process).



# Chapter 5

## The School Building

### **A House for the Educational Needs of Your Students**

It should be the goal of every sponsoring agency to provide the finest possible facility for the Christian school. Many Christian schools have had humble beginnings. In Africa, for example, some up-and-coming Christian schools had their beginning under a tree or in a crudely constructed open structure with a thatched roof. The building does not make a school; however, it gives an impression of the kind of learning atmosphere available in the school and reflects the seriousness of the sponsoring group's purpose. The building houses the spirit of learning that favorably or unfavorably influences parental perception of the school's educational environment. All parents want the best education for their children, and parents often equate quality of education with the facility. Therefore, it is important to have a clean, orderly facility with color schemes that are bright and cheerful. A building that is dirty, disorderly, and in need of repair can give the school a poor image.


The purpose of this section is to consider the "schoolhouse" and to show how the building should be used to meet the needs of the students. Although options are sometimes limited, selection of a school facility is one of the most important decisions made by the new school committee. You need to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the following options.

### **Renting or Using a Church Education Building**

In the beginning, a sponsoring group may find it advantageous to rent space from a sponsoring church. However, every effort should be made to avoid the underlying psychology in the child's mind that he or she is going to church or Sunday school. Worship and education, while complementary, are distinct activities. As much as possible, the building should convey the appearance and function of an educational institution. Conflicts between the programs of the church and the Christian school will arise unless proper precautions are taken. This problem will exist even for a church-sponsored school.

### **Agreement or Contract with the Church**

Whether the school is church sponsored or independent, all arrangements with the church should be on a business basis. A use agreement should address the following issues in writing.



1. Identity of the participating organizations
2. Indication of the number of grades in the school (for example, K-3, K-6, K-12) as well as the maximum number of students
3. Renewal date or termination date of agreement
4. Classrooms to be used by the school
5. Responsibility for room modification and financial arrangements for those modifications
6. Use of church and school equipment
7. List of areas to be used by the school and hours of use (for example, sanctuary, kitchen, gym, offices, playground, and audiovisuals)
8. Custodial arrangements
9. Shared use of utilities; maintenance arrangements
10. Shared use of custodial supplies and equipment
11. Movement of equipment from church to school and from school to church
12. Property and equipment damage
13. Insurance
14. Financial arrangements (to ensure that the church is not expecting the school to support the church)
15. Mediation committee for resolving disputes
16. Procedures for dissolving the agreement
17. Capital improvement fund

It is reasonable for the school to pay for all its expenses, including wear and tear on the buildings. In some cases the church might consider the school to be a part of its ministry and thus might not require the school to pay for the use of church facilities.

## **Renting a Public School Building**

The demographic changes in many communities have led to the closing of public schools. When the community can find no immediate use for the buildings, it may rent them to private groups. Rental costs have usually been at a fair market value, yet renting the whole facility is often too big an undertaking for a new or young school. In such cases it is not uncommon for a school to rent part of the facility. The advantage of this option is that the building has already been planned as an educational facility. In many cases, much of the equipment is still in the building.

If a public facility is considered a viable option, remember that any involvement with municipal governments should include a detailed lease arrangement that covers accessibility, utilization, maintenance, insurance, and so on. Also keep in mind that most public facilities are leased on an annual basis. If community demographics change, the facility could be reclaimed by the local government for its own educational requirements. A growing Christian school would then be pressed to find another facility. Furthermore, the public may decide to use the building for some community endeavor (such as a daycare center, a center for senior citizens, or a rehabilitation center). Community opposition to a Christian school housed in a public building is also a possibility.

## **The Ideal Facility**

If it is possible, building a facility is certainly the most desirable alternative. Such an undertaking involves extensive planning and funding sources. A sponsoring group for a Christian school should consider the needs and expected support of the Christian community. Only then will there be an adequate basis for projecting recommendations for sound action and long-range planning. This analysis of the community will provide direction for the facility and for the educational program. The analysis should show the implications that each phase of facility development has for other elements of the school (curriculum, student population, teacher recruitment, salaries).

## **Site Selection**

When you choose the location for your school, you should consider its centrality to the constituency it seeks to serve. It would be in the best interests of the planners to seek out ten acres for every unit of 100 students at the primary level and thirty acres per 100 students at the senior high school level. However, this is only a rule of thumb. There can be the same number of students on a smaller ground area, though more land increases the efficiency of the educational program. Naturally, size and shape, topography, open land area, water supply, waste disposal, safety services, accessibility of public utilities and services, and surface and subsurface conditions must all be taken into consideration.

## **Legal Requirements**

Preliminary investigation must be made into local ordinances, planning and zoning regulations, and building codes and regulations. We cannot overestimate the importance of legal counsel to review all contracts and building permits and to provide representation before government agencies.

## **Enlisting an Architect**

In enlisting a capable, reputable architect or architectural firm, a committee would profit from traveling to projects that have been designed by the architect and from reviewing plans and photos of the architect's work. Sometimes the best architect is not the best salesperson. The lowest-bid architect may well cost more money during the construction phase.

The architect will usually operate in three phases. The first phase is the schematic and preliminary planning phase, in which a plot plan is submitted showing the location of the buildings and areas for development according to the needs of the educational program. Also, a general floor plan of space requirements and locations of classrooms, offices, and other facilities is shown. All kinds of changes can be suggested at this stage.

The second phase is design and development. This is a more detailed phase in which the plot plan shows the general topographical conditions and the relation



of the school to highways and streets. The floor plans give overall dimensions, location, size, and intended use of all areas while specifying the general method of heating, ventilating, and lighting. Drawings that show floor and ceiling levels and their relationship to the exterior grade levels are submitted.

In the third and final phase, the architect supplies detailed plans and specifications that provide both overall and individual unit dimensions. Specifications are submitted that detail all materials to be used and ways of doing the work. These are the plans that are submitted to contractors for bidding.

## **Furniture and Equipment**

How often have you seen children in church school programs using chairs and tables meant for adults? Adult chairs and desks are not meant for children. Chairs and tables are available in children's sizes; they can also be made by a local carpenter. Proper furniture contributes to the child's comfort and learning efficiency. Movable furniture gives the teacher the opportunity for a variety of arrangements that become stimuli in the communication of knowledge. Blackboards should range in height from 24 inches (61 centimeters) for kindergarten to 42 inches (106 centimeters) for senior high school. To promote educational themes and to display student work, bulletin board space is important and should be as generous as possible.

## **Conclusion**

Your facilities make a statement to the community about your school. While not every school can begin with a new building, every school can be a safe, clean, attractive place that is kept in good repair. Leaders of a Christian school that is committed to excellence must be concerned about the physical facilities and the image that the school projects to the public. First impressions are important!

## **Checkpoints**

- Conflicts between the programs of the church and the Christian school will arise unless proper precautions are taken.
- Whether the school is church sponsored or independent, all arrangements with the church should be in writing and on a business basis.
- Demographic changes in a community will impact the availability of facilities as well as their use.



# Chapter 6

## Making Your School Known

### **A Story to Tell**

The message of Christian schooling is one of hope and encouragement. The issues and challenges of our day seem overwhelming, and children around the world are facing some of the most difficult social issues known to mankind. In many parts of the world children are in despair and trapped by poverty. No one seems to have any answers for these challenging issues. The news media bombard us with a litany of graphic images highlighting the evils of our day, and it seems there is no place to turn. Yet, in the midst of this gloom and doom stands the hope and joy of Christianity. Christians have answers—God’s answers.

There is deep concern related to how the secularization of the world and in particular the government educational systems are having an impact on the minds and hearts of children and youth. Christian schools train young people to see life through the eyes of God’s Word. By integrating the learning process with God’s Word, Christian schools prepare young people to approach the challenges of life from the perspective of a biblical world-and-life view and to use their knowledge of the Scriptures in confronting the issues of the day.

When buying a diamond, the purchaser would not expect it to be displayed in a brown paper bag. The diamond’s presentation should enhance its inherent beauty. For this reason jewelers often display diamonds on a setting of black velvet or jeweler’s cloth—the perfect background to highlight a diamond’s God-given beauty.

We often communicate the diamond of Christian education in a brown paper bag. We have the truth, the purpose, and the real answer for today’s society. However, the ways we promote and publicize that truth, that purpose, and that goal often distract from the message.

### **Techniques for Promoting and Publicizing Christian Education**

#### **Consider the image of your school.**

The image of a school is complex but not difficult to comprehend. It seems to be a combination of one’s impressions of the school picked up through visiting the campus. Generally, we gain those impressions by observing the school’s facilities

and noticing whether or not they are attractive, clean, well-maintained, and adequate for the purposes of education.

Also important are the impressions we gather from the people we meet. The image of a school begins in the hearts and minds of its administration and board members. The principal needs to lead the board and other key staff members through a discussion of school image. When a number of ideas are discussed, it is important for the group to come to consensus on what message the school wishes to communicate, and they must prepare a clear, concise statement of that message.

