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# INSIDER



An International Division Member Connection, June 2025

## Fellow International Educator,

Teachers are control freaks. I should know I was one.

I'm not saying control is wrong. Christian teachers are given an immense responsibility to lead students to learn, and that means controlling and owning the space and everything that goes on in it: the wall decor, the plans, the pace, the tone, the subject matter, the assessments, the order, and discipline – in other words, every minute of every class. All of this requires excellent planning and execution.

Of course, this is good and right. And let's not forget what a privilege it is to teach about [God and His great world](#). However, for someone as driven as me, that level of control and ownership without limits can go sideways. Due to the skills I first developed in the classroom, I was soon invited up the leadership ladder at Black Forest Academy, assuming one leadership role after another. This eventually culminated in my appointment as Director in my 12th year of service. All was going well until... about four years into headship, my freakish levels of control finally caught up with me, and I had a stress-related collapse.

The short version of that collapse is that while I was doing a good job, I was attempting to control and own too much to the point where I was working hard for God but leaving little left for Him. Eventually, I was sidelined for several months with a bout of vertigo, exacerbated by exhaustion.



This sidelining turned out to be a tremendous gift. You can read the [entire story](#) and what I learned at [my blog](#), but let me share this one quick lesson with you.

While on a solo retreat during my months of recovery, I became very aware of how controlling I was and how, by owning everything, I was leaving little time for prayer and God. This was when I started to pray differently. 1) Every morning, I began by returning the school I led back to God, reminding Him, as Moses did in [Exodus 33:12-13](#), that these people, this school, were His, not mine. 2) I also started to open my hands, palms up, imagining the school resting in my hands and, as David did in [Psalm 142:1-2](#), lifting it all to God, saying aloud, “It’s not mine, it’s yours. I give it back to you. Help me to serve you and your people well.” This was a significant part of my healing, as I put God back in charge of my work and life.

How about you? Before your appropriate control and ownership cross a line, take time daily to lift your classroom, your department, and your responsibilities to God and give them back to Him and rest in His peace.

Blessings to you wherever you are in the world,

Tim, for the [international school team](#)

[Tim Shuman, Senior Director, International Division](#)

[Chealsea Allen, International Schools Activity & Events Coordinator](#)

[Michael McNabb, Director of Accreditation, International Division](#)

[Kimberly Park, Accreditation Specialist, International Division](#)

[Caitlin Taylor, Administrative Assistant, International Division](#)



### Share Your Story

We're always on the lookout for inspirational stories about Christian schools around the world. How is God moving in your school community? Please take a moment to share your story with us by filling out [this form](#).

### Fall 2025 Events

Join us for a dynamic lineup of events and professional development opportunities in Fall 2025! Connect with educators and school leaders, engage in meaningful learning experiences, and enhance your teaching practices. Together, we'll explore fresh ideas and

strategies to inspire the next generation of learners. Don't miss out on this chance to grow and make an impact! Learn more at [acsi.org/events](https://www.acsi.org/events).

### Your Account Information

Keeping your account information up to date will help prospective families find you, and you'll receive accurate information about your school in our online member directory, [Find a School](#). Log in to [your.acsi.org](https://your.acsi.org) and update your account today! View the [User Guide](#) for assistance and [contact us](#) if you have any additional questions!

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## The Ideal Portrait of a Christian High School Graduate

By Dr. Larry Taylor, ACSI President & CEO

It's that time of year once again. As the sun sets on the familiar halls that echo with laughter and locker doors clanging shut, a mix of emotions hangs in the air. High school graduation, a milestone marking the transition from adolescence to adulthood, is an event brimming with nostalgia, anticipation, and the promise of new beginnings.

The significance of this moment in time is undeniable, as it involves looking back over a lifetime so far and anticipating the future. As diplomas are granted, graduates stand on the threshold of a world brimming with endless possibilities. The future beckons with unseen adventures, promising new friendships to be forged, new challenges to be overcome, and new dreams to be pursued.

Graduation ceremonies are a testament to the dedication and hard work put forth by each graduate. Christian schools have embraced this opportunity to nurture and guide the students God has entrusted to their care. The hope and goal are that regardless of the length of time—one year or twelve—they have been laying a strong foundation by helping them grow in knowledge of academics and the Bible and mature in their faith and relationship with Jesus Christ.

Continue reading [here](#).

