

SHORELINE
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Society Membership Handbook

In 1952, Shoreline Christian School was established by a group of parents. While these parents all attended the same church, and the church was an active supporter of their efforts, they developed a system of governance for a school where the parents would have the primary responsibility for the Christian formation of their children. As the school grew, the group of parents included community members, relatives, and friends of the school. This group became the Shoreline Christian School Society. By definition a society is:

An organized group of persons associated together for religious, benevolent, cultural, scientific, political, patriotic, or other purposes.¹

The Society was brought together for the following purpose:

Shoreline Christian School works in partnership with Christian families and their church to challenge students in preschool through high school:

To celebrate that all of creation belongs to God

To respond to God by developing their unique gifts and abilities.

To live as dynamic and transforming influences for the glory of God²

Recognizing the school represents a diverse group of Christians, the Society felt it was necessary to develop this study guide to acquaint new members with the philosophy and purpose of the school and its programs. Rather than lecturing on the topic, you will do some guided reflection and small group discussion. It is our belief this approach will help you to better “own” the information. Within this framework, there are the following ground rules:

a. The lessons are meant to develop an understanding of the school, its programs, and its purpose. While the lessons deal with theological issues, it is not the purpose of these meetings nor of the school to indoctrinate you with a single denomination’s system of beliefs.

b. Differing opinions are to be respected. With over eighty different Christian churches represented by the students and their families, it is

¹ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/society>

² Shoreline Christian School Mission Statement

understood that there are a wide variety of expressions of Christian faith and worship.

c. The discussion is meant to be informal and an avenue for future discussions. We only want to introduce you to the essence of who and what we are.

It's an Ecosystem

A group of us gathered in a coffee shop on a Sunday evening to discuss what the first line of our Mission Statement meant to us--“Shoreline Christian School works in partnership with Christian families and their church to challenge students in preschool through high school”. Within the small group, there were parents with children in our school, parents choosing not to send their children to our school, couples without children, singles, and grandparents.

It became apparent the idea of a partnership of parents, their church, and the school was a challenge to understand. Each element was deemed important in the development of the child, but partnerships involve connections that did not seem apparent. How does standardized testing impact the child at church? Worship is something we do on Sundays. How can a math lesson be considered worship? As a parent, where do I find time to help my child make these connections?

When the discussion seemed to be floundering for direction, the leader asked us to put on a different set of lenses. What we need to do is consider the partnership of the home, church, and school as more of an ecosystem established for the Christian formation of a child. It is a fascinating picture. An ecosystem is the connection of dynamic pieces brought together for the mutual development of each. It recognizes the following:

The child grows best when supported by a committed community.

Christian formation becomes a two way street. It is not just what a child takes from the community, but includes what the child gives back to the ecosystem for its continued development.

That each element of the ecosystem depends on the other for the full benefit of their own growth.

Time for your thoughts:

What excites you about education being seen as an ecosystem developed for a child's Christian formation?

What causes you concern about this picture?

To Celebrate All of Creation Belongs to God

Bernard Zylstra in a preface to The Relation of the Bible to Learning¹ states:

Creation is the theater of God's Glory. That's how it was made in the beginning; that is what it is intended for today. From the outset God the Father established an all-embracing covenant with His creation--a covenant of divine love on one hand and creaturely praise on the other. The covenant is as wide as creation. That covenant came into being when God spoke the words, “Let there be,” and there was. The Creator speaks His majestic Words, utters His ordinances, and creatures come into being immediately shaped as praisers, servants, lovers of their Maker. To be creature is to be an addressee of the sovereign Word of the Lord: “be my servant, sing forth my praise.”

Sin is disservice, disobedience, dishonor. It is the antithesis to God's thesis. It is the refusal of mankind, in Adam its covenantal head, to love, serve, and obey the Creator...and it (sin) destroys the peace in Man's relation with nature, of which mankind was created crown.

Redemption is the restoration of creation as the theater of God's Glory. God the Father accomplishes this restoration through the Lamb who was

¹ Runner, Paideia Press, 1982

slain, reconciling to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross (Col. 1:20).

The Earth is the Lord's

John Van Dyk in his booklet, *The Beginning of Wisdom* applies Psalm 24:1 to education as follows:

