

Teaching and Learning at Denver Christian Schools

Guiding Principles

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Vision Statement

Denver Christian Schools will build and maintain, within the Reformed tradition of Christianity, a distinctive and outstanding Christian school program, pre-kindergarten through high school.

Mission Statement

Denver Christian Schools inspires and equips children of Christian parents to engage the world with Christ's transforming power and love.

Values Statement*

We value

- Christ-centered education
- Educational excellence
- A school culture that reflects the kingdom of God
- Community
- Honesty and integrity
- Stewardship of our resources
- Quality (high standards)

*Complete Values Statement is located in the appendix.

Philosophy of Education

Introduction

Every school has a worldview, a starting point that dictates not only what it teaches, but how that content is taught. This worldview influences and shapes children in a myriad of often-subtle, but nevertheless critically important ways.

It is vital, therefore, that a school be clear about the perspective that shapes its approach to education and on the basis of which it will teach, guide, and nurture the children it is privileged to serve.

Accordingly, Denver Christian Schools offers the following brief description of its worldview, as well as examples of some of the key implications that this worldview carries for teaching and learning at our school.

Our Biblical Worldview

We worship, honor, and seek to glorify the three persons of the Trinity. We believe that the triune God is sovereign over the all. Because God is Lord over all, we know that any truth that we discover not only originated with God but points to Him. Therefore, all truth is God's truth. Because we understand that academic and religious truths are congruent, we need not fear exploring and learning about all aspects of our world. Indeed, we are called by our Creator to do so.

We view God's truth through the narrative of the Creation, the Fall, and the Redemption. God created the universe perfectly. We, humankind, destroyed that perfection through our fall. Using us, His image bearers, God seeks to redeem the cosmos and thereby restore His creation. This view of the world embraces and informs every aspect of life.

As Christians, we belong to God and are called to live in His world, glorifying God and enjoying him forever. The nature of our presence in this world is determined by God's own redemptive work: specifically, we are called to be agents of renewal, enabled by the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help reclaim and restore the world for God's glory.

Educational Implications

At Denver Christian Schools, the “what” and the “how” of education—what we teach and how we do so—flow directly from our understanding of God, of the world that He created, and of humankind as made in His image.

Specifically, we provide an education grounded in our belief in the sovereignty of the triune God over His whole creation and His active desire to reconcile fallen creation to Himself.

Students educated from this perspective are confronted with the Biblical call to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and mind. They are instructed in ways of Christian discipleship and called to develop Christian virtues and practices. They are challenged to participate in God’s redemptive work. That is,

these students are **inspired** to see the world through the eyes of the Father, who delighted in his creation and desires for it to be reclaimed for Him.

these students are **equipped** with the ability to understand and apply God’s truth wherever it is found; they find this truth in studying both the created world and the mind of Christ as revealed in Scripture.

these students, by the power of the Holy Spirit, integrate their faith and their learning by doing: that is, they see every subject they study and every activity in which they participate as an opportunity to become **engaged** in the redemptive work of God here on earth.

At Denver Christian Schools, then, academic excellence is defined as the attainment of that knowledge and those skills, understandings, and interpretations that enable students to see their world, themselves, and their calling in life through the lens of God’s redemptive vision for His creation.

Key Descriptors

Three descriptors of the Denver Christian student and graduate capture our comprehensive educational approach.

Inspired

Equipped

Engaged

Inspired

(dreaming God's dreams)

- passionate about learning
- determined to excel
- eager to serve

Equipped

(learning God's truth)

- academically prepared
- personally and culturally aware
- spiritually discerning

Engaged

(doing God's work)

- alert to God's call
- invested in community
- serious about change

Inspired

Denver Christian students are **passionate about learning**, drawn into their studies by a joyful awareness and appreciation of the beauty, complexity, elegance, and vastness of the cosmos God has created. Students experience the pleasure and wonder of learning as they move through a comprehensive and integrated program designed to address each student's specific academic interests and needs.

Denver Christian students are **determined to excel**, empowered by tools that encourage children to track and reflect on their growth. Student-centered assessments and personal portfolios facilitate, document, and celebrate each child's maturation into the uniquely-gifted and capable person he or she was created to be.

Denver Christian students are **eager to serve**, inspired by a vision of Christian life as a transformative endeavor wherein they are called to apply their God-given gifts to bring Christ's healing power and love into a fallen, broken world. Their grasp of this exciting and important calling motivates and shapes their development into young men and women who respond in faithfulness and joy to God's invitation to believers to serve in all occasions and in a myriad of ways as the hands and feet of Christ.

Equipped

Denver Christian students are **academically prepared**, armed not only with strong foundational skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and other subjects, but also with vital higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and application. As individuals capable of locating, assessing, organizing, and imaginatively and meaningfully communicating and using information and ideas, students are prepared to excel both in rigorous college-level programs and in life.

