



I love Christian education; I am passionate about it!

My love, my passion, may come from my DNA. I grew up with seven siblings on a small family farm in South Dakota. My parents were deeply committed to Christian education. They had a vision for who they wanted me and my siblings to be---not at age 18, but when we met the prime-time of our lives--in our vocations, in our communities, in our families and in society. While my family lived on a meager farm income, all eight of us benefited from Christian schools, 1st-12th grade, and most of us also from Christian colleges. I vividly remember many times when my parents struggled to pay tuition, making many sacrifices to do so. Yet, they carried on with grit, determination and innovation because of that vision.

I love Christian education because I recognize the profound impact it has had on my mind, heart and desires. It helped me frame my life as a CPA, as an education leader, as a church member, as a husband and father. My view of who I am as a child of God, animated by the work of Christ in my life, has been impacted by my years of Christian education. I am deeply thankful for that influence.

I am passionate about Christian education because I have had the opportunity to watch my two daughters grow in their understanding of their stories in the context of God's story while at CCS, and as a result live passionately in learning, serving and relating.

It's out of that love and passion that I accepted the calling six years ago to lead Calvin Christian School.

When I was asked by the Board of Directors to fill the role as the first president of CCS in the summer of 2011, we talked about what it would mean for me to give leadership in developing the organization and its organizational culture, what was necessary to be more intentional about promoting the "value proposition" of CCS, what it might look like for CCS to take a leadership position in the movement of Christian education in the Twin Cities region, and what was necessary to solidify the financial position of the school. I recently was reminded of these imperatives as I was reviewing correspondence and other documents dated back in August 2011. The Board recognized at that time that a change in direction was necessary.

As my time leading Calvin Christian draws to a close, I have had many opportunities to reflect on these past six years, and to talk with many of you about the progress we have made as an organization and about how much we have yet to accomplish.

Let me just summarize some things we have accomplished over the past six years within the areas of need identified by the Board of Directors as mentioned above.

Development of the organization and its organizational culture

I have found in many organizational settings that there is a temptation to create a hierarchy of importance related to organization health vs. program health. Traditionally, Christian schools have maintained this hierarchy, with the education program considered a priority over the organizational

health and capacity. It is true that such positioning results in very strong programs. However, in many cases, the strong program eventually becomes stalled due to the lack of a flourishing organizational ecosystem. When vital functions of the organization are not getting the attention and resources they need, the programs suffer.

Calvin Christian School has been known for years as having a very strong education program. But, with the organization becoming more complex and its environment more challenging, organizational health needed more attention. It was time to spend some intense time and resources to strengthen all functions of the organization: development, communications, finance, and admissions, among others. In doing so, the education program has also been strengthened. New positions needed to be established; roles needed to be redefined; systems had to be built; the board needed to take a more focused direction-setting role. We have seen the organization flourish as significant progress has been made in these areas.

An organizational culture which operates vertically creates a significant drag on organizational performance. The three CCS campuses came into being and developed their individual cultures at very distinctive points in the organization's history. Thus, each developed a unique culture and a related collective mindset about their position and role in the organization. This mindset contributed to isolation, competitiveness, inefficiencies and cross-campus dysfunction. To make strides in becoming a high-functioning organization, the mindset had to change---from being three schools under one corporate umbrella to one school with three interdependent campuses. This was a significant cultural shift requiring sacrifices, commitment, and hard work. As a result, we now see more cross-campus collaborating, shared learnings, shared experiences and more productive relationships.

Is CCS a flourishing organization as a result of these developments? We are stronger today than six years ago. Continued vigilance in this process of change will drive the organization to even higher levels of flourishing.

Value proposition of CCS

There are many options in today's education market place. Quality public schools; charter schools; a variety of non-governmental schools--Catholic, Lutheran, Independent, Christian. So how do we talk about CCS's education in such a way that provides a clear distinction in this education market place?