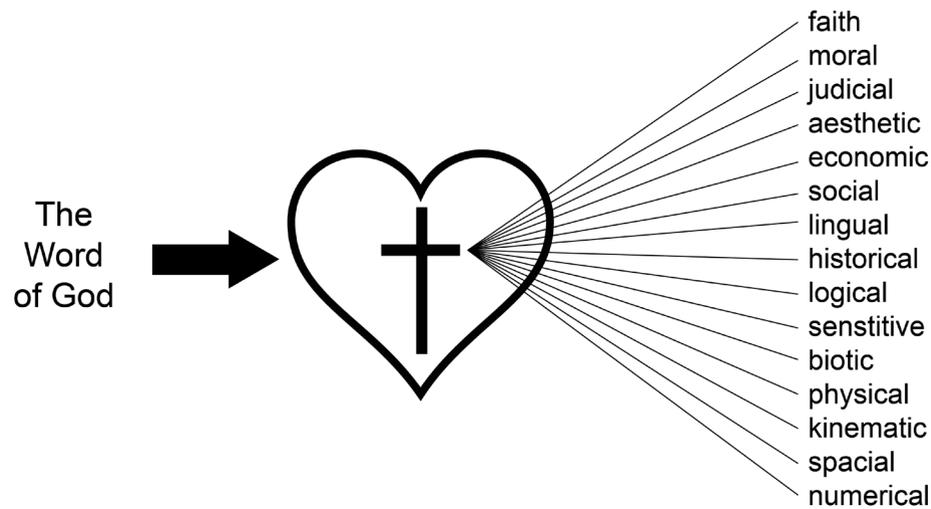
This means that all components of human life and education are subject to the will of God. There cannot be, for example, parts of the curriculum which have nothing to do with the Christian faith. There cannot be neutral science or valueless fact. No part of life or education, no matter how large or small, can stand apart from God's sovereign will. Because the earth is the Lord's, all things must serve Him and respond to his will.

Controlled by this biblical perspective, the Christian school rejects the dualistic view that human life is divided into two separate, mutually exclusive realms- a spiritual realm and an independent realm of science and reason to which the Word of God has nothing to say. The Bible makes it clear that God's Word and Spirit speak to and require response for the whole of our life (Acts 17:28).

Truth and Knowledge

Knowledge should lead us to the understanding of the Lordship of Christ over creation and the restoration of Truth. Since the attainment of knowledge is a life-long process, it is the responsibility of the school within the ecosystem to help prepare the students to continually seek the knowledge that prepares them for service to our Lord. As the student grows in the knowledge of the Lord, they begin to understand that truth is not a collection of facts or scientifically proven statements, but that truth is a heart commitment to respond obediently to the Christ who proclaimed himself the truth and the life. Truth is rooted in the Bible as it reveals all of creation. The central theme of creation is the relationship of God and humankind.¹

This view of creation affects the way we develop our curriculum and programs at Shoreline Christian School. Dr. Al Greene in his workshop entitled "A Christian Mind in a Secular Age" uses the following illustration to show how our school subjects are generated from our view of creation:

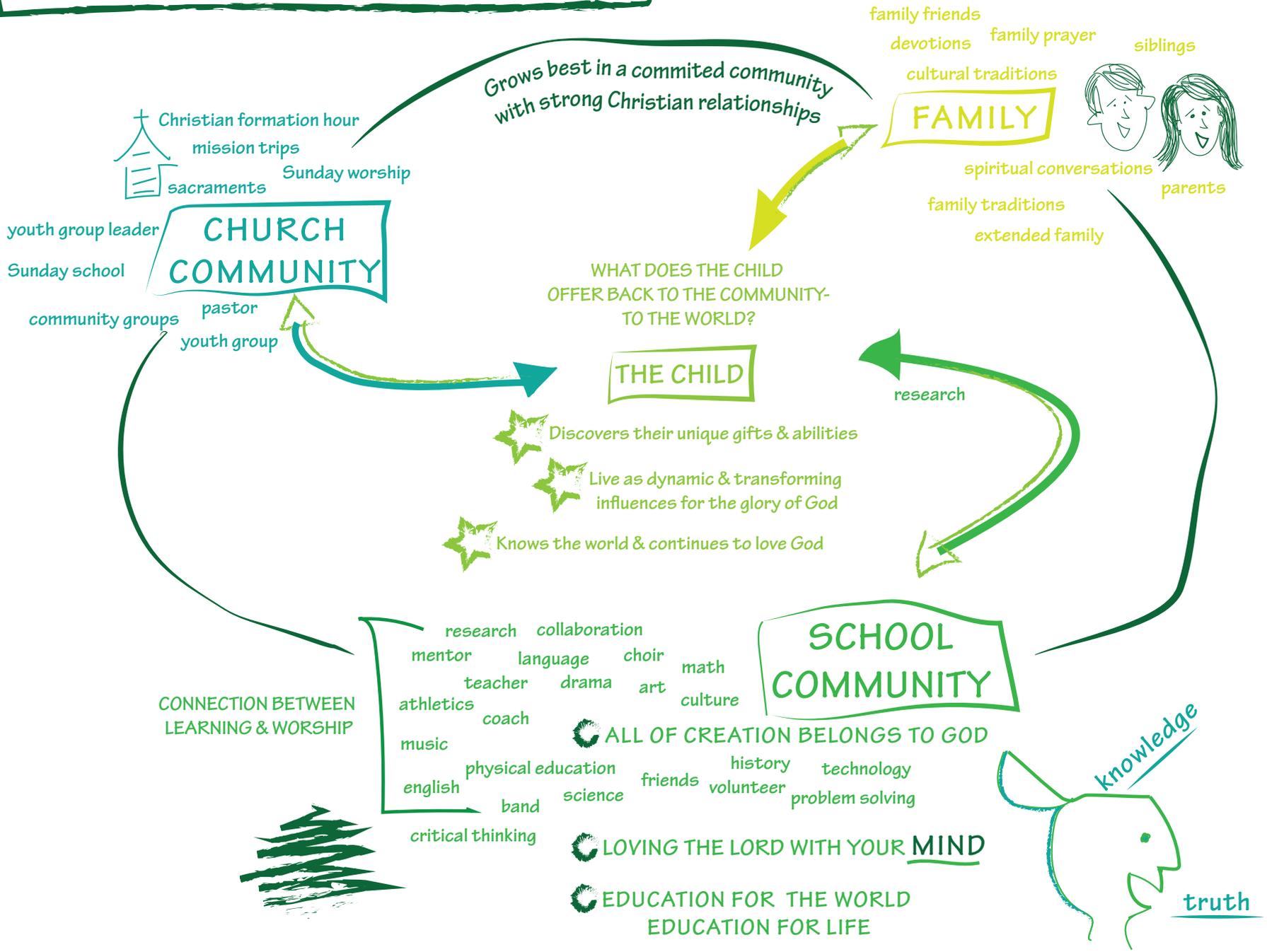


There is a fable about three blind men asked to describe an elephant. The first man felt the elephant's trunk and described the elephant as similar to a snake. The second man felt the elephant's side. He believed the elephant to be a wall of immense proportions. The third man felt the elephant's leg and declared the elephant to be similar to a tree trunk. Each was right as far as they went, but each missed the whole picture because they were only able to feel a fraction of the whole.

In the same vein, the school's curriculum must be designed to help the students understand how creation reflects God. No one subject or area of interest can possibly reveal the glory of the Lord by itself. Each area must contribute to the understanding of cohesiveness that mirrors creation. This is the school's greatest challenge.

¹ Shoreline Foundational Statement

CHRISTIAN FORMATION ECOSYSTEM



Time for your thoughts:

How would each of the following classes/courses help you to understand creation:

Art

Math

Science

Physical Education

Occupational Skills

Bible Courses

Uniquely the Same?

As parents, we marvel at the uniqueness of our children. The same home, the same set of parents, and we have completely different children with their own unique views and talents. While we shake our heads sometimes, we need to understand our ecosystem as an orchestra. We can't all play the same instrument if we want the orchestra to flourish. At the same point in time, we also need to blend each unique instrument in a way that balances their strengths if we are going to create a sound pleasing to our audience.

Schools can be tough places to find the balance between being unique and the same. We recognize that not all children will be mathematicians, but they do need to learn math. Not all are athletes, but they need to opportunity to try. It is one of the reasons why our school talks about unwrapping uniqueness as a gift, encouraging the child to reflect on how that gift can be used to grow both the child and the ecosystem in which they exist. The ecosystem for Christian formation encourages the child to use their gifts as they participate in the theater that is God's creation.

Time for your thoughts:

How is this idea of education similar to what you experienced?

How is it different?

What excites you about this idea?

What causes you to have concerns?

If You Give Them no Target, There is Nothing to Aim At

As we look back at the success of our ecosystem in the life of child, how will we measure success? King Solomon once had a choice between riches and wisdom. He chose wisdom. The beauty of the choice is the idea that he had the opportunity to give back to the ecosystem God had developed for him as an act of worship to the God he served.

We encourage our children to be that transforming influence for the Glory of God. The challenge is that we live in a creation God created as good, yet humankind has found ways to make it profane by turning it into something about us rather than God. Christian formation is about helping our children experience the way God intended it to be- to experience the thesis of His creation.

Neal Platinga puts it this way:

“In the literature of Scripture, wisdom is, broadly speaking, the knowledge of God's world and the knack of fitting oneself into it. The wise person knows creation. She knows the boundaries and limits, understands its laws and rhythms, discerns its times and seasons, respects its great dynamics. She understands that creation

possesses its own integrity and significance quite apart for her claim on it and quite apart from any possibility that creation will make her happy. The wise person gives in to creation and to God—and she does the first because she does the second. She knows that wisdom itself is the Lord's, and so is its fullness. She knows some of the deep grains and textures of the world because she knows some of the ways and habits of its maker...Discernment is a mark of wisdom: it shows a kind of attentive respect for reality. The discerning person notices the differences between things but also the connections between them.”¹

Time for your thoughts:

How does our ecosystem give our children a glimpse of living as God intended?

How should we measure success?

Where does the concept of God's grace energize our ecosystem?

¹ Cornelius Plantinga Jr. *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*. Eerdmans, 1995 pg 115 – 116