Denver Christian students are **personally aware**, honest, thoughtful, and knowledgeable about themselves. Consistent encouragement and frequent opportunities for reflection and exploration help students discover their specific interests and passions, and recognize and develop their unique gifts and talents. Graduates leave DCS confident and excited about using their diverse abilities for God's glory.

Denver Christian students are **culturally aware**, thoughtful and knowledgeable about the times in which they live. Students see all of life through the lens of Scripture, recognize the messages implicit in modern culture, and evaluate those messages from a Christian perspective. Students affirm and celebrate the world's beauty, yet also acknowledge its pain and proclaim and seek the healing that God offers in Christ.

Denver Christian students are **spiritually discerning**, enabled to grapple meaningfully, productively, and personally with age-appropriate and sometimes-tough questions of life. Students work hard to learn about, embrace, and usefully apply a personal faith; they understand how to think about, talk about, and actively make God-honoring choices.

Engaged

Denver Christian students are **alert to God's call**, empowered by the Holy Spirit and inspired by their understanding of God and of themselves in relation to Him. Students realize that God's invitation to join Christ in His work of renewal—in helping to make right a broken world—extends to all believers, whatever their age, profession, or station in life. Students understand that even learning itself is a spiritual calling: that it draws us closer to God and gives us the knowledge and skills that we need to be increasingly effective agents of renewal in God's world.

Denver Christian students are **invested in community**, both enfolded within and actively involved in building Christian community wherever they live, work, and worship. Academically, students understand the value of participating in focused, dynamic, supportive learning communities, and they work hard to create and nurture such communities in classrooms and extra-curricular activities. Spiritually, students recognize their responsibility to encourage others with humility and love, and to forge and sustain relationships that glorify God by reflecting and celebrating His love and joy.

Denver Christian students are **serious about change**, committed to contributing actively and significantly to our world's larger healing. Students internalize the truth that there is no square inch of the cosmos that God does not call His own and recognize, therefore, that they are, at all times and in all ways, challenged to be meaningfully engaged in God's redemptive work on earth. Now and in the future, students and graduates labor in God's kingdom, striving toward the restoration of the peace, justice, and harmony that characterize His intended creation.

Organizational Implications

From Vision to Reality

For our vision to be reality, for our mission to be accomplished, for our students and graduates to indeed be accurately described as inspired, equipped, and engaged, we must enjoy complete understanding, full support, and total commitment toward those goals from everyone connected with Denver Christian Schools. Indeed, all of us must be similarly inspired, similarly equipped, and similarly engaged in doing God's work. Parents, volunteers, Board trustees, committee members, faculty, non-teaching staff, administrators, and even, and most importantly, our students, must all perform their tasks and fill their unique roles in a way that will produce the person described in this document.

Different methods can accomplish the same result and unique gifts and talents are useful in different situations. However, because it is crucial that all of our work be pointed toward our common goal, the performance of everyone at DCS is regularly assessed against job descriptions written with the inspired, equipped, and engaged employee in view, and curriculum and teaching practices are constantly reviewed against the ideals articulated in this document. Only those programs, procedures, practices, and personnel that contribute toward the development of inspired, equipped, and engaged students are privileged to participate in the accomplishment of our mission.

Appendix

Values Statement

We value **Christ-centered education**: We emphasize our belief that the world belongs to God, that all knowledge and truth come from Him, and that Jesus is Lord over all creation. Because of that emphasis, our teachings, the curricula we present and the learning opportunities we provide will ground students in God's Word and prepare them to live lives of service in the world.

We value **educational excellence**: We model a pre-school-12th grade liberal arts curriculum that focuses on the whole child as an intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical being. We encourage teachers to develop best practices in their classrooms and foster educational partnerships with the broader community that promote learning on a variety of levels. Administrators and support staff work to help create a safe, productive and dynamic learning environment where excellence is defined, measured and supported.

We value **a school culture that reflects the kingdom of God**: We desire to admit students, hire staff, and garner support from people of all backgrounds who demonstrate a relationship with Jesus Christ and a commitment to live according to his Word.

We value **community**: We strive to establish an atmosphere in which love for God and love for each other is evident. We seek to model Christ in our interactions with one another by expressing acts and attitudes of prayer, encouragement, inclusion, humility, grace, discipline, accountability, empathy and care.

We value **honesty and integrity**: In interactions with each campus, with the constituency, and in the broader community, we seek to demonstrate the gospel of love by acting fairly, transparently, and responsibly, and communicating openly and effectively.

We value **stewardship of our resources**: We are committed to prudent management of current financial resources, and we are dedicated to developing new sources of income. Our goal is to strengthen our ability to enhance operations and lessen our dependence on enrollment-driven budget planning.

We value **quality**: God calls us to a high standard in all that we do. We strive to create an environment in which people reach for their God-given potential and God is glorified.