The image of a school is often tied to some symbol—perhaps a school logo, crest, or emblem that is recognized in the community. The school logo is an important part of establishing your school's image; therefore, logo development must be done well, and process must not be hurried. It is best to acquire the services of a professional graphic designer. If you describe the school's philosophy of ministry, its history, and its purpose and goals, a good designer can create a logo that will symbolize your school's ministry. This is an excellent exercise because it requires you to narrow your message to concise terms that can be quickly and easily communicated. Once the designer has one or more samples, you might want to share them with individuals within as well as outside your school to get their reactions. Ask about each design, "What do you think of when you look at this logo?" Their answer will let you know very quickly which logo will communicate what you hope it will communicate. If no design does the job, continue to work with the designer until you get fairly consistent positive answers from a variety of sources.

### **Focus on your current constituency.**

The best communicators of the Christian philosophy of education and the best promoters of your school are those parents and students who are already part of your school. Your job is to equip them to be spokespersons for Christian schools in general and for your school in particular. Most Christian schools report that newcomers were attracted by a good report from somebody already bonded to their school. This concept of bonding our constituents to our school is extremely important. It is best achieved by recognizing the needs of our constituents and then designing our programs and services to address those needs. People who have caught the vision will give good reports and will seek and enjoy opportunities to promote and publicize our schools.

Identify and invite volunteers to assist in the various aspects of the school. When you find good ones, don't overwork them. Always be looking for those who have the ability to be involved but have not had the opportunity. Create opportunities to involve new people in your school. Your school constituencies are very much like concentric circles. The innermost circle is made up of those who are closest to the school. As you move outward, people feel less attached and less a part of the school's activities and program. Always remember that bonding individuals to your school is an issue that will require your personal attention.

## **Advertise the school.**

It is important to begin advertising the school early. School leaders must use as many ways as possible to contact churches and parents. Following is a review of appropriate methods and practices.

### **School advertising checklist**

#### **1. Generate interest by working with local pastors and spiritual leaders.**

A team that is committed to the project of opening a Christian school needs to spend some time before the Lord praying for guidance and wisdom and asking for His timing and direction. If they believe that God is leading them to start the school in the next year, they need to begin sharing their vision with others. It is wise to honor local pastors and spiritual leaders by sharing the vision of the school with them first. The people who have the vision should be the ones to share it with the spiritual leaders. The planning committee should compose a letter presenting the project along with some details about their vision for the school. This will give the pastors and spiritual leaders time to process the information. The letter could propose a meeting to discuss the plans for the school with each pastor or leader, giving the committee an opportunity to answer any questions and get input.

Members of the planning committee should take time to visit personally with as many pastors and spiritual leaders as possible. These visits will be valuable in building relationships and in honoring spiritual leadership. Committee members should be prepared to meet with some criticism and pessimism. They need not try to prove their points, and should not argue about the necessity or appropriateness of Christian education. They should respond in a mature manner, receiving what others have to say and assuring them that the committee members will be thinking and praying about their thoughts and suggestions. The key elements in this process are honoring leadership and providing information. Those planning the new school may not see the fruit of their efforts right away. However, some church leaders may desire to be involved and to have a part in the project. The school planners should pray carefully about these offers, try to understand the motivations of the leaders, and discuss the matter with the school board.

If the school is going to be a church school, one that is organized and controlled by a single local church, the pastor will usually want to provide a great deal of leadership. It is important to seek the pastor's leadership and counsel. One way to get a Christian school started is to make use of the facilities of a local church. The school can be in a local church facility and still be a ministry to the Christian community at large. Perhaps an advisory board of local pastors would be willing to help bridge the gap between the local church that is sponsoring the school and the other churches from which the school may receive students. This board would present the school as nondenominational and open to students of various churches.

## 2. Prepare a brochure or flyer to advertise the school

It is extremely helpful to prepare a flyer or a brochure that gives the basic information about the school. It should include the following:

- basic philosophy (keep it very simple)
- grade levels to be offered
- location, with address and phone number if available
- names of board members
- specialized services to be offered (for example, transportation for students)

As the school grows, the brochure can become more detailed in its presentation of the school's ministry. It can include pictures of students and student activities. But a simple flyer is needed at the outset to stimulate interest in the school and encourage parents to apply.

A simple flyer can be developed on a computer and printed on an office printer. The flyer's design should be attractive, and the text should be informative. With the use of a computer and a printer, the flyer can be made available for immediate use without the cost of professional design and printing.

## 3. Advertise in local churches

When the members of the planning committee have a flyer or brochure, they can begin to visit local churches and advertise the school. If possible, they should develop a video presentation or a series of posters or large pictures. These will help capture the parents' interest and attention. Such media resources are not absolutely necessary, and they can be developed at a later date, but early contact with the local churches is vital. (See "Create a visual presentation" later in this chapter.)

- Make contact with churches to see whether the board chair or a board member can make an announcement in a church service.
- Visit adult Sunday school classes or Bible studies that have parents with school-age children; distribute flyers and response forms.
- Place a poster, school flyer, or brochure on the church bulletin board.
- If funds are available, mail the flyer to church members with a response card to allow for future personal contact.

When speaking in classes, study groups, or special meetings, a representative of the school should start the meeting with an explanation of the school's vision and the school's basic foundational principles along with answers to common questions. After the presentation, the audience should have an opportunity to ask questions, which should be answered as carefully as possible. The whole meeting should take no more than an hour. Afterward, it is appropriate to send a letter thanking the pastor or group leader for the opportunity to share your vision for the school.

## 4. Distribute flyers or brochures

Distribute materials in areas near where the school will be located or in the



areas where the school wishes to serve. Place materials in grocery stores and shops and on bulletin boards. Small flyers can be developed to give a short description of the school, where it is, when it will start, what age levels it will serve, and a telephone number or e-mail address where an interested person can request additional information or an application. These flyers can also be used as small posters in many places where people will notice them. Be sure to highlight the distinctives of the school (for example, English language, biblical and moral education, biblically integrated curriculum, university preparatory).

#### 5. Create a visual presentation

A visual presentation could be in the form of a PowerPoint, video, slide show, or posters that can be used in small groups, churches, and Sunday school classes.

Visual aids help in making a presentation to parents, pastors, and spiritual leaders. One or more of the following can be used, depending on the availability of funds and equipment:

- a simple PowerPoint presentation with a few well-prepared slides to present and explain the ministry
- a group of posters that present the philosophy and goals of the school, including facts such as grades to be served and location of the facilities
- some large pictures (drawings or enlarged photographs) to display as posters
- a video presentation

A visual presentation is not an absolute necessity, but it can greatly enhance a verbal presentation. Creative people should be invited to assist in preparing such an aid.

## Help for Your Printed Materials

While word of mouth is definitely the best method to promote and publicize Christian education, each Christian school should develop a plan for printed promotional materials.

Everything that goes out in written form from your school “tells a story” about your school. Parents will form impressions by looking at the test papers their children bring home. Tests that are duplicated on machines of poor quality or are sloppily prepared create an unprofessional image. The appearance of letters sent out from your school communicates much more than the words. Careful attention to detail, neatness, and attractiveness should be hallmarks of all written materials from your school.

Promotional materials include brochures, newsletters, yearbooks, programs for athletic events, and other pieces designed to meet particular needs. These principles are important to keep in mind regarding promotional brochures:

- Make sure the brochures are colorful and attractive.
- Use text that is clearly written and carefully proofread.

- Always use sharp, clear pictures. The cost of a professional photographer or a high-resolution camera is worth the investment.
- Use pictures that show action and that focus on students rather than pictures of facilities and equipment.
- If you want to highlight a new facility that God has given your school, be sure to include people in the picture. In taking pictures of equipment, show people using the equipment.

Another key element in promotional materials is the principle of validation. The best validation of a school is personal testimonies from families concerning what the school means to them. When promoting your school, try to validate what you say by including personal testimonies. The design of your promotional materials should always consider the target group for whom the brochure is being developed. Validation of the effectiveness of these programs and services is the key to communication.

A school newspaper can be an effective means of communicating with the various constituencies in your school. The newspaper should be attractive and orderly. It should feature sharp, clear pictures, including some that are not posed. Headlines should always be action statements. Articles should be precise, to the point, and validated by direct quotations whenever possible. Publishing a school newspaper can be a means of involving students in a journalistic effort. Many school newspapers produced by students are written primarily for students. A better approach to journalism is to involve students in writing for a broad spectrum of the school's constituency. A good school newspaper will be a journal of what God is doing in the life of the school.

## Conclusion

The key to effective promotion and publicity for any Christian school is person-to-person contact. Individual needs and personal concerns should also be the focus in promotion and publicity, as well as in printed materials. School planners must always keep in mind that promoting Christian education is promoting the cause of Christ.

## Checkpoints

- The image of a school begins in the hearts and minds of its administration and board members.
- Those parents and students already in your school are the best communicators of the school's ministry.
- The school's leaders must cultivate interest and support among members of the Christian community by developing a strong relationship with the local churches.
- All written materials that come out of your school should exhibit attractiveness and careful attention to detail.