That is what the value proposition seeks to provide.

In our analysis of websites of other schools in the above categories of school, we noted some generalities that provide glimpses of what those school consider their value proposition. For public schools, they generally talk about building up employees---persons who will provide human resources to sustain or grow an economy. For charter schools, they generally talk about building up citizens---persons who will provide human resources to sustain or grow an economy, but with a certain character or specialty. Non-governmental schools tend to talk about building character and morality in the context of faith practices in the education process.

At Calvin Christian we go one step further. **We seek to build disciples of Jesus Christ—students who are intentional learners about how to live and think in the service of Jesus.** We

seek to build students who are animated by who they are as Christ's disciples. We teach for transformation.

So when folks ask me why they should pay CCS to educate their children, I always start with discipleship.

It is important to know that distinctive, as it is Calvin Christian's unique expression of Christian education for the benefit of God's kingdom.

Leadership in the Christian education movement

The Twin Cities Christian community is large enough for all the existing Christian schools to flourish. It's this premise that we as CCS leaders drew together leaders from eight other Christian schools in the metro region to begin to dialogue about how we can speak with one voice about the value of Christian education in the development of children and the growth of the Christian community.

Each school has its own unique expression of Christian education in its community. Yet we all seek the same end—the growth of God's kingdom. Therefore, we can work together as brothers and sisters in the effort.

The results have been interesting and inspiring. Collaborations have developed. For example, CCS shared a faculty member with Minnehaha Academy for two years. School leaders are affirming and encouraging each other. They are looking for ways they can be supportive rather than competitive. We learn from each other.

My hope is that these relationships can grow and continue to develop in the future—for the good of Christian education and the growth of God's kingdom.

Financial position of the school

Systems, trend analysis, budgeting, financial reporting---all disciplines that help organizations flourish related to finances. These, in addition to building strong supportive relationships with bankers, brokers, and donors, are critical to becoming a more stable and sustainable organization.

CCS has been blessed with generous donors who provided timely funding for new and innovative initiatives that could not be accomplished without their generous gifts. Contributions for endowment have more than doubled the size of the endowment in the past 3 years.

While much work has been done related to finance in the past few years, more work is necessary to reach the position of being a stable and sustainable organization.

In closing...

I must give credit for the growth and development of CCS where credit is due. Every employee in the organization has gone the extra mile, has sacrificed of themselves for the sake of building disciples, have worked beyond the expected, and have contributed to the critical dialogues in some way. CCS is blessed with committed, passionate and talented faculty and staff. It has been my privilege to lead this group and I give thanks to God for each one of them. Well done!

Let me express how much I enjoyed my leadership tenure at CCS. It has been a delight to be part of the CCS organization—to be a part of the mission of an organization that takes its organizational calling so seriously. It has been a delight to lead the organization on behalf of such an engaged, capable board of directors. It has been a delight to interact with a faculty whose members takes their personal callings so seriously, each and every one investing themselves in the lives of their students, loving them and caring deeply for their spiritual growth and development. It has been a delight to lead the staff members who serve with such care and support. And it has been a delight to be part of God's kingdom building efforts here at CCS.

I am thrilled to hand the baton of leadership to Dr. Bethany Schuttinga. Bethany has the leadership qualities that will serve CCS well as she capitalizes on the hard work of the Leadership Team members, the faculty, the staff and the parent over the past six years. I will watch with excitement from a distance. I anticipate great development and growth under Bethany's leadership.

To God be all the glory for his faithfulness in providing for each of our needs, individually and collectively!

Blessings!

Randy Kroll
President
Calvin Christian School
Blaine – Edina – Fridley

"Education is not something that traffics primarily in abstract, disembodied ideas; rather, education is a holistic endeavor that involves the whole person, including our bodies, in a process of formation that aims our desires, primes our imagination, and orients us to the world--all before we ever start thinking about it." From Desiring the Kingdom by James K.A. Smith