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Your school... or another school?



by **Robert Koole**
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School choice is increasingly becoming part of the political landscape in BC's education scene. In removing school boundaries the provincial government has made it possible for parents to send their child to a public school outside of their own district.

The Ministry of Education promotes school choice by means of several brochures ("Developing More Choices within the K-12 Public Education System," and "Choosing a School in British Columbia: A Checklist For Parents,") and by setting up a website with a School Choice Database: www.achievebc.ca/choices/search_about.aspx. The website allows you to search all 1652 public schools in the province by name, city or level (elementary, middle, or secondary) and all 4912 specialties. You can search the entire province, district or local community for specialized programs or themes available in public schools. It is also possible to select one or more of the location, level or specializations, and themes that interest you to find out where they are available. The website is limited to searching for choice among public schools, although the home page has a direct link to the website of the Federation of Independent School Associations (FISA) where parents can find a list of independent schools in the province.

It is important to note that there is a limit to the choice options that may be explored within the BC public school system. The brochure, "Developing More Choices within the K-12 Public Education System," states that under provincial legislation, any faith-

based education programs may only be provided through an independent school.

Why is school choice gaining more attention among people in BC? One factor relates to the slow but steady increase in the number of parents sending their children to independent schools. A second factor relates to the proportion of children attending independent schools – currently almost 10%. A third factor relates to a change in direction in the provincial government with an emphasis on choice, flexibility, and accountability. There is now a clear recognition that when parents are more directly involved in the education of their children and have more choice in the school they attend, children do better in school and reach higher achievement in learning. Fourth, public schools are being encouraged to compete with independent schools in attracting parents to send their children to their school.

How might the expanded discussion about school choice affect Christian schools? Clearly, we can no longer expect parents to automatically send their child to our school simply because we are a Christian school.

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Planning Your Asking

by Gerry Ebbers, *Financial Stewardship & Development*
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Nothing I have ever written has generated as much discussion and feedback as my last two articles in LINK, *Why not just 'ask'* and *Why not just 'give'*. And since the feedback has all been positive, I assume that the articles resonated with boards, fundraising committees, staffs, and individuals.

In this article I'd like to lay out some specific steps that boards, fundraising committees and development directors can do to plan their 'asking' (their requests for donation support) for each school year.

The first step is holding a planning session in May or June of the current school year. Ideally this meeting should include all the committees involved in development: marketing, public relations, community relations, fundraising, and recruitment since all of these activities complement each other.

At this planning meeting you will want to start by asking questions, but not the question "what did we do last year?" You want to ask:

- What are our specific goals for recruitment: how many students and in what grades?
- How committed are our current parents to the school and how would we define the perfect parent?
- How committed is our larger support community and how closely would we like them to be to the school?
- How well are we known and supported in the churches which our students attend?
- How would we like the external community (our neighborhood, our city) to think of our school?
- What would the perfect donor to our school look like?
- How much money would we like to raise and for what projects?

Notice that you start with questions that will force you to define objectives and set goals. As much as possible your goals should be measurable ones: number of students, dollars raised, attendance at events, number of volunteers, number of press releases published, and percentages of response. Set realistic and achievable goals. There's nothing like failure to discourage your volunteers and community. You can increase your goals annually based on your success.

The next step is to plan what actions, events and activities you will need to accomplish your goals. This may include some of the same things you did last year, but it need not. Only those plans which were successful last year should be duplicated. Everything else should be jettisoned.

In the case of your fundraising goal, you may decide that you want to do an annual drive to raise \$50,000 for the

support of extracurricular activities, scholarship funds, technology advancements or tuition relief. Your goal will include the number of gifts (or percentage of participation) from different segments of your school community. Your goal will indicate the range of gifts you expect and the number in each range. An annual analysis of just these few goals will tell you much about the success of your fundraising both in dollars raised and levels of support. If one of your fundraising goals is to increase your support through estate gifts, then a dollar goal at this point will be difficult to measure. However, you can measure the number of will visits that CSS holds with community members and the number of 'expectancies' that result from those visits.

In addition to planning your fundraising goals, you need to communicate these goals to your community. Your communication plan should include articles in your school's quarterly newsletter to supporters, presentations at events, explanations with your requests for donations and maybe even a poster in the school with a list of the fundraisers that are planned for the year and the expectation that folks respond with a gift.

Don't forget to use all opportunities to communicate what you believe about Biblical stewardship. Don't sound 'preachy', but be direct and honest. If we believe that our schools are strengthened by a multi-generational supporting community, then we must say that and practice it.