# Chapter 7

## Financial Management

### Laying a Proper Financial Foundation

Your school is both a spiritual ministry and a business. Good business planning will free the principal to pursue the work of Christian schooling unhindered by financial worries and frustrations. Financial planning and the careful management of finances are central to the school's sustainability. Your treasurer, business manager, and bookkeeper are all vital members of your administrative team. They provide the support network out of which your Christian school can grow and prosper.

Just as with every other part of your school program, it is important in financial matters to begin right. The policies and procedures adopted now should serve the school in years to come. The accounts payable and the accounts receivable will likely increase, but the procedures will remain the same. The budget is expected to grow in future years, and the processes you establish now should be able to accommodate the growth. Forecasting cash flow—the balance of the amounts of cash being received and paid by a business during a defined period of time—will become fundamental to the budget process because during the school year, cash flow fluctuates from day to day and month to month.

In this chapter we make an attempt to help you start right. However, we do not address the laws and financial regulations of your local government or ministry of education. You are advised to get a copy of the education laws for your country and to seek legal counsel as well as the advice of a certified public accountant. This advice will keep you from having to correct accounting mistakes in the future or to pay heavy fines for not having your school finances in order. Develop your financial system in a manner that will honor God and that will allow it to grow with the school.

### 1. School Finance

- a. Thorough planning now can save countless hours and much confusion in the future. It can also spare the school serious problems with the laws and regulations of your local government. Consult an educational finance official for advice.

- b. Consequences of poor planning can range from frustrated parents to legal fines imposed on your school. It is a great frustration to staff and board when the budgeting process causes a deficit in the school or creates serious cash-flow problems.
- c. Begin now to utilize computer technology for your business department. Software is available for all phases of the school's financial activity: billing, general ledger, donations, etc. Spreadsheet software can be invaluable for planning and budget preparation. Investing in the right computer hardware and software now will allow you to reduce employee hours, saving salary dollars in the future.

## 2. Determine School Size

- a. Predict growth. In order to prepare financially for your school's opening, you must determine what grade levels you will include. (For example, the school might open with kindergarten through grade three.) Then you must make your best prediction of the number of students in each grade. (See chapter 2, "Developing a Feasibility Study.")
- b. Plan future growth. Strategically decide how the school will grow. Will you add one grade per year? How do you expect each class's enrollment to grow year by year? Stay conservative but be realistic. At minimum develop a three-year plan for growth. This three-year plan should be revised each year.

## 3. Start-Up Costs

- a. Equipment needs. Once you have determined the desired grade levels and projected enrollment, you can prepare for the needed equipment and materials. Don't be overly conservative in your planning. Equip the school properly for your opening. Allow sufficient time for equipment delivery. This will make a strong statement to parents and faculty that your school will be characterized by excellence.
- b. Funding for start-up costs. The new school will have start-up costs that should not be included in the operational budget. These capital expenses include such items as classroom furniture, office equipment, and audiovisual equipment. Although these items will be replaced at some time in the future, they are considered start-up expenses and should be funded from outside the operational budget. Otherwise they inflate first-year operational expenses and create unnecessarily elevated tuition rates. The charts below will assist you in computing these capital costs. Not every item is immediately necessary for every school; the board of each new school will need to determine which items are needed for that school. Funds for start-up costs should be raised from outside the normal tuition/fee revenue.

## Sample Chart for Equipment Needs

Item	Location	Number required	Cost each	Total cost
1. Chairs	12" Student K	25	\$	\$
	14" Student 1st grade	25		
	14" Student 2nd grade	25		
	16" Student 3rd grade	25		
	16" Student 4th grade	25		
	18" Student 5th grade	25		
	18" Student 6th grade	25		
	18" Adult	10		
	Teacher	7		
	Secretary	2		
	Principal	1		
	Visitor	4		
2. Tables or student desks (should be 10–11" above chair height)	Classrooms (7)	25		
	Classroom extra (nonadjustable)	15		
	Other	4		
3. Desks	Teacher	7		
	Secretary/bookkeeper	2		
	Principal	1		
4. Cabinets	Classrooms	7		
5. Filing cabinet	Classroom and offices	11		
6. Storage cabinet	Various	4		
7. Classroom computer	Classroom	7		
8. Computer and printer	Office	2		
9. Chalkboards	Classrooms (minimum 20' per room)	21		
10. Bulletin board	Classrooms (3 per room)	21		
11. Map rail (nylon hook and clip)		21		
12. Platform/risers	3-Step	4		
13. Audiovisual equipment	Overhead projectors	3		
	Tape players	4		
	Television	2		
	VCR	2		
14. 10' x 12' Film screen	Portable for assemblies	1		
15. 6' x 5' Wall-hung film screen		7		
16. Music stands (as podium)		9		
17. Piano		1		
18. Office equipment (photocopier, etc.)				
19. Playground equipment (misc.)				
20. Maps, globes, encyclopedias				
21. Time clock, bell system, fire alarm				
	Capital Equipment Total			\$



## 4. Developing Your School's Annual Budget

The budget becomes a tool for managing the school's finances. It should guide the school's strategic planning. Properly developed, the budget embodies the school's strategic priorities. Properly administered, it enables the administration to reach those priorities.

### a. Setting your staff compensation

- 1) Determine staffing needs. Since you have determined your school's projected grade levels and enrollment, you can now plan realistically for the school's staffing needs. This planning should include not only the instructional staff but also the noninstructional staff, including administrative, secretarial, and custodial personnel. You might also want to include food-service personnel if you plan to serve lunches for your students. Since it is the nature of a school to be staff intensive, employment compensation can make up as much as 75 percent of the school budget.
- 2) Establish salary levels. The next step is to establish compensation levels; compensation should include salary plus benefits. Determine to do your best to pay adequate wages. The Scripture reminds us that "the laborer is worthy of his wages" (1 Timothy 5:18, NKJV). While you may not be able to afford salaries at the government school level, professional teachers should expect to be remunerated for their education and experience. Adequate salaries encourage your teachers to remain in the school, and a stable faculty is a great encouragement to the parents of your students. Encouraged parents keep their children in your school and enthusiastically tell their friends about their positive experiences. However, you must stay within your budget. Compensation and tuition are like hand and glove: they must increase together.

This tension is always present in a school—paying the highest salary possible without pricing the school beyond the reach of your parents. Christian teachers must not be expected to shoulder the sacrifice for low tuition. Any necessary sacrifice in the Christian school must be shared equally by parents and teachers. Never lose sight of your teachers as professionals, and determine to compensate them accordingly. Careful research can easily determine the salary levels that are offered by the public school system, local private schools, and comparable Christian schools.

- 3) Develop a salary schedule for your school. The sample salary schedule is in U.S. dollars and is only a suggestion to indicate adequate increments for training and years of service. You should consult officials in your local ministry of education and in the private school sector and obtain samples of salary schedules for your area.

## Sample Salary Schedule

(Step)	A (BA)	B (BA+9)	C (BA+18)	D (BA+27)	E (MA)	F (MA+30)	G (PHD/EDD)
1	\$20,000	\$20,250	\$20,500	\$20,750	\$21,000	\$21,250	\$21,500
2	20,400	20,650	20,900	21,150	21,400	21,650	21,900
3	20,800	21,050	21,300	21,550	21,800	22,050	22,300
4	21,200	21,450	21,700	21,950	22,200	22,450	22,700
5	21,600	21,850	22,100	22,350	22,600	22,850	23,100
6	22,000	22,250	22,500	22,750	23,000	23,250	23,500
7	22,400	22,650	22,900	23,150	23,400	23,650	23,900
8		23,050	23,300	23,550	23,800	24,050	24,300
9		23,450	23,700	23,950	24,200	24,450	24,700
10		23,850	24,100	24,350	24,600	24,850	25,100
11			24,500	24,750	25,000	25,250	25,500
12			24,900	25,150	25,400	25,650	25,900
13				25,550	25,800	26,050	26,300
14				25,950	26,200	26,450	26,700
15					26,600	26,850	27,100

4) Determine the principal's salary. Additional responsibilities should be compensated. One excellent example is compensation for administrative responsibility. The principal should be a twelve-month employee; thus, in addition to the teacher's salary, he or she should be paid 20 to 22 percent for the additional two months. The salary must also include compensation for the additional responsibility. A responsibility increment of 20 to 30 percent of the teacher's salary is recommended. Proper compensation results in a long-term principal, and a long-term principal will add to the professional stability of your school.