## Upcoming International Events

- The 2025 [Job Fair Tour](#) dates are set, and the tour lineup is in place. See you or your staff recruiter at Liberty, Grand Canyon, and Dallas Baptist from 28 October to 4 November.
- Teachers and Leaders in Latin America, take a look at the exciting plans for the [ABI Conference](#) coming up on 12-15 November in the Dominican Republic. You do not want to miss this first-of-its-kind gathering of national, international, and American teachers and leaders from Accredited, Bilingual, and International schools. [Dr. Jon Eckert](#), of Baylor University, is our featured speaker.
- [ICEC Asia 2025](#) registration is now open. Join us, from 26 to 29 November, on the oceanside campus of Dalat International School. We've secured special conference rates at the beautiful [Flamingo By the Beach Penang](#) hotel, just a short walk from Dalat. We are delighted to announce [Dr. David I. Smith](#) from Calvin University as our featured keynote speaker. Our pre-conference courses will enhance your experience. Are you ready to share your insights with fellow educators? Workshop submissions are being accepted [here](#).
- Take advantage of the special promo rate for [PFO2Go](#) between now and July 1. Sign up your incoming new staff and save. Read some of the course [reviews](#).
- FUTURE Conference dates
  - 26-29 April 2026. International School Leader Conference Europe. Tentative: Dubrovnik, Croatia
  - 17-20 March 2027. International Christian Educator Conference Europe. Prague, CZ
  - 17-20 November 2027. International Christian Educator Conference Asia. Tentative: Chiang Mai, Thailand

## News, Articles, & Other Ideas

- ACSI's most recent posts and resources:
  - Learn [how to connect with ACSI](#) this month with a video from Dr. Larry Taylor!
  - The first edition of [ACSI's Christian School Strategist](#) is chock-full of helpful articles for your business manager, advancement leads, operational leaders, and school head.
  - Enjoy ACSI's latest [Research in Brief](#) for Spring 2025

- [School's Over, But We Didn't Finish Everything—And That's a Good Thing](#) with Dr. Lynn Swaner
  - [Navigating AI in Christian Schools](#) is a resource co-authored by ACSI and Cardus.
  - See the complete catalog of free ACSI Videos [here](#).
- [Michael and Kim Essenburg](#) care for international Christian schools and love to share flourishing tips and ideas with you.
  - [Leaders, what helps you be concise and clear?](#)
  - [How do you ensure your international Christian school policies are effective?](#)
  - [Leaders, how can you help your colleagues keep growing?](#)
  - [What do flourishing boarding staff at international Christian schools consistently experience?](#)
- I highly recommend Matt Mann's new Substack, Better Simpler, for international school leaders. His first issue explains his thinking behind [Better, Simpler Schools](#). Please share this with your team.
- Have you ordered Michele Phoenix's, "[Pieces of Purple: The Greatness, Grit, and Grace of Growing Up MK](#)"?
- [Grading Writing Just Got Weird](#) is one of the most helpful things I've read for detecting AI cheating for writing assignments.
- Dr. Mosbacker's latest post is much needed for all of us. [Make Time to Think: Why Every Christian Leader Needs Mental White Space](#). Use this for a discussion with your department.
- Leaders, you need to grab this free resource: [Mapping Global Growth in the International Schools Market](#). It offers a fascinating glimpse into the world of international schooling.
- Get ready for oohs and awes, [Owls in Towels](#) is cuteness overload.

### Head of School Openings Only

- Christian English School of Torino, Italy. [Learn more here](#).
- First Baptist Christian School, Cayman Islands. [Learn more here](#).
- Grace International School, Bangladesh. [Learn more here](#).
- Hillcrest International School, Indonesia. [Learn more here](#).



- Hope Academy, Central Asia. [Learn more here.](#)
- International Academy of St. Petersburg, Russia. [Learn more here.](#)
- Lighthouse Primary and Secondary School, Mauritius . [Learn more here](#) .
- Mountainview Christian School, Indonesia. [Learn more here.](#)
- Oaxaca Christian School, Mexico. [Learn more here.](#)

If you have an opening for a head of school position, please let me know. Check our [member school vacancy page](#) and the [ACSI Career Center](#). If you are interested in a position at an international school, check out the latest non-USA opportunities [here](#). Check out the latest ACSI [Job Flash](#) that goes out to thousands.