Finally, I believe every school should tithe from their own fundraising and support some other charity. This could be done by simply giving a tenth away, but I'm impressed by the Christian school which is doing a capital campaign to build TWO new schools, one for their own needs and one for the third world school they support. You should choose a charity that is compatible with your mission and vision so supporting another school in a developing country makes sense and allows for more contact than just sending a cheque. Consult John Postuma at Worldwide Christian Schools (canada@wwcs.org).

If your board and/or committees would like some help planning your development goals (including your fundraising goals) and strategies for next year, please ask me to assist you. I would enjoy working with you to establish a program that complements your vision and mission and brings glory to the Christ we serve.

New Parent INTERVIEWS



by Marlene Bylenga
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At this time of the year one of the biggest challenges for schools is the interviewing of new families for the upcoming school year. Both Canadian and international parents are seeking enrolment in our schools for differing reasons; a big challenge for administration is to ensure that the vision of Christian education is communicated in the admissions process and that the parents embrace this vision. For international students and their parents the biggest challenge in the admissions process is their inability to communicate effectively in English. The following are some strategies to help bridge the communication gap:

- Require that all report cards and transcripts are officially translated into English. These documents should be notarized.
- Make it a goal to have materials containing your school's mission statement, Code of Conduct, expectations regarding homestay etc. translated.

Note: it is important to retain the services of a translator who understands the meaning and intent of these documents—a literal translation does not keep the “flavour” of the content. These documents should be part of the registration packet and can be used as a reference in the interview.

- It is important to have a face to face interview with the parent(s) and student. This interview gives school administration a chance to communicate important details to both parent and child regarding the school. It also provides



another opportunity to communicate the vision of Christian education. It is a time when the parent(s) are able to share with administration their reasons for sending their child to a Christian school in Canada and voice their concerns regarding this decision. An adult interpreter should be part of the interview process. Ideally, this interpreter is someone who can translate in an impartial way; he or she should be someone who does not have a vested interest in the admittance of the student.

A continuing challenge for boards and administration is that they guard the vision of Christian education and consistently communicate this vision. As our communities become more diverse we will need

to consistently and deliberately hold up that vision to all seeking admission. We will also need to be sensitive to those who come from cultures very different from our own and develop communication skills which will enable us to bridge our cultural differences and unify us in our vision.

If you require more information regarding effective communication across cultures or have any other questions regarding international students, please contact Marlene Bylenga, SCSBC International Program Coordinator (by phone: 604-533-4513/604-789-6472; by e-mail: ieprogram@scsbc.ca).

... a big challenge for administration is to ensure that the vision of Christian education is communicated in the admissions process ...

“The principal of the ideal Christian school would not boast only about graduates who are successful executives, scientists, or attorneys. Instead, he or she would point with pride to those who have become advocates for battered women or abused children, or alumni who are poets, or musicians, or social activists, or chaplains who visit the prisons.”

“In Christian schools kindergartners still fill cardboard banks with pennies for the poor, and junior high students collect clothes and canned goods. The roots of poverty are complex, but good Christian schools refuse to use bewilderment as an excuse to ignore the issue. They teach students that warm

homes and regular meals are gifts, that beyond such oases are vast areas of pain, where many people need a healing touch. In classrooms and chapels, in a quiet, unassuming way, the commitment continues.”

“Christian schools have their share of behavior problems. The difference may be that Christian school teachers realize that the origins of the word “discipline” are closely tied to the word “disciple.” When behavior is seen in relationship to the person of Christ, it takes on a new, positive dimension.”

- From “Choosing a School” (CSI)
<http://community.gospelcom.net/Brix?pageID=2970>

Should we hire this person? Have we made the “right” choice? Do we have ‘just cause’ to terminate an employee’s contract? How do we ‘handle’ a board member who no longer sends his school aged children to our Christian School?

Many boards and principals are currently busy interviewing potential new teachers, support staff and other employees. School boards are also occupied with the recruitment of new board and committee members. In both our hiring practices and issuing of employment contracts we often overlook the other side of employment, namely the termination of contracts. What if the person we hired doesn’t uphold the Christian values and lifestyle we expect of employees in our schools? How would we deal with a board member who no longer demonstrates a strong commitment to Christian education?

Lifestyle clauses in employment contracts and lifestyle policies are



Developing and Implementing Community Standards

by Henry Contant, Executive Director contant@twu.ca

becoming increasingly important for our schools. It seems that we are in a time when our ability to live out who we really are, that is sons and daughters of God, is increasingly coming under scrutiny and question. The value of tolerance, particularly in relation to moral conduct, is much spoken about today. One of the challenges for our schools is to be in the world and yet maintain our Christian distinctiveness.