5) Benefits are an important part of your employees' compensation. As a school you can provide greater group benefits at a lower cost from insurance services than your teachers and staff members can obtain individually. Establish a three- to five-year plan to phase in these benefits as the school grows. Consider such important benefits as the following (in order of importance):

- group health and life insurance
- sick leave
- payment for graduate tuition
- long-term disability
- professional days
- retirement
- vacation (twelve-month employees)

b. Tuition pricing considerations

1) Tuition must equal actual costs. It is recommended that tuition and fees cover 100 percent of the school's direct operational expenses. Families are paying the actual cost for the education of their student. If the school depends on gifts to cover its operational expenses, it runs a greater risk of

- a budget it cannot fund. Contributions can be used to add equipment and enhancements to the school that the operational budget cannot provide.
- 2) Avoid automatic discounts such as those for multiple-child families, pastors, and missionaries. When discounts are automatic, they may or may not be needed. If the family of four children or the pastor can afford to pay full tuition, the policy should expect them to do so. Unneeded discounts should never be given. For those families with need, it is recommended that a tuition assistance program be established that grants assistance determined by need.
  - 3) Set your tuition so that it includes all reasonable expenses required to attend your school. Avoid where possible those extra charges such as laboratory, yearbook, physical education, uniform, and graduation fees. Since these expenses can be known at the beginning of the year, include them in the tuition fee. Where fees in addition to the tuition are charged, they must be easily justifiable and might include the following:
    - Facilities fee. Every family should pay its part for the maintenance and replacement of the physical plant. These monies are used for facility upkeep and improvement and should accrue to a reserve account. They should not be absorbed into the operational budget.
    - Activity fee. This fee would be used to fund other aspects of the school program—extracurricular offerings such as sports and other nonacademic, noncredit activities.
    - Textbook fee. If the school provides the textbooks, this fee would cover the initial purchase and replacement cost of textbook materials.
  - 4) All tuition discounts should be based on financial need. Need-based financial aid is distributed to families that probably could not afford to send their children without assistance. The monies spent result in increased enrollment and make the ministry of the school available to a broader range of families. This financial aid fee should be governed by written policies and procedures.
  - 5) Prorated tuition policy. On occasion, families are not able to remain in the school for the entire year. For any number of reasons, they enroll late or leave early. A prorated tuition plan should be established and publicized. This could be based on the number of days a child spends in class. If a child is enrolled for any part of a class term, the family should be charged for the number of days in the term. A class term could be defined at your discretion as a month or an academic term.
  - 6) Delinquent-tuition policy. Beginning the first year, establish policies for tuition accounts that fall behind. The school is not helping a family if it allows a child to remain in the school when he or she may leave at the end of the year owing money to the school. Bad-debt loss puts a strain on the budget and discourages those families who are timely in paying tuition.
  - 7) Tuition collection system. Set policies to protect the budget and the school from financial loss.

c. The budget process

- 1) Consider a zero-based budget when building the expense side of your budget. Every amount must be justified. An account cannot add a 5 percent inflation factor to last year's expenses. Each account starts with zero and builds its budget requirements on the basis of actual needs and projections for the next year.
- 2) Be conservative as you project your revenue. Failure to achieve the anticipated revenue can be just as disastrous as exceeding your expenses. Anticipate the possibility of attrition in enrollment and be conservative in setting your budgeted revenue.
- 3) Insist on a balanced budget. A deficit could develop during the year because of an unanticipated expense or a shortfall in revenue, but a school should never begin the year with a budget deficit. In fact, it is recommended that you build a small contingency fund into your budget to cover the unexpected. The recommendation is 4 to 5 percent of your total budget.

d. Budget timeline. It is important to start the budget process early. Below is a suggested budget-planning cycle before the school year begins.

10–11 months. Project a conservative enrollment for the coming year.

Determine the staff size needed, and establish desired salary levels. Begin by getting a commitment from your current families, and then project conservative growth for the next year by grade level.

8–9 months. Using your established salary levels, compute your total salary expense and carefully project all additional costs for the coming year. Tentatively set the tuition increase necessary to balance the budget. The board should review and tentatively approve the projected salary and tuition increase.

7 months. The board should give its final approval to the coming year's budget. This approval permits the administration to proceed with reenrolling students and offering contracts to staff.

1 month. At this time the actual tuition/fee revenue and salary expense levels are available. The board should revise the budget as needed to ensure a positive cash flow at the end of the year.

A word of caution: In using this type of budget cycle, you are projecting revenue and expenses nearly a year into the future. Care must be taken to be conservative and accurate in your forecasts.

e. Model budget. A suggested list of line items for the budget and a sample operational budget are provided below. Not all line items are in the sample budget, but as the school grows they may be added. This particular school consists of kindergarten through grade six; therefore, the budget is relatively simple. As the school expands, it may add additional services such as a preschool, bus service, or after-school care. Each of these areas will provide a stream of revenue to offset expenses. It is wise to keep each of these accounts separate in order to maintain proper cost accounting. If your transportation service is losing money, you need to determine that fact quickly; then it is possible to take the precise steps needed to correct the

problem.

**Suggested budget line items:**

1. Income

a. Fees for services

- 1) Tuition
- 2) Fees (books, materials, activities, transportation, labs, field trips, etc.)

b. Contributions

- 1) Annual fund (general unrestricted gifts for operations)
- 2) Special projects (benefit auction, etc.)

c. Other income

- 1) Interest on investments
- 2) Miscellaneous revenue (rentals, etc.)

2. Expenses

a. Program expenses

- 1) Teacher salaries
- 2) Staff salaries
- 3) Substitute salaries
- 4) Payroll taxes
- 5) Group insurance
- 6) Retirement
- 7) Professional development (teacher conventions and conferences)
- 8) Advanced schooling (graduate program support)
- 9) Dues and subscriptions
- 10) Printed materials
- 11) Teaching supplies
- 12) Textbooks
- 13) Library supplies
- 14) Awards and graduation
- 15) Special speakers
- 16) Special learning programs (outdoor education)
- 17) Activities
- 18) Student insurance
- 19) Field trips

b. Administrative expenses

- 1) Staff salaries
- 2) Payroll taxes
- 3) Group insurance
- 4) Office supplies
- 5) Copier
- 6) Postage
- 7) Staff activities
- 8) Professional services (audit, legal, etc.)
- 9) Travel
- 10) Professional development (conventions, conferences)
- 11) Bad debt



- 12) Printed materials
- 13) Insurance
- 14) Accounting
- 15) Computer services

c. Plant expenses

- 1) Salaries staff
- 2) Payroll taxes
- 3) Group insurance
- 4) Telephone
- 5) Electricity
- 6) Water, sewer, garbage
- 7) Gas and oil
- 8) Depreciation: buildings
- 9) Depreciation: equipment
- 10) Maintenance supplies
- 11) Custodial supplies
- 12) Maintenance expenses

Victory Christian School Enrollment = 135, Grades K-6														
	Income	Budget	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
	Tuition	398,100	0	44,100	38,000	38,000	38,000	38,000	38,000	38,000	38,000	38,000	38,000	12,000
	Registration	3,375	500	2,175	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Textbook fees	18,225	2,000	13,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Contributions	2,000	50	100	300	300	200	400	100	100	100	100	100	50
	Misc. income	1,600	80	80	160	160	160	160	160	160	160	160	80	80
	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>423,300</b>												
Program	Expense	Budget	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
	Salaries	21,2800	0	10,640	21,280	21,280	21,280	21,280	21,280	21,280	21,280	21,280	21,280	10,640
	Payroll tax	16,280	0	814	1,628	1,628	1,628	1,628	1,628	1,628	1,628	1,628	1,628	814
	Group insurance	9,600	800	800	800	800	800	800	800	800	800	800	800	800
	Retirement	4,000	334	334	334	333	333	333	333	333	333	333	333	334
	Teacher supplies	2,000	0	500	400	100	100	100	400	100	100	100	100	0
	Curric/books	20,100	0	1,4000	2000	600	400	300	1800	300	300	300	100	0
	Subtotal	264,780												
Administration		Budget	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
	Salaries	50,000	3,000	3,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	3,000
	Payroll tax	3,824	230	268	344	344	344	344	344	344	344	344	344	230
	Group insurance	1,200	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Retirement	500	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	41	41	41	41
	Office supplies	3,920	160	1,800	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	160
	Postage	430	10	80	50	20	20	20	20	20	60	60	60	10
	Bad debt	2,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	500	0	0	0	0	1,500
	Property insurance	1,460	0	0	1,460	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Miscellaneous	1,200	30	200	200	70	100	100	100	100	100	70	100	30
	Subtotal	64,534												
Plant		Budget	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
	Salaries	20,400	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700
	Payroll tax	1,560	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130
	Group insurance	1,200	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Retirement	500	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	41	41	41	41
	Telephone	540	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
	Utilities	22,000	400	400	1,000	1,800	2,600	330	3400	330	2,600	1,800	100	400
	Rent	36,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
	Maint. supplies	500	10	20	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	20
	Maintenance	45,500	1,200	1,000	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	100	1,000
	Cap. improv.	5,000	2,000	1,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,500
	Subtotal	92,200												
	Total Expense	421,514												
	Net Gain (loss)	1,786												

## 5. Your Bookkeeping System

- a. Choose a system that will grow with the school. The right system for your school should grow with the school. The numbers and accounts will expand, but the bookkeeping system should be able to accommodate the growth.
- b. Obtain counsel. You should obtain counsel and assistance from a certified public accountant who is familiar with nonprofit organizations, the financial accounting standards and practices for your location, and government requirements. There may be certain records and forms that are required by your government on a regular basis. Financial penalties occur when they are not filed on time. Neglect in this area is a negative reflection on the school and its practices.
- c. Annual audit. An annual audit or review is recommended for every Christian school. The Bible speaks of avoiding every “appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22, KJV). A clear annual audit/review ensures that school finances are being properly managed.
- d. Cash-flow management. Cash flow will fluctuate, and accurate cash forecasting can prevent the loss of revenue. Cash-flow management then becomes a planning tool for the short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term needs of the school. Accurate cash-flow management is strictly a tool for meeting the school’s needs and for preventing any untimely and unexpected loss of revenue. Cash-flow management will indicate whether or not the school can pay its bills.

