Recommendations for Change

A Vision with a Task embraces a program of learning for responsive discipleship. To help Christian schools with that task, we have a number of recommendations to make for the implementation of this program.

We believe that Christian schools should function as covenant communities. We often use the term schools when indicating who should implement these recommendations. While individuals with specific tasks will work on certain aspects of a recommendation, the school community as a whole must take responsibility for its overall implementation.

We recommend:

1. That Christian schools discuss the nature and task of learning for responsive discipleship in terms of how they can encourage their students to unwrap gifts, share joys and bear each other's burdens, and seek shalom within and outside the school.

2. That, at least, once every five years, Christian schools analyze the social factors affecting the school, both those in the surrounding culture and those within the supporting community.
   a. That national and regional Christian school organizations develop materials that provide local school communities with procedures and materials for such investigation and scrutiny.
   b. That local schools regularly collect data on social trends within their supporting community.
   c. That local schools appoint an ad hoc committee of students, parents, teachers, and education committee and board members to analyze social changes (e.g., family patterns and problems, use of leisure time, effect of media on family life) and make recommendations to the school society.
   d. That Christian schools determine and implement desirable structural and program changes that take into account relevant social factors.

3. That Christian schools compose a mission statement and corresponding objectives that unpack and clarify that statement, and revise these at least once every five years.
   a. That the board, principal, and teachers regularly articulate the school's mission statement and objectives so that the school's guiding vision is clear to students and parents.
   b. That schools determine whether proposed policies are compatible with their mission, and set priorities for new initiatives on the basis of the school's vision as enunciated in its mission statement.
   c. That the board, committees, and staff consistently use the school's mission statement and objectives as a framework for making all decisions, including those with respect to program and instruction, evaluation, and enrollment.

4. That schools, in order to realize their vision, implement one- to two-week planning sessions by teachers prior to the beginning of classes, with the agenda being set on the basis of the school's mission statement, input from graduating and other students, and end-of-year teacher grade-level or department meetings.

5. That schools implement a system of teacher peer associates whereby pairs of colleagues support each other in prayer, by active listening, through assisting and encouraging each other, and by asking questions that require the exercise of judgment and discernment. Schools would do well to provide peer associates with time to visit each other's classes to help analyze each other's teaching, and pair new teachers with experienced ones.

6. That schools encourage mutual love, compassion, and respect among students, teachers, parents, and board and committee members so that all can fulfill their respective callings.
   a. That schools promote and practice honest, forthright, and respectful communication.
   b. That schools regularly affirm and celebrate their vision with parents, teachers, and students.
   c. That schools, recognizing that God grants leadership and authority for service, enable all involved in the school to exercise their legitimate authority to make decisions in their areas of calling.
7. That schools include learning experiences focusing on ways of knowing traditionally underemphasized in school programs, such as the spiritual, ethical, aesthetic, spatial, intrapersonal, and interpersonal.
   a. That schools offer learning experiences appropriate for diverse learning styles.
   b. That schools plan their program and teaching to counter gender biases in current structures and practices