

## Lead Principal's Report to the CCS Society May 2017



CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

### See the Story; Live the Story!

The close of the 2016-17 school year at Calvin Christian School, Minneapolis marks another year of God's faithful provision as we have sought to invite, nurture and empower disciples for kingdom work. For over 50 years, equipping disciples has been central to CCS's mission. And central to that mission is the biblical truth that Christ is sovereign over all things. What does that mean at Calvin Christian School? Our Teaching for Transformation materials put it this way: "God created all things. Even after the fall, which indeed affects and infects all things, creation remains good. Christ's redemptive act touches all things, redirecting them to their God-designated purposes. Someday, all things will be fully restored, but the work of renewal begins now, and we are privileged to be coworkers with God in this process."

This celebratory story is ultimately what we hope our students will see and live out. See the Story; Live the Story! From Kindergarten through 12th grade, CCS invites, nurtures and empowers uniquely gifted servant-workers, image-reflectors, God-worshippers, idolatry-discerners, beauty-creators, earth-keepers, community-builders, justice-seekers, creation-enjoyers, and order-discoverers for work in God's kingdom. Celebrate with me the 2016-17 story of God's faithfulness to CCS!

### Evidence of a quality CCS program

Evidence of the quality of teaching and learning at CCS in 2016-17 can be told through anecdotal evidence. These are the stories you've read about on the CCS Twitter posts and Facebook pages, stories you've read about in the Happenings or CCS Connections Newsletters, or stories you have experienced with your own children. The list below is merely a short list that came to my mind; they are glimpses of the excellent education that happens each day in CCS classrooms. Perhaps my list will remind your own CCS stories. If so, remember them with your kids during dinner; share them with fellow CCS community members as you attend end-of-year concerts and graduations; tell your neighbors and friends this summer as you reflect on the end of another school year. Celebrate the great things God is doing at CCS!

- It's a joy for me to see and hear about the quality Teaching for Transformation units teachers are creating during monthly staff meetings. It is well-known among educators that developing effective teachers impacts student learning significantly. Mary Kooy, in an article titled, "Teachers Matter," says, "The effect of increases in teacher quality swamps the impact of any other educational investment, such as reductions in class size." She later notes, "More can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor." Thank you, CCS teachers for the impact your dedicated, quality work has on our kids!
- This spring one CCHS junior scored a 35 on his ACT and two juniors met the requirements to enter the 2018 National Merit Scholarship Program!

- Ten students from our Blaine and Edina campuses participated in the 2017 State History Day competition; five of those students took home special honors.
- Spring musicals at each of our campuses: CCHS's *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, CCS Edina's *Once Upon a Mattress* and CCS Blaine's *School House Rock*.
- As part of her Senior Project, Mollie Kelderman organized a 5K to benefit Shema, an organization aiming to open 25 sewing co-ops within the next five years. These co-ops will employ women in Southeast Asia who are at risk or survivors of human trafficking. Mollie hoped to raise \$10,000, which is what it costs to open one co-op. As of May 20, Mollie's efforts and God's blessings on it had raised over \$19,000--nearly enough to open two co-ops!
- A number of special events connected with classroom learning that are often student highlights: Civil War simulations, high honors at the 5th grade Math Masters competition, CCHS Dordt College Band Festival, Faith Heroes Wax Museum, band and choir concerts, 6-12 WeRCalvin trip to the play "To Begin With...", service projects to Second Harvest Heartland and Cloverleaf Apartments, K-5 Concentrated Study, DNA labs in 7-8 Edina science...just to name a few!

### **Site Visit Team Recommends 5-year Accreditation!**

Evidence of the quality of teaching and learning at CCS in 2016-17 can also be told through our accreditation process and results. Accreditation for educational institutions not only measures the quality of teaching and learning, but also the alignment of practice to the organization's mission. For decades, CCS has been accredited through MNSAA (Minnesota Nonpublic School Accrediting Association). However, in 2017 Christian Schools International (CSI) was approved in the state of Minnesota as a K-12 accrediting organization, and CCS leadership decided to seek accreditation through CSI. That move is a strategic one, as the accreditation aligns with our mission, vision and values, and will challenge us to be consistent and excellent as an educational institution in our implementation of curriculum and instruction that is rooted in a biblical worldview.