## 6. Long-Range Financial Considerations

- a. Endowments. Some contributors are interested only in giving to an endowment fund. They want their original gift to remain intact and to continue annually to contribute to your school. Consider establishing an endowment early in the school’s history for a particular purpose. This purpose could be for such needs as tuition assistance, faculty benefits, or facility improvement.
- b. Capital improvements. As the school grows, the physical plant will need to grow and improve. A capital development fund would contain the budgeted expenses and the facility fees collected from the parents each year and other designated gifts for capital development. Improvement needs would be funded from this account.
- c. Equipment replacement. In this day of high technology, the replacement of school equipment is expensive, sometimes exceeding what can be funded through the operational budget. Anticipate how long pieces of equipment will last, and then budget funds for replacing them. These funds should be designated for the purpose of equipment replacement only.

## 7. Fund-Raising

- a. Don't be operationally dependent on fund-raising. Fund-raising can be a great blessing to the school; however, don't allow the operational budget to be dependent on this revenue. Use revenue from fund-raising activities and contributions to fund needs and projects outside the basic operational budget. If the funds fall short of the expectation, the project is delayed. If the operational budget is dependent on these funds and they fall short, the result can be a financial deficit at the end of the year.
- b. Fees for fund-raising. The total revenue from fund-raising includes all monies raised; however, there are often costs associated with the fund-raising effort. These costs need to be controlled in order to maximize the benefit of the funds raised to your school. The net benefit to your school is the total funds raised less the expenses necessary to raise them.
- c. Fund-raising policies. School policies are important in the area of fund-raising. It is important to anticipate each of these areas before the fund-raising begins:
  - The board should specify that all fund-raising projects must be approved by the principal.
  - Before funds are raised, a project statement should be filed indicating how the funds will be used.
  - The school leaders should determine how the school will acknowledge the contributors.

## 8. Purchasing

- a. Purchasing policies. Good schools control spending. They establish policies that control who authorizes a purchase and what procedures must be followed in making the purchase. These policies ensure that the school lives within the approved budget. It is generally advisable to have one central purchasing agent who is familiar with vendors and the various discounts that might be available.
- b. Purchase orders. In order to make sure that the purchase has been properly authorized, many schools utilize a purchase order. This practice ensures that the purchaser has followed the appropriate procedures and has received the required authorization.

## 9. Insurance

Insurance protects your school from losses that could jeopardize its future ministry. In order to reduce costs, many schools choose a large deductible to their policy. Certain types of insurance may be required by local authorities and the ministry of education. Make sure you know the law and provide the protection that is important to keep your school viable.

Insurance checklist:

- Liability
- Vehicular
- Property casualty
- Errors and omissions
- Professional liability
- Student accident
- Employment practice liability
- Unemployment compensation
- Workers' compensation
- Flood/earthquake/tornado/hurricane (where applicable)

## Checkpoints

- In order to remain stable, a school must be recognized as both a spiritual ministry and a business.
- Financial stability is important to the future of your school.
- The community will judge the school by the way it maintains its financial integrity in the community (for example, whether it is current on all its bills).
- Employees will be encouraged and blessed by the meticulous way you fulfill your financial obligations to them.
- Integrity and sound business decisions will enable the school to experience financial stability.
- Good stewardship and sound business practices will earn the trust and respect of your community, providing another opportunity for your school to be “salt and light” to an unbelieving world.





# Chapter 8

## Preparing the Board Policy Manual

### **A Tool for Efficiency and Consistency**

Just how important is a policy manual to a Christian school? A small school is almost like a family, and no one writes out rules for a family! Today we find ourselves in a sophisticated and complex society. Members of the Christian school community expect excellence in the management of their schools. The constituents want a bigger role in decision making. Young and small Christian schools face many of the same administrative problems that larger schools confront, but most have less time, money, and personnel to do the job. Policies and procedures are necessary if school leaders are to deal with their responsibilities efficiently and meet the challenges of increased Christian community involvement, tighter budgets, and added special programs.

One of the most significant, meaningful, and difficult exercises for the board will be creating the board policy manual. Every school must have policies that guide all aspects of school life and experience. Policies are written to inform the principal of the wishes of the board, to establish the relationship between the principal and the board, and to provide a clearly mandated set of guidelines to keep the school running smoothly. The board develops these policies and expects the principal, as the chief education officer of the school, to carry them out. Without clear policies the operation of the school is often inconsistent and haphazard, and inconsistent management can create embarrassing circumstances within the school community and can produce difficult situations to which the board will be called on to respond.

Many Christian schools are founded by sincere church members and individuals who have a strong love for God and for children. What they may lack is an understanding of how to govern a school. As a result, the day-to-day operations of the school are often inconsistent and haphazard. Unfortunate episodes happen that give the school a poor testimony within the school community and the community at large.

Properly administering a Christian school is a difficult task. A well-designed policy manual gives the principal the protection necessary to efficiently handle the questions and problems encountered on a daily basis. It provides immediate answers, many of which cannot wait for the next board meeting. The well-designed policy manual becomes the principal's friend. It frequently saves him or her from making arbitrary or impulsive decisions.

There are sound biblical reasons for having a formal policy manual. The apostle Paul said, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40, NKJV). A smoothly run organization honors God. Since God is a God of order, a policy manual can give a Christian school an orderliness that will glorify Him.

Written policies help the principal/headmaster consistently manage the school’s personnel, students, finances, employee benefits, and general procedures. A good school board will provide the principal with a framework of policies within which to function. It gives the principal immediate control and strengthens his or her position as the leader of the school rather than causing the principal to delay a decision until the board has time to consider the issue. Well-written policies are broad enough to allow the principal to use discretion in individual cases.

Basically, policies can ensure that all individuals are treated fairly. There will be no suggestion of favoritism if the policies adopted are enforced equitably. The golden rule is the measurement of fairness: “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). It is wise to approve policies well in advance of need. Carefully thinking through each policy is important. Policies should be developed through careful thought unimpeded by the emotions that often develop in the midst of a situation involving employees or students. Policies should be worked out while cool heads prevail rather than in the heat of the battle in an emergency board session.

A policy manual will allow the principal to handle grievances in a systematic and Christlike manner; the principal will be able to confront issues biblically, following the pattern of Matthew 18:15–17. No one likes to have problems in relationships, but differences are bound to occur in any organization. Handling them according to scriptural guidelines is the wisest method. Probably the area in which it is most necessary to adopt policies is personnel management. It is neither unfair nor unkind to work with school employees in a professional manner, enforcing policies according to the school’s expectations.

Policies paint a portrait of a Christian school’s program. It can be consulted, for example, by those requesting information about how to make complaints and what action can be taken about a problem. Policies can give focus for change and can help identify sources of confusion and areas of objection. They specify the procedures to follow in challenging or objecting to the board’s decisions.

An important principle to remember is that the board establishes policy and the administration carries it out. Policies give the principal the sense of direction needed without minimizing the professional skills for which he or she is paid. Some schools have run into difficulty because the roles of the board and administration were not firmly understood by both parties. Boards should not manage the school. If they do, they are exhibiting a lack of confidence in the principal. By the same token, principals should not establish policy since they are employees of the board, and their role is to carry out established policy. The three main functions of the board are (1) to hire the principal, (2) to approve and monitor the budget, and (3) to establish school policy.

The board need not make and remake basic decisions each time a new or similar situation arises. A well-written policy will give clear guidelines for administrative decisions. Good policies can free the board for more creative work. A policy manual is a guide for board decision making.

The written policy manual can save the principal from many difficult dilemmas. For example, the chairman of the board may have a son or daughter who is graduating from college with no formal training in teacher preparation. Without written policy-setting criteria for the professional staff, the principal may be placed under a great deal of pressure to hire this individual. If the policy manual clearly states that all teacher applicants must have college training in their field as well as formal classes in teaching, the principal will be on safe ground.