### Your Reading List for the Summer

Summer is on the horizon and we know the importance of utilizing this time to refill your cup and invest in your own professional development! We compiled a list of recommended books that our educators are reading for you to browse for your own summer reading list:

[“Beholding: Deepening Our Experience in God”](#) by [Strahan Coleman](#)—“This book was critical in contributing to my understanding of silence and solitude in surrendering to God and allowing him to transform me into being all He has called me to be as His child, a father, husband, and leader. A key insight is that life in the Holy Spirit is similar to riding the current of a river. There is an active role that

### An Exemplary Example: Dalat International School

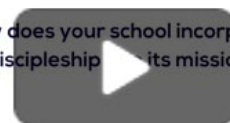
By Josh Worden

There are a handful of impressive, unique, and defining qualities of Dalat International School (DIS) in Penang, Malaysia: it boasts a nearly 100-year history, it is no longer in the city it is named after, and maybe most notably, it is ACSI’s first international school to earn exemplary accreditation status.

DIS was a boarding school for missionary kids when it was founded in 1929 in Dalat, Vietnam, by the Christian and Missionary Alliance. In 1965, with the Vietnam War raging, the U.S. military gave the school 48 hours to pack up everything they could and head to Thailand.

### How Does Your School Incorporate Discipleship Into Its Mission?

How does your school incorporate discipleship into its mission?



In this video, Dr. Brian Dougherty discusses how a school can successfully incorporate discipleship into its mission.

### Watch More Videos From ACSI



most of us play, like swimming: Bible study and prayer. But, there is also a more passive role, like floating: silence and solitude. So many of us neglect the passive role, and it inhibits us from being transformed in the fullness of what God has in store for us. Deepened my walk with the Lord.”

“Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work” by Timothy Keller—“‘Every Good Endeavor,’ by Tim Keller, articulates a deeper purpose to work, a sense of call and vocation in our profession. Essentially, Keller is describing a Theology of Work that the reader can understand and begin to apply in any context, in any industry.”

[Continue reading here.](#)

“We still have a number of alumni who remember those days,” said Shawna Wood, the Head of School at DIS. “They call themselves the ‘evac-pack.’”

After six months sharing space with an international school in Thailand, the school moved to Malaysia. Within a few years, administrators realized a return to Vietnam would never materialize. They moved to Penang in 1971, rented a campus from a convent, and have remained there ever since.

The last few decades have not included as many chaotic changes, but that has allowed the school to grow in other ways.

[Continue reading here.](#)



# mission

## ADVANCEMENT



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### **The Ideal Portrait of a Christian High School Graduate Continued**

An individual's character, work ethic, and academic abilities are not fully developed at the age of 18, and maturity is a lifelong process. However, there are fundamental training strategies that can enhance the likelihood of a child adopting a desired belief system, cultivating effective learning habits, and embodying Christ-like character traits. While parents are the primary influencers in shaping these qualities, schools also play a significant role in their development.

Every graduating senior is a unique creation in the image of God, yet schools aim to instill certain desired outcomes in all of them. During my time as head of school at Prestonwood Christian Academy in Texas, we prayerfully aspired for our graduating seniors to demonstrate the foundational desired outcomes listed below:

1. Reverence for God is the beginning point of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). Without reverence and recognition of God, then education is essentially secular. Learning to think and discern (Hebrews 5:14) as a mature believer in Christ is undergirded by authentic respect and love for our Lord.
2. An Eternal Perspective is interdependent with reverence. This type of perspective gives us purpose in our work, and it develops a strong work ethic because we know and understand that we are working to please and honor God (Colossians 3:23). The Latin phrase on our school crest, Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam (for God's greater glory), frames our motives.
3. Humility is then cultivated when one recognizes that our lives are about Him; we are a 'serving-as-His' leader. Recognizing that God has bestowed intellect, talents, and gifts upon us takes the focus off us and rightfully places it on our Lord. This compels us to demonstrate the love and attitude of Jesus Christ to all people, characterized by selflessness, servanthood (Philippians 2:2-11), and a lifestyle of obedience to seeking first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33).



4. The process of learning, or scholarship, is conditioned by reverence, eternal perspective, and humility. The Christian liberal arts environment nurtures the mind to become eager to learn, think, and analyze. All knowledge and every academic discipline are appreciated, and not for a 'grade' per se, but because of the very process of learning—scholastic excellence becomes a commitment to disciple the mind. Using our mind to not only magnify God but to serve as His ambassador in areas of law, business, medicine, engineering, education, ministry, and any assignment God calls us to is an act of obedience and reverence. The development of a biblical worldview is the fruit of this process.