Lifestyle or community standards are about our distinctiveness. They are not, in essence, about rules and regulations. They are, fundamentally, a working out of who we are and what we believe about ourselves and God’s call on our lives to be obedient to him. Lifestyle standards must, however, be considered in the context of grace, forgiveness, reconciliation and community.

A number of schools have requested advice and assistance in developing and implementing lifestyle policies for their schools. Therefore, in order to assist schools in such a task, the SCSBC has developed a document entitled *Considerations for the Development and Implementation of a Community Standards Policy*. The purpose of this document is not to provide schools with a draft policy that can simply

be adopted, but to provide a “model” community standard policy that may be of assistance to schools in the development of their own policy.

Lifestyle is really about community standards; these standards can and do vary in the Christian school community. Accordingly, it is not possible for the

One of the challenges for our schools is to be in the world and yet maintain our Christian distinctiveness. Lifestyle or community standards are about our distinctiveness.

SCSBC, which is a broad umbrella organization to propose a specific community standard for a particular school community. It falls to each school to develop for themselves a community standards policy that is reflective of its particular values and practices.

What this support document for school boards does purport to do, however, is provide schools with advice and direction on important policy matters. These include such things as:

- Who should a Community Standards policy apply to?
- How specific does the prohibited conduct need to be?
- What is the scope of the prohibitions?
- What happens if prohibited conduct is engaged in?
- Should the Community Standards be part of the contract and hiring procedures?
- How do you encourage staff members who were hired before

ting a rds Policy

a Community Standard Policy was in place to now agree to such a policy?

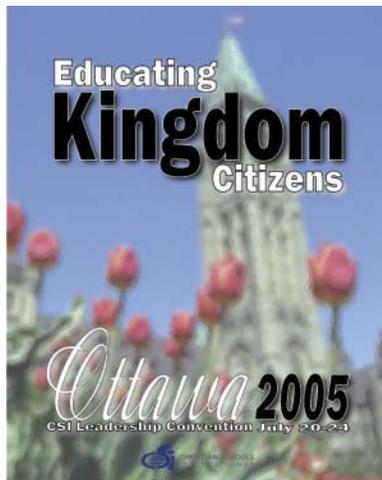
- How should disputes be resolved?

In developing and implementing a community standards policy it is also important to have an understanding of the legal requirements around such matters. The SCSBC document provides a brief overview of the common law and legislation in this area. It also explains the “bona fide” occupational requirement defense the school board must establish to avoid liability.

As the SCSBC cannot recommend a “one size fits all” policy, this “model” does not contain specific prohibitions. These are left to each school to work out for themselves. It does, however, contain some broad statements of the biblical ethic informing conduct in the Christian community. Each school retains the challenge and responsibility of adapting this SCSBC policy model to reflect and meet the needs of their particular community.

In their responsibility as ‘trustees’ of the vision and mission of the school and their proper exercise of due diligence, boards are strongly recommended to ensure the development and implementation of a Community Standards Policy. Doing so may be the most important work a board does this year!

NOTE: A copy of *Considerations for the Development and Implementation of a Community Standards Policy* may be obtained from the SCSBC office upon request. Henry Contant will be pleased to meet with individual School Boards to discuss the matter of developing a Community Standard Policy for their particular school.



Christian Schools International LEADERSHIP CONVENTION 2005

July 20 - 24

Ottawa, Ontario

“Educating Kingdom Citizens”

Keynote Speakers: Quentin Schultze, Ken Wales, Janet Buckingham, Jolene DeHeer

Jesus taught us to pray: “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). What is this kingdom? What will it take to advance the will of God on earth? How shall we then live? Join with fellow school leaders and community members in exploring a vision that is refreshing and invigorating.

<http://community.gospelcom.net/Brix?pageID=5547>

developing Christian Schools

APRIL 6 - 8, 2005

This year’s Developing Christian Schools conference brought together 70 people representing Christian schools in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Washington and Australia.

Keynote speaker Tim Caughey set the pace, reminding attendees of the need for a “Contagious Passion for Christian Education”, and worship leaders Mitch and Rochelle Senti helped keep the focus on the source of that passion: Jesus Christ.

Here’s what some of the delegates had to say about their experience:

- “[The conference offered] practical sessions where



Sharing good food and fellowship at Cedar Springs Christian Retreat Center

questions were taken, discussion prompted.”

- “[I liked] the informal relational atmosphere and the opportunity to really connect with others who do what I do.”
- “It was very valuable to hear how other schools had implemented ESL/ International Education programs.”
- “[I learned] that even though we’re all at different spots in our respective journeys, we all have the same divine destination.”