## **What Is a Policy?**

A policy is a course or method of action adopted by the board to guide present and future decisions. Policy has the full authority of the board behind it. To willfully break a policy, therefore, is to commit insubordination. Policy is company law, and it communicates to employees, from the top down, what the board expects. A good policy manual will free the principal from making many routine day-to-day decisions, leaving him or her time for more crucial and challenging matters. The time and effort spent in developing a policy manual will be more than compensated by the smooth operation of the school.

Policies should always be put in writing. Verbal traditions (all that some schools have for policies) are open to misinterpretation and misunderstanding, while written policies will generally be upheld in a court as long as they are not contrary to law. It is always wise to have an attorney look over your policy manual to make sure that your policies are well within the law.

It is not possible to have a written policy for every eventuality. In situations for which there is no written policy, the board should act in a manner consistent with other actions and decisions.

## **Procedures for Policy Writing**

Effective policies and regulations must be precise and clear. They must express as succinctly as possible the board's decisions about what should be done, the desired results or outcomes, and directions for the principal/headmaster as to how, by whom, when, and where (the means or procedures) the action will be done.

The language used should be formal enough for precision but not stilted or legal sounding. The policies should read easily enough for students, parents, employees, and board members to understand. Writing that is full of educational or legal jargon should be avoided.

The board should make every effort to be consistent in style and format as it develops policies. It would be helpful if one person, preferably the principal,

were given the responsibility for writing all policies, adopting a format and style characterized by easy readability. This same style should be followed in subsequent policy writing.

## Basics of Writing Policies

1. *From general to specific.* Effective boards develop policies in a systematic manner. They begin with the most general guidelines and proceed to more specific ones until they are comfortable that administrative practice will be conducted within desired parameters. This method is pictured as a “nesting bowl” policy development. The broadest and most general statement in the area of policy is developed first, and it becomes the umbrella for subsequent policies. Standing policies are developed only to the level required to give the principal the needed direction for the operation of the school.
2. *Understandable.* The board must ensure that sufficient detail is provided for the principal to clearly understand what the board intends to convey. Policy wording must not be so general that it is ambiguous and not so precise as to outline operations that are the responsibility of the principal. It is important that the dialogue between the board members and the principal during policy development shape the wording so that there is clarity for both governance and administrative leadership.
3. *Legally and ethically appropriate.* The board members must recognize that their policies are substantial documents in the organizational life of the school. These policies have an impact on the lives of people and on the life of the organization. The board and the administration have a legal and ethical responsibility to carry out these policies. There is a clear distinction between board policies and the operational policies that derive from them. Board policies indicate what the board desires to occur. Operational policies are constructed by the principal to assure that the board’s goals become the operational practices of the school. It is very important that policy manuals be accurate and up-to-date. This means regularly maintaining them. Someone looking up a policy should be able to find it readily and know that it is current. Thus a regular procedure for updating manuals should be established. A good practice is to insert new policies into the manual after the board meeting at which they are adopted. It is helpful to date each policy and all amendments so that the reader can easily verify that the policy is current.

## Preparing the Policy Manual

When developing a policy manual for a new school, it is recommended that the board and the administrative staff work together in a creative manner so that neither group feels intimidated by the other. Brainstorming should be encouraged and ideas collected. The resulting draft of the policy manual should be examined by a competent attorney familiar with school law.

In your quest to establish policies, you will find it helpful to ask other schools for copies of their policy manuals. Looking through other policy manuals can be advantageous in pointing out policies to consider. You may not agree with another school's policy manual, but it can serve as a springboard for your own ideas. For example, your model policy manual may suggest a sick leave of ten days per year, which you may feel is either too little or too much. If ten days is not acceptable, what do you consider a suitable number of sick days? The important thing is to settle on the number of days even if you decide to change that policy at a later date. (See toolbox: Model Standing Policies.)

A good procedure to follow when adopting a policy manual or adding new policies is to read it at two separate board meetings before it is officially adopted. With such prudent care, your policies will be in keeping with Christian school philosophy, goals, and objectives.

When the board is satisfied with the policy proposals, the policies should then be formally presented at regularly scheduled board meetings. When controversial policies are being considered, those with an interest in the issue under discussion may be invited to attend. These could include parents, area pastors, teachers, staff members, and even students. Knowing these people were invited will instill further confidence in what you are doing, whether they attend or not.

If a change is made in a policy, it is wise to type the revision on a new page, date the change, and retain the old policy in another book for future reference. Printing the policies on just one side of standard white paper is helpful, and placing them in a ring binder is ideal; any revisions can then be easily inserted.

The organization of the manual is crucial to its usefulness. You may wish to have a section containing the legal and foundational documents of the school, another containing policies related to the desired goals and outcomes of the school, another containing policies on how the governing board will function, another containing policies that describe the relationship between the board and the principal, and another containing policies that provide guidelines for administrative practice.

Within the various sections, decimal outlining is helpful. The regular method of outlining with Roman numerals, letters, and numbers will be too confining. By using decimals, items can be identified more precisely by simply adding another digit. For example, policies on leaves of absence can be outlined as follows:

## 1.2 Leaves of Absence

1.21 A leave of absence is any time a Christian school has an obligation to its employees when an extended illness or another condition exists that interrupts their employment. In such cases, an employee may apply for a leave of absence that, if approved, will enable the teacher to resume his or her employment.

### 1.211 Sickness or personal business

1.2111 Teachers are allowed ten days of annual leave without pay.



- 1.2112 Leave is cumulative from year to year to a maximum of forty days.
- 1.2113 Leave earned during the normal school year may not be used during the summer session, and the summer session does not have any leave benefits.
- 1.212 Bereavement leave
  - 1.2121 Teachers are allowed up to three days with pay for the death of an immediate family member.
  - 1.2122 An immediate family member is defined as a parent, grandparent, guardian, brother, sister, son, son-in-law, daughter, daughter-in-law, or any other relative living in the immediate household of the employee.

The above policy example will be helpful to both the principal and the teachers. Everyone will clearly understand the ground rules from the beginning. Policy must not become a tyrant; exceptions will occasionally be necessary. When an exception to a policy ruling is being considered, the board should always be kept informed. When board members are not aware that the principal is making an exception to a policy, they can become suspicious and can lose confidence in the principal.

What are the forces that cause policies to be adopted? Basically, policies grow out of need for answers concerning procedures, problems, situations, and issues. The board, because of annoyance with repeated questions, may suggest solutions to common school problems. If these solutions are found to be satisfactory, they are later written in policy form and adopted. The principal is most aware of areas in which policies are needed; the principal will frequently present a draft proposal to the board for study and possible adoption. Policy proposals may also come from teachers, students, parents, and occasionally from the school community and church.

Generally, formal board meetings allow little time for working on the development of a policy manual. Thus it may be necessary to set aside time for that task. You might find it helpful to schedule a weekend retreat when the board (and the administrative staff, if so desired) can get away and concentrate on developing policies. During this time there will be repeated revisions. This is to be expected.

There is no reason why the policy manual, once adopted, should not be available to the public. The fact that you are not afraid to share the school's policies will go a long way toward building confidence in the school.

Keep in mind that any policy not worth enforcing is not worth having, but it is not sacred. If it is not working, the board should review the policy and if advisable take it out of the policy manual. The important thing is to enforce consistently the policies the board adopts. If a principal is not comfortable with a particular policy, he or she should feel free to speak with the board about it, but in no case should the policy be ignored.

The board will want to review policies periodically because circumstances that led the board to establish certain policies may change. At such times it is perfectly proper to amend policies. A mark of a functioning board is that it will revise the policy manual periodically to reflect changes in the school and in the community it serves.

## Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the scriptural basis for having a policy manual, what to include in a policy manual, and how to go about the process of writing one. The policy manual is an essential document for successful Christian school administration. The school board adopts school policies after prayer and careful study and review of policy needs. The Christian school principal/headmaster enforces the adopted policies as the chief officer and employee of the board and as a faithful servant of the Lord.

## Checkpoints

- Determine what kind of school you want and develop your policies and procedures accordingly.
- Keep policy manual up-to-date.
- Effective policies and regulations must be precise and clear. They must express as succinctly as possible the board's decisions, desired results or outcomes, and the principal's directions.



# Chapter 9

## Teacher Supervision

When supervisors (headmasters) comment constructively on teachers' specific skills, they help teachers become more effective and improve teachers' morale. Yet, typically, a supervisor visits a teacher's classroom only once a year and makes only general comments about the teacher's performance. This relative lack of specific supervision contributes to the low morale, teacher absenteeism, and high faculty turnover.

—*What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning*  
U.S. Department of Education, January 30, 1986

### Teacher Management or Mismanagement?

One of the most important responsibilities that the principal must assume is classroom observation and supervision of the teachers. This is a task that is often overlooked. As a result, instead of providing teachers with the opportunity to grow in their professional skills, the lack of supervision may cause them to stagnate and lose confidence in their ability to teach. For a school to be making progress in its quest for excellence, the teacher must always be striving toward improving teaching techniques and strengthening weak areas. The principal must regularly schedule a sit-down visit in each classroom and hold a postobservation conference with the teacher. It is insulting to the classroom teacher for the headmaster/ principal to act as though he or she is totally aware of what is happening in the classroom after dropping in for just a few minutes.

