

WHAT ABOUT A QUALITY EDUCATION?

Many of you know that Champion Christian School espouses a high quality academic education as a significant part of who we are and what we hope to do in the context of educating your children. We believe that to fulfill our mission as a strong Christian school we must be a strong school academically. Our outcomes need to be children who are functioning at their highest potential from an educational perspective. We take that responsibility seriously, and as a distinct part of our Christian ministry.

However, the story can't end there. Just as we talked about last week, there is no way to separate values from education. And fortunately there is no need to choose between Christian values and a high quality education! In fact, as we established in last week's articles, if an education doesn't operate from a Christian worldview it literally cannot be a good education. It is something like saying we can take love out of a marriage and still have a good marriage! The truths of the world around us are simply that; Truth, whether we believe them or not. The fact that $2 + 2 = 4$ is not simply a fact. It is a fact that is based on a much larger and significant truth about the world around us. It is a fact that will never change and in the bigger context, one that reflects the unchanging character of God. That would be discussed as a Christian integration component of one of our math classes and Christian integration is another article in itself! In any case, to simply teach $2 + 2 = 4$ without the bigger and more important context is indeed educational folly!

So, if we assume for a minute that you cannot take Christian values out of a high quality education, let's focus then a little bit on what are the other components of a quality education. We need to translate that into decision-making points, as parents reevaluate whether that is happening in their child's life. There are very few people who would not want a high quality education for their child. What is important, though, is to understand what is 'high quality'.

There are a couple of things that are important to us at Champion. When we define 'high quality' we mean several specific things. First of all, we mean that the education that a child receives shapes them, takes who they essentially are, their gifts and abilities and gives them opportunities to maximize that potential. We have to be careful when we talk about 'high quality'. 'High quality' doesn't mean that all CCS students will become Rhodes scholars. What it does mean is if your student has the ability to become a Rhodes scholar, a CCS education gives your student the opportunity and stimulus to become that. So, **the potential of students is the first component of producing a high quality education.**

If a student is more gifted mechanically, and their talents and abilities call them to be doing something with their hands, then those are the areas in which we need to prepare them. That is also a 'high quality' education.

In those contexts, assessment and understanding of child development, giftedness, learning disabilities, emotional issues that affect children, and learning styles; all of those things become highly relevant to a school that wants to produce a highly educated student. One of the things that we work hard on at Champion is to communicate and work with parents to understand their children, to understand how God has made them, how He has wired them, and what are their expectations and limitations. Which of those limitations are redeemable? Which are those things that we need to learn to deal with and shape in terms of their identities? Which of those things do we need to look to for God's healing and redemption?

The **second component** of 'high quality' in our minds is the ability to then understand how to shape the uniquenesses of children in the context of where they should go next. It is one thing to know that you want your child to learn calculus. It's another thing to know how to take them from addition to calculus in an orderly and sequential way that is appropriate for their ability to learn. We could try to teach a three-year-old calculus all that we want, but the capacity for learning and the understanding of those concepts just isn't going

to happen. So, understanding the educational process, educational theory, and developmental psychology is critical to providing an environment that will allow education to happen. Unfortunately, it is not a science that is defined completely in today's academia. Teachers, faculty members and administrators at Champion continue to learn and grow in interpreting our experiences with a variety of ideas that are being generated about education, both in the secular and the Christian arenas.

The **third component** that defines a high quality education is measurable results and evaluation. The ability to get honest feedback that is specific, accurate, and also subjective in other ways, and to try to understand that is important. You will find Champion looking at ways to do that both objectively and subjectively. Some of the things that we do in that process are:

1. Evaluate achievement scores in the context of individual abilities, group and national norms.
2. Follow-up with alumni, to look at how the products of our education have performed in college arenas.
3. To talk with people who leave our school and go to other schools about those experiences both on a short term, for example, one year after leaving, and on a longer term basis.
4. We utilize consultants and other professionals to help us see freshly how we and our children are doing.
5. We belong to professional organizations, spend time reading and looking at research that helps us to understand the issues that we face every day. Part of the accreditation process is to constantly be improving and working on goals.

Evaluating all those contexts and things is very complex. And the idea of producing a quality education is more than just taking one aspect of that and looking at it. Although as a whole you will find that our achievement scores are at least one year above the national norms (in many cases several years above), we also need to recognize that part of that is about our students' ability levels. Other questions to ask are, "How are learning disabled students achieving and improving their achievement scores?" "How do our very brilliant students achieve according to their abilities, etc." Or, "Do our gifted students have appropriate social skills?" You'll find us talking about our graduation rate of students going to college. You will find that at CCS well over 85% of our students attend higher education. That is across the ability range. That's important and significant to us. That is a value that is shaped partially by parents, however, as well as the school, and needs a supportive environment in which to grow.

One of the other objectives is to measure the quality of our education with like situations in other cultures. CCS teachers and administrators visit other schools to find out how other students are doing at certain types of tasks. We send our staff to serve on accreditation teams to help evaluate other schools of excellence. How do we compare with those schools? One of the conclusions from all of this evaluation is the fact that the quality of the education we are offering at Champion is significantly high.

What I will say to you is that at Champion, we will do everything within our understanding and power to make sure that the students in our care are receiving a rich educational experience and becoming everything that God wants them to be.

May God bless your decision making.