Keynote speaker Tim Caughey from Australia leads a role play for “The New Parent Interview”

Community News

- **Several SCSBC schools participated in World Vision's 30 Hour Famine. These are some of the exciting results:**



Richmond Christian Elementary students with their "cheque" for World Vision

370 students at Richmond Christian Elementary School (K-7) took part. As they are an elementary school, not all students could do a full fast; students were given a chart with age appropriate food challenges and many challenged themselves to choose the most difficult level for their age. In their third year participating in the 30-Hour Famine, RCS students raised \$18,575.83! "This is a great way to get students involved in reaching out to others around the world—especially other children."

Langley Christian Middle and High School students took part in the 30-Hour Famine April 7-8. The famine began on Thursday morning, and activities (including painting murals on the portables, capture the flag, building huts out of cardboard, and a movie) continued after school until 9:30 p.m. This great time of service and community-building ended on Friday the 8th with a school BBQ. \$17,000 had been tallied at the time of our LINK deadline!

- **Discovery Christian High School is now CARVER CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL!** Vancouver Christian School, John Knox Christian School, and the high school Governing Council are pleased to announce that they have finalized the name for the new school, opening this coming September. The name "Discovery" was chosen after a naming contest, but it soon became obvious that the name



did not resonate with the kids who would attend the school. **Carver** is inspired by "our Master craftsman who refines His children, honing and shaping their unique gifts and equipping them to lead and serve." The new name and school logo were presented at the *Gloria!* gala concert, April 15th.

- **Congratulations to all our school athletes who participated in recent provincial basketball tournaments.** Abbotsford Christian's Knights are the Boys "A" champs and the White Rock Christian Warriors are the Boys "AAA" champs. Several SCSBC schools competed in the boys "A" tournament, with Pacific Christian

Abbotsford Christian in Girls "AA" play



The Houston Christian Wildcats at the Boys "A" tournament

School finishing in 3rd place, Langley Christian 4th, Houston Christian 7th, and Cedars Christian 14th. The Unity Christian Flames finished 3rd in Girls "A" play. The Abbotsford Christian Knights finished 3rd in Girls "AA", while the Fraser Valley Christian Falcons finished 12th in Boys "AA".

- **Congratulations to the Richmond Christian business students who took third place honours in Junior Achievement's annual BC Business Challenge.** Student-managers Nathan Yu, Daniel Coleman and Timothy Wong competed in a computer-generated marketplace, controlling the finances of a virtual company (competing for market share, developing management strategies, and scrutinizing the actions of other companies across the mythical industry). Over 100 business students participated in this year's event. The RCS "Eagles" earned a cash bursary of \$50 each and entry into the HP Global Business Challenge.

- **Two SCSBC schools embarked on “groundbreaking” missions trips this spring:**

A team of 35 from Vernon Christian School spent 9 days in Rosarito, Mexico (south of Tijuana). The group of Grade 9 students, teachers, and parents also included, for the first time, 6 of VCS’s long-stay international students and 2 moms from Korea. Students were there at the request of Amore Ministries to build a house for the Naranjo Campos family. This strong Christian family of 6, who had been living in a van on the father’s income of \$60/week, welcomed the team warmly and were eager to work alongside them.

8 students, 5 teachers and others from the Nanaimo Christian School community embarked on a HANDS missions trip to Belize over Spring Break. **Help Another Nation Develop Schools** is a ministry of Worldwide Christian Schools (to support Christian schools in other countries through building/expansion of school buildings, classrooms, playgrounds, or related educational structures). NCS VP Brian De Schiffart’s team went to Orange Walk, laying blocks and pouring concrete in 30 degree+, humid weather. Their team was one of many that helped the school there to grow to its current size with 200 students.

- **Congratulations to the Rainbow Christian School community, which sold its first “fundraising” house this year.** Principal Winston Price says of the project: “Our Board was trying to come up with fundraising ideas and heard about other schools building a home for profit. Time was an issue, due to the reliance on volunteers to do much of the labor . . . The experience of building was challenging but rewarding in that it brought our school community together. We sold the house to a staff member and we have had a number of inquiries about future house building projects.”

- **The SCSBC Board recently adopted two additional policies that it now recommends to member schools for their consideration.** They are: a (revised) *Voluntary Early Retirement Policy*, and; a *Professional Support Policy for Employees & Board Members Under Investigation for Allegations of Wrongdoing*. These policies were introduced to principals at the recent CPABC Principal’s Conference and have now been sent to all member schools. The Leadership Policy and Government Relations Committee remains busy developing recommended policy guidelines for schools regarding *Admissions/Enrolment Contracts*, *Conflict of Interest Guidelines*, and *Sexual Orientation*.

