

## Your Christian School Educators

**T**he Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) is just now completing its 2005–2006 teacher conventions. Each year the association conducts more than 50 conventions worldwide to provide professional development and enrichment for member schools such as the one your students attend. It is our objective to give Christian school educators the opportunity to hear keynote speakers for both encouragement and professional enrichment and to participate in workshops and seminars designed to strengthen curricular offerings and teaching strategies.

I have the privilege of addressing audiences at eight to ten of these conventions every year. Each convention is an opportunity to meet the men and women who have committed their lives to serving the students who attend ACSI member schools. The men and women who serve as your children's educators are working to be better tomorrow than they are today. As they educate a total of more than one million students in ACSI schools, many of them are pursuing graduate studies in an array of programs covering myriad curricular emphases.

I am impressed as I hear these educators talk about their passion to engage in the intellectual development and spiritual formation of their students. They wrestle daily with a culture that to a greater and greater degree embraces secular values that mock the Christian worldview they work so hard to nurture in the hearts and minds of their students. As you well know as parents, they are fighting a battle with a large portion of the entertainment industry, which is quite effectively condoning a lifestyle of self-centeredness, acquisition, immorality, and 24-7 entertainment.

These educators, your children's teachers and mentors, desperately need your prayers and moral support in the great battle for the hearts, minds, and souls of children. Your school is striving in every area to develop and implement learning experiences—both in and out of the formal classroom—that engage each student physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually.

Every spring, one of those out-of-the-classroom learning experiences that many schools make available is a cross-cultural student mission trip. Countless educators will give up their spring break to lead or help supervise these crucial learning experiences—experiences that expose students to some of the most difficult and challenging places and lifestyles in the world. The intent is not only to engage these students in spiritual and social-service outreach but also to help them develop a heart for sharing God's love and compassion with others—to love their neighbor as they love themselves.

As a Christian school administrator, I had the privilege of leading high school students on mission trips in Asia and the former Soviet Union. I was astounded to witness powerful changes in the lives of students who participated in these experiences. I have known alumni of these trips to return to the places as missionaries after graduating from college. I have seen students weep uncontrollably as they say goodbye to new friends they met while living and serving in an orphanage during their mission trip. I have also been disappointed to hear a parent express his concern that perhaps these trips were going too far. It bothered him to see that his daughter was showing a much-diminished interest in the mall and was talking only about the impact of the mission trip on her life.

I share these thoughts with you in the hope of encouraging you about the investment you are making in Christian schooling. With your prayers and encouragement, your investment will continue to support the transformation of your children into "salt and light."



Ken Smitherman, President  
Association of Christian Schools International