It is critically important for the principal to observe each teacher in the classroom a minimum of two times each year. Each visit should be followed by a sit-down conference in which the principal reviews the objectives of the school, communicates expectations for classroom instruction and biblical integration, and evaluates the teacher's performance within the framework of the school's Christian philosophy of education. It is important for the principal and the teachers to view supervision as a tool of professional development and of continual growth and improvement. It is a means of encouraging the teachers and of helping them to become ultimately better at what they do. When the teacher has this level of confidence in the principal, the entire process becomes a very positive and affirming experience.

In most schools the principal functions as the supervisor. The supervisor must carry out his or her responsibility in a spirit of humility, exercising great care and

discernment when pointing out the strengths and the weaknesses of the teacher, who usually appreciates suggestions for improvement.

## Teacher Orientation

There are a number of approaches the principal can take toward the ongoing and effective supervision of the teachers. However, teacher supervision really begins during the hiring process. During the very first interview the prospective teacher should hear what is expected in the classroom.

1. Go over the teacher's position profile or job description so that the teacher knows what the job responsibilities involve. (See toolbox: Teacher Orientation.)
2. Clearly define, verbally and in writing, all expectations so that the teacher can strive to meet them.
3. Hold an orientation meeting for all new teachers prior to the teachers' first day of school. This orientation should involve
  - a thorough introduction to the Christian philosophy of education.
  - a brief report on the history of the school.
  - a review of the curriculum goals.
  - a report on the services offered by the guidance office.
  - an explanation of what is available to teachers in the library and the media center.
  - a clear description of the chain of command.

Allow plenty of time for questions and a time of fellowship for team building. This is a time in which relationships and responsibilities can be clearly outlined and communicated.

The time you spend in a proper orientation of your teachers will be time well invested. Your teachers will know from the beginning that you are interested in them, what the school is all about, what you expect of them, that you are well organized, and that you care about the teachers as individuals.

## Self-Evaluation

Self-evaluation is important to any teacher. Each year, during in-service days, teachers can be given a self-evaluation form. The form gives the teachers an opportunity to think through strengths and weaknesses and to develop a plan to deal with any weak areas. (See toolbox: Teacher Self-Evaluation.) The same form can be used throughout the year during the supervisor-teacher conferences.

## Lesson Plans

Teacher supervision also includes checking written lesson plans. Preparing written plans forces teachers to consider where they are going in the classroom and their specific lesson objectives and procedures. When the principal checks plans periodically, the teacher will consider them important to good classroom instruction. The principal should use his or her knowledge of the teacher's plans

when visiting with the teacher. It encourages teachers to know that the supervisor is knowledgeable regarding their educational objectives for the class.

## Classroom Observation

Formal classroom visits by the principal need to be planned and scheduled with teachers well in advance. It is a good idea to prepare a master schedule of classroom visits for the upcoming year. Nothing should stand in the way of these classroom visits. For the first visit of the school year, it is courteous to ask teachers for an appropriate time to visit their classroom. This arrangement indicates that the principal respects the teachers and considers their time and schedule important. Supervision time during the early part of the school year should focus on the new or less-experienced teachers. After the first scheduled visits, unannounced visits are acceptable. When the time for the visit is established, the principal should tell the teacher that he or she will quietly enter the room, take his or her place appropriately, take notes on what is observed, and leave quietly.

At the visit, it is a good idea to pray just before entering the classroom. Barging into a classroom with one's mind in high gear over the problems of the day is not a good beginning and is not likely to lead to a productive end. A quiet, prayerful heart will help ensure an objective analysis of what is taking place in the classroom.

The postobservation conference with the teacher should take place as soon as possible after the in-class observation. The supervisor should begin the conference with prayer and ask the teacher whether the class performance had been typical. If for some reason it was not typical, the principal can factor that into his or her evaluative comments. Then written comments along with general impressions of what went on in the classroom should be reviewed. At this point, it can be beneficial to ask the teacher what he or she sensed as strengths and weaknesses during the visit. Many times the teacher will mention a weakness that the principal observed; this gives the principal the opportunity to be specific in suggesting ways to improve in a specific area. This discussion leads to prayerful and thoughtful sharing of other needed improvements and of recommendations on how to proceed. In the compilation of any written comments, the supervisor must be mindful of the teacher's background, training, temperament, and level of maturity. Taking these into consideration will help the supervisor make remarks in language that is heard, received, and appreciated.

The supervisor should dwell on the positive and discuss the weak areas in a way that will not intimidate the teacher. The teacher should be given ample time to ask questions or to clarify the supervisor's observations. This conference should not be rushed, but it should begin and end on time. Any comments made by the teacher should be noted on the written report, and both the teacher and the supervisor should sign the report. The conference should be closed with prayer. It is beneficial to give copies of the signed evaluation to the teacher and to place a copy in the teacher's professional file in the office. These written evaluations will be factored in during the decision process for renewal of the teacher's contract.



Teachers need positive reinforcement and frequent feedback. A mistake that principals often make is to wait until after a teacher has erred before having any communication with that teacher. The supervisor should watch for areas of strength and for occasions when a teacher excels and then should thank the teacher for a job well done. Later, when the supervisor must point out a weakness, the teacher will more readily accept it because the previous commendation gained the teacher's attention and respect. The supervisor should make it a point to periodically mention something positive in writing about each teacher. (See toolbox: Classroom Observation Checklist.)

## Learning Opportunities

Part of teacher supervision is planning opportunities for teachers to sharpen their skills. To be effective, an in-service program must be planned carefully and thoroughly. Quality must be the trademark of each session. Each opportunity for in-service growth must be in harmony with the school's philosophy and be geared toward specific areas that need improvement.

A good place to start is to ask the faculty what areas they would like to see addressed and discussed. This step can be very useful, aiding the principal in planning such activities. Here are some examples:

1. Encourage teachers to take advanced study where possible by taking courses that are offered by a local university in the evening or during the long break. There may be an opportunity for courses by video, through correspondence, or via the Internet. Many school boards contribute to the cost of such study, realizing the importance of tangibly encouraging the teacher to continue learning.
2. Encourage teachers to attend ACSI-sponsored conferences in your area; there may also be conferences sponsored by the local ministry of education. If possible the school should budget for the cost of registration and expenses. This is often the best investment you can make in your teachers.
3. Encourage teachers to visit other schools. What an encouragement it can be for a less-experienced teacher to observe a master teacher at work! It can prevent myopic vision from limiting your teachers' methods to "the way we've always done it." Of course, in order to make such visits possible, the school must invest in providing for substitute teachers.
4. Encourage teachers professionally and spiritually by having regular, well-planned faculty meetings. These should be times for the faculty to think through problems and to grapple with educational issues. Meetings should begin promptly and conclude on time. Do not spend the time making announcements or reading information that could have been put on the faculty bulletin board or sent out in a written staff memo. Outside speakers, audio and video recordings, teacher demonstrations, discussions of books assigned for faculty members to read, and discussion groups can be effective means of making faculty meetings productive and helpful to the teacher.
5. Encourage teachers to become readers. Each school, regardless of size, should

have a professional library for the teachers. Much can be told about a teacher by what he or she is reading. Periodically, books, journals, and tapes should be added to the library, and teachers should be encouraged to take advantage of them. It can be helpful to select a teacher to give a brief review of a recent book or a professional journal article. The principal must take the lead in this area by continually recommending books to teachers, lending personal books, and passing along ideas.

The entire process of teacher supervision must be carried out in a positive spirit. The body life of the school must be that of a caring community that practices the “one anothers” of Scripture. As followers of Christ, your faculty and staff are models of His character and should have the common goal of making an impact on the lives of students—for this life and for eternity. It is easy for a faculty to be infected with the critical spirit of one individual or a small group of individuals. The principal must be proactive in rooting out the causes of a critical spirit. The principal should ask the Lord daily to cleanse him or her of any negative thoughts so that he or she can give the kind of counsel from which the teachers will grow. The principal can help teachers by providing the climate that allows teachers to come to the principal at any time for help without being made to feel incompetent or unprofessional.

## Conclusion

May God guide the principal with depth of insight and true wisdom as he or she works through the evaluation of teachers. What could be more rewarding than to have teachers grow spiritually and professionally because of the principal’s willingness to invest time in their lives? Teachers will be eternally grateful for the evaluation, and students’ lives will be eternally changed. While this may seem to be a foreign concept for many school principals, we challenge them to take this area of responsibility seriously in discharging the responsibilities of the position of principal.