“We educators have always known that children learn better when their parents are involved in some way with the school.

The current generation of independent school parents wants to be involved in multiple ways,

and their children and our schools will only benefit from this phenomenon. We do, however, need to learn how to help them to become involved in meaningful and effective ways and to be advocates for our schools.

- Communicate the value of the school: why is this . . . school worth it?
- Use your own resources and outside experts to help you teach a “parent curriculum” to your school families.
- Use face-to-face meetings judiciously and effectively. Plan them well.
- Be aware of cultural differences in the parent body. Respect them and celebrate them.
- Find multiple ways to integrate the cultures and values of your parents into the curriculum and the life of the school.
- Ensure that there are no “guests” at the school’s table; that all parents feel enfranchised in the life of the school.

Neither parents nor schools can go it alone. We need each other to fulfill our missions as educators and as parents. And, like any other social interaction, once we understand each other and buy into a common value system, we can work together to create something extraordinarily worth it for our children.

- From Ralph Davison, “Working with the New Generation of Parents” Independent School Magazine Winter 2005: www.nais.org/publications/ismagazinearticle.cfm?Itemnumber=146802&sn.ItemNumber=145956

SCSBC Calendar

www.scsbc.ca/calendar.html

May

May 23

Victoria Day

June

June 30

Schools close for summer vacation

July

July 4

TWU Educators Summer Sessions start

July 21-24

CSI Convention - Ottawa

September

September 6

Schools open



The SCSBC is a member of
Christian Schools International
and Christian Schools Canada.



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Today's parents have different, and in many ways higher, expectations about the education they want for their child. A generation ago, many parents sent their children because they wanted Christian education and trusted that the local Christian school would do exactly that. Today, however, parents are looking for evidence that demonstrates the quality of the education offered in the Christian school. Some believe that the Fraser Institute's Report Card is an accurate reflection of a school's quality while others want to be assured that their son or daughter will achieve the high academic standing necessary for being accepted into the

Schools Working with Parents

- The school clearly and fully presents its philosophy, program, and practices to parents during the admission process and encourages dialogue that clarifies parental expectations and aspirations for the student.
- The school seeks and values the parents' perspective on the student.
- Teachers and administrators are accessible to parents and model candid and open dialogue.
- The school defines clearly how it involves parents when considering major decisions that affect the school community.
- The school offers and supports a variety of parent education opportunities.

Parents Working with Schools

- Parents recognize that effective partnerships are characterized by clearly defined responsibilities, a shared commitment to collaboration, open lines of communication, mutual respect, and a common vision of the goals to be reached.
- Parents are familiar with and support the school's policies and procedures.
- Parents provide a home environment that supports the development of positive learning attitudes and habits.
- Parents involve themselves in the life of the school.
- Parents seek and value the school's perspective on the student.
- When concerns arise, parents seek information directly from the school, consulting with those best able to address the concerns.

- From "NAIS principles of good practice":
www.nais.org/about/seriesdoc.cfm?ItemNumber=146883&sn.ItemNumber=146810

best universities. For some parents it would be a bonus if the Christian school also provides spiritual nourishment along side of academic success.

Why should Christian schools be concerned about the promotion of school choice? We can no longer operate Christian schools in the ways we have always done and still expect that parents will send their children to our schools because it is a Christian school. The expansion of school choice raises people's awareness about the educational possibilities that are available. It is no longer the case that an elementary school in one part of town is the same as an elementary school in another part of town. Nor is one secondary school like another secondary school. School choice means just that – parents and young people can select from a variety of educational options, and they are doing exactly that.

What should Christian schools do?

1. become aware of the choices available in your area, discover whether, in fact, you may already be doing what they say they are offering but you haven't made it a point to highlight it as a feature of your school;
2. express your school's mission in fresh new ways and demonstrate how it comes alive in day-to-day lessons;
3. invite and involve parents in the education of their children, make them feel welcome and don't take on professional airs that turn parents off;
4. re-interpret the concepts that schools of choice use to show that in fact the concept is an essential part of the Christian education you offer. For example, isn't it amazing that many people believe a public Traditional School offers Christian education inside the public system?
5. demonstrate educational excellence in all aspects of you school so that people see evidence of high quality, biblically-inspiring teaching and learning;
6. deepen the Christian distinctives that attract attention and show that Christian education is different yet at the same time very relevant to current societal issues.

See also "The Principal of the Ideal Christian School", p. 3, and "The Current Generation of Independent School Parents", p. 7.