Since spring of 2016, the CCS School Improvement Team (Steve Groen, Jack Shields, Wendell Schaap, Paul Clemens, Amy Teunissen, Holly Radke, Linda Marcus, Sue Vande Kamp) has been working with our CSI Accreditation Regional Coordinator to complete our work on "Measuring the Mission"--the CSI process for schools seeking CSI accreditation. The process, which included a School Profile, Self-study, and a School Improvement Plan, gave the CCS community (faculty, staff, students, parents, Board members, and Society members) an opportunity to apply a standard to our current systems and practices and determine strategic initiatives for future growth.

On April 10-12 a Site Visit Team, led by Glenn Vos (former superintendent at Holland Christian School in Michigan), spent three days visiting CCS campuses and meeting with parents, teachers, administration, and students. The purpose of the site visit was to 1) validate the School Profile and Self Study 2) review the School Improvement Plan 3) identify commendations and needed improvements and 4) make a recommendation for accreditation. If you know CCS, the results below will not surprise you, but it is a blessing to receive the validation and encouragement from fellow educators outside of the CCS community.

## **Accreditation Commendations Worth Celebrating!**

- ***Integration of Faith and Learning:***
  - The Site Visit Team indicated that “biblical integration permeates every aspect of the school.”
  - “The implementation of Teaching for Transformation,” they noted, “is remarkable. It has provided a common language and framework for faith integration. It has given students a purpose, practical ways to act out their faith, and see themselves as characters in God’s story.”
  - They noted that there was significant evidence that CCS is Seeing God’s Story and Living God’s Story, and they encouraged us to go out and tell the larger community about the great things happening here.
- ***Teaching and Learning:***
  - The CSI Site Visit Team indicated that they saw 21st Century learning happening across grade levels (K-12) and at each of our campuses. “The school,” they wrote, “fosters both collaborative and independent learning, critical thinking, and creativity. These all lead to engagement and ownership of learning.”
  - They also noted, “The staff’s creativity in differentiating learning and making modifications for all students, given the limited resources and facilities, is exemplary.”
- ***Community***
  - “A culture has been created that deeply values teacher relationships with students and the development of student relationships to each other. A strong sense of community on each campus is evident.” Students eagerly responded when asked what they loved about their teachers. Mentoring relationships are important to long-term learning and successful relationships.
  - “Parent ownership, engagement and enthusiasm all contribute to the feeling that parents are vital to the community.” The visit team noted in a meeting with the School Improvement Team that we had an outstanding Board and parent community who love our school.
- ***Leadership***
  - The visit team commended CCS leadership for its “focused energy and efforts on the future of the school. They are deeply committed,” they wrote, “to its sustainability, mission, and success.”

## **Strategic Areas of Growth for 2017-18**

- The site visit team encouraged CCS to continue working towards a one-school mindset. “The unity between the three campuses,” they noted, “could be improved through communication, transparency, shared decision making, and agreed upon student outcomes.” During the 2017-18 school year, the CCS community will be working through a process to determine K-12 student

outcomes. This is an important process, as it identifies the end result of our K-12 education, and allows us to measure our K-12 program against those standards.

- The team also encouraged CCS to improve the “documentation of current systems, processes and methods for work expectations, curriculum and governance.” Next fall, CCS teachers will be working in teams to review our K-12 scope and sequence in key curricular areas.

Those of us committed to Christian education know the blessing that Christian schools are to our children. Connecting the creation to our Creator allows them to see God’s story and both understand and practice their place in it. We invite, nurture and empower Christ’s image-reflectors through the powerful working of the Holy Spirit because it’s what God calls us to do.

Arlan Koppendrayer, Calvin Christian High School Bible teacher and chaplain, ended an article he wrote a few years back with this: “Today we teach our students to be agents of shalom because one day shalom will flourish. Today we teach our students to share the good news and to transform culture because one day they will inhabit a city whose builder and maker is God. Today we help our students have the eyes of faith because one day their faith shall be sight.”

Please continue to pray that Calvin Christian School will flourish as a K-12 institution that aims for an education that is both excellent and praiseworthy. And give thanks for the place God has given Calvin Christian School in his redemptive story.

Blessings!

Wendell Schaap  
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