## Checkpoints

- Make teachers aware of the principal’s expectations beginning with the first interview with a new teacher.
- Set clear parameters for teacher observation and classroom visits.
- View teacher evaluation as an opportunity for the ongoing development of the staff in helping them grow and be the best teachers they can be.
- Plan for the orientation of new teachers and a beginning-of-the-year orientation for all teachers.
- Consider the varied learning opportunities that are available for the professional development of the faculty. The principal’s goal in evaluation is to help teachers grow professionally.
- Encourage teachers to periodically complete the personal self-evaluation and to establish goals for growth.



# Chapter 10

## School Curriculum

### **A Choice Made by Default or Design?**

Although the majority of the school day revolves around the curriculum, decisions related to curriculum development seldom receive the time they deserve. Typically, this is true for at least two reasons.

First, in the midst of all there is to do, a total curriculum program can be purchased, allowing the busy director time for more important tasks. In many cases curriculum will be dictated by the government, and the school will purchase material from government-approved bookshops or government printing houses.

Second, most school personnel lack a clear understanding of a biblical philosophy of curriculum development and its implementation in the school. Thus, there is a reluctance to thoroughly analyze the curriculum selected.

### **What is the relationship between the school's philosophy and its curriculum?**

We hear a lot of talk today about the "information highway." For a well-resourced school, the luxury of a computer lab will allow you and your students to search the Web for a great amount of current resource material for the various units of study in the curriculum. The base of information and knowledge is increasing at an astounding pace. The implication for the school's curriculum program is clear. Because the school cannot teach all that is available, someone will have to make decisions about what will be selected from an overwhelming body of knowledge and what will be passed over in preference to that which is considered to be more important or appropriate. These decisions must be made in accordance with the school's biblical philosophy.

Through the school's curriculum, the student is introduced to each subject area. In each subject, the school must identify what is most important. The school will have to make some critical decisions regarding what to accept and what to reject. How the school makes these selections is directly related to the values and philosophy the school holds.

It should be remembered that education is never value neutral. All efforts to guide the experiences of the young assume a preference for certain values. Groups and individuals accept the challenges that inevitably come in the founding and maintaining of schools because they are convinced that the school will shape

children in ways that would not be possible if they were left to themselves. The values the school chooses will determine how the children are shaped.

- If the school's philosophy reflects a secular value system, then its students will gravitate to the "things of this world."
- If the school's philosophy is founded upon the Word of God, its students will learn to see the world from God's perspective.

### **What is the role of the teacher in the selection and implementation of the school's curriculum?**

"A teacher affects eternity," wrote Henry Adams. "He can never tell where his influence stops." Long after the textbooks have been forgotten, the influence of the teacher will still be felt upon the life of the student. Completing a specific grade or level in school, with all its required courses and assignments, is certainly a milestone in the student's life. However, teachers are "living milestones." A teacher can be a point of reference against which a child can measure his or her own pace of learning. It is the responsibility of the teacher to be a road marker, reminding students that other travelers have made this same journey. It is the teacher's duty to be a guide who is trusted and upon whose experience students can rely.

The biblical philosophy, expertise, and experience of the teacher are the most valuable assets in the selection and implementation of the school's curriculum. While it may be easier to rely on a publisher's sales representative to advise you on your curriculum decisions, this is not the most prudent approach. The teaching faculty should be an integral part of the curriculum decision-making process.

Not only should the teachers be involved in the curriculum-selection process, but the curriculum that is chosen should not get in the way of the teacher-student relationship. Remember, textbooks don't teach students—teachers do! The school's curriculum, both textbooks and supplementary materials, provide the structure for learning. But, as the noted Christian educator Dr. James Braley said, "The teacher is the living curriculum." If there is any single ingredient that is paramount in the entire process of learning, it is the teacher.

### **Should secular textbooks be used in a Christian school?**

In the implementation of its philosophy, the Christian school must likewise make textbook selections. Although many Christian organizations including ACSI have moved into the area of providing textbooks and other aids specifically for the Christian school, there is still a scarcity of Christian textbooks and workbooks. Sometimes, choices will need to be made from textbooks available in the subject area. In some instances, secular textbooks will be considered for adoption. If secular textbooks are selected, the school's leadership should clearly understand the implications of the decision.

Dr. D. L. March in his annual report as president of Boston University said, "When we leave religion out of our educational program, we practically announce that

life can be explained without God, which is the same thing as saying that God does not exist or is of no consequence.” The secular publisher will share neither the Christian school’s biblical philosophy nor its spiritual sensitivity. The clearest concern of the publisher is to protect the good will of his or her potential market, and the Christian school is certainly not a major part of the market. In the case of selecting a secular textbook or in places where the government mandates textbooks, teachers should work together to develop a course outline that provides specific material and recommendations for biblical integration.

As was previously noted, the ever-increasing knowledge base forces specific decisions as to which content will be included and excluded in a series. The secular publisher works from a value base that is very different from that of the Christian school. A recent study of curriculum materials from major publishing companies indicates that they “mirror” the society that surrounds them. A number of social issues related to homosexuality, abortion, gay marriage, and certain political agendas have filtered their way in because they reflect some of the serious social issues of society today. These certainly do not reflect a biblical worldview or a biblical philosophy of education.

There are, however, some advantages in the Christian school’s use of secular textbooks:

- It provides opportunities for the student to develop critical thinking skills as biblical knowledge is applied to the content of the secular material.
- It provides opportunities for the student to encounter non-Christian ideas, as represented in the secular materials, in a context where they can be fully discussed from a Christian perspective.
- It provides opportunities for the student to learn to be selective of the good things in this world (for example, the arts).
- It provides opportunities for the Christian school to broaden the alternative texts available for specific courses, especially at the secondary level.

### **What are the considerations for selecting the right curriculum?**

Remember, the textbook typically structures much of the content of the formal curriculum in the average classroom. It influences the sequence of experiences, the content emphasis, the teaching methods used, and the evaluation of student work. Curriculum development is a perpetual process for the forward-looking school. There should be some systematic process for bringing different parts of the curriculum under study each year. This will keep the curriculum up-to-date and will prevent the school from having to make massive changes in curriculum during any one school year.

The following is a suggested curriculum review checklist:

- Review the table of contents and the scope and sequence. Are the content, skills, and emphases appropriate for the age level and subject area?
- Evaluate the philosophy of the materials. If it is published by a Christian organization, does its biblical philosophy reflect that of your school community?



If it is published by a secular organization, how will the secular value system be addressed from a biblical perspective in the classroom?

- Assess the professionalism of the curriculum. How were the materials developed? Have they been thoroughly field-tested? Does the teacher edition provide a variety of methodologies for classroom use? Are testing procedures suggested?
- Carefully review the student edition of the materials. Are the materials “pupil friendly”—for example, are they at the appropriate reading level, are they interesting, do they incorporate a variety of activities, are they colorful?
- Assess the impact of the curriculum on the school’s testimony. Is the curriculum current and reflective of the school community? Does the curriculum communicate academic excellence to parents and supporters? Does the curriculum properly prepare students for academic assessment (for example, standardized testing or university entrance)?

Christian schools should be committed to the finest possible academic program, one that embodies a uniquely biblical philosophy and goals. A strategic part of this program will include a well-developed curriculum that includes well-chosen textbooks and teaching aids. We must be willing to take the time necessary to study this area of our school carefully. The Lord’s guidance and wisdom will be necessary if we are to build a curriculum that is truly Christian.

Adapted from *The New and Young School Manual*  
Association of Christian Schools International  
Dr. Ollie Gibbs

## Checkpoints

- Choose curriculum to be used (Christian, secular, government-mandated) after much careful research.
- Encourage teachers to be part of the decision-making process.
- Train teachers to be able to integrate biblical principles in all subject areas.
- Help teachers realize their importance as the living curriculum.
- Be sure that all curriculum used embodies the philosophy of the school.

# Conclusion

We know that it is impossible for one book to answer all the questions that will arise as you walk through the process of starting a Christian school; however, it is our prayer that the information contained in these pages will provide you with the guidance you need in making a solid start.

In Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 78, God instructs the people of Israel to teach their children the laws and precepts of the Lord—and not just for the current generation but for generations to come. Regardless of your geographical location, God has strategically placed you in the key position of beginning a Christian school. Don't think of it as a school that will serve only the current generation of students in your community, but think of it as a school that will serve the generations to come and that will outlast your legacy as one of the founders of the school. That is why it is important to start right—you are building for the future.

Every project that is worth doing is worth doing right. When an architect draws the plans for a new building, he must give careful attention to the details of his plans. One mistake in the planning process may result in a faulty building or one that will not serve the purpose for which it was designed. When planning a Christian school we must remember that since His name is in the word *Christian*, the school will reflect Christ. Your planning should be such that when the school is developed it reflects a level of excellence worthy of the name of Christ.

A vibrant Christian school will not happen by accident; it requires careful planning, prayer, and sound judgment as you map out your strategies for an organization that will reflect the glory of God. May you seek carefully His guidance in every decision and follow His leading as you plan for the future of raising up a generation of young people who will honor God in all they do.

As you establish the foundations of your new Christian school, you are also building the lives of generations to come who will carry forth the message of the gospel to a needy world.

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Editor