5. Rigor, high expectations, and accountability complement the entire learning environment as students grow accustomed to striving for excellence. Problem-solving, thinking, critical analysis, and synthesis strengthen the mind and become natural thought processes. The apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthians to strengthen their minds (2 Corinthians 10:5), including all systems of philosophy, opinions, and powers of reason being subject to the Word of God. A culture of rigor serves as a catalyst to pursue excellence in every area of one's life

Schools, savor every moment of this celebration as we witness God's reflection in the eyes of each graduating senior. The memories of high school will forever hold a special place in their hearts. To the graduates: may your futures be as bright as your spirits, and may you always seek to glorify your Heavenly Father on whatever path He leads you!

### **An Exemplary Example Continued**

DIS has been accredited through ACSI since the 1980s, so the desire to become an exemplary accredited school was to push the school to another level.

"We always want to improve," Wood said, who is also on the ACSI Commission on Accreditation. "We decided it would give us direction for what things to change."

That sentiment proved to be true. As DIS made changes to meet exemplary accreditation status, the school leadership saw positive results.

"We needed to develop an evaluation and a growth program for all our staff, not just instructive and administrative staff," Wood said. "That was really needed. It helped everyone feel more supported. It made us go back and write detailed job descriptions and evaluation tools for every position."

The school also began focusing more on its alumni base and establishing better procedural documentation.

Now, Wood recommends that many schools should consider taking an additional challenge beyond the Inspire protocol.

“The exemplary protocol is a really good way to give you some ideas,” Wood said. “There are a lot of requirements for your school board, your head of school, and your financial situation. It will really help with the long-term stability of your school.”

Along with its academic excellence and growth mindset, the DIS leadership and community have stepped up in recent years to address much-needed campus improvements.

Most of the original buildings were completely demolished and replaced with new, state-of-the-art facilities that are a wonder to behold for any visitor and a significant boon to student achievement and engagement.

These include upgraded classrooms, a new high school building, a new middle school building, a new dormitory on the beachfront, and a state-of-the-art auditorium with seating for nearly 500.

These campus improvements not only complement DIS’s Exemplary accreditation status but also enable them to host various Christian gatherings on their campus.

The first major conference to be hosted on campus is ACSI’s International Christian Educator Conference (ICEC Asia), scheduled for November 2025.

ACSI is expecting 500 educators from member international schools across Asia to gather on DIS’s beautiful campus for professional growth and spiritual enrichment. Dalat International School is blessed to be a blessing (Psalm 67:1-2).

### **Your Summer Reading List Continued**

“Leading Insights” – ACSI’s “Leading Insights” series highlights the latest thinking on best practices for Christian school educators in areas of key importance in their schools. Each monograph in the series draws on leading experts, as well as Christian school perspectives and voices, to share fresh ideas for advancing your school’s Christ-centered mission in an important area of focus.

“Mind Shift: It Doesn’t Take a Genius to Think Like One” by Erwin Raphael McManus – Throughout his thirty years of work as a mindset expert and leadership coach, Erwin Raphael McManus has been obsessed with these questions: Why do some people succeed despite having all the odds stacked against them? How do others achieve the unthinkable, only to watch their lives slip away? Are there mental structures for failure and success?

“Rethinking Discipleship” by Dr. Alan Pue – Dr. Pue explores the importance of shepherding a child’s heart by looking at the biblical principles that should drive behavior, values, and beliefs. Plus, he details how a joint approach of home, church, and school is foundational to Christ-centered education and weaving faith into every aspect of life.

“Safely Home” by Randy Alcorn – Is this the day I die? Li Quan asks himself this question daily, knowing that he might be killed for practicing his faith. American businessman Ben Fielding has no idea what his brilliant former college roommate is facing in China. He expects

his old friend has fulfilled his dream of becoming a university professor. But when they are reunited in China after twenty years, both men are shocked at what they discover about each other. Thrown together in an hour of encroaching darkness, both must make choices that will determine not only the destinies of two men, but two families, two nations, and two worlds.

“Teaching Redemptively” by Donovan L. Graham – You have a divine calling to reveal who Jesus is and what His Kingdom is like to the students God has entrusted to you with grace and truth. No matter where or what you are teaching, you have an incredible opportunity to participate in God's larger story and make His Kingdom visible. In the third edition of “Teaching Redemptively,” Donovan reviews perspectives to guide teachers in best practices and illustrates ways to teach for Kingdom transformation. Beyond techniques, he encourages you to deepen your personal intimacy with God so that you can thrive in spiritual health and well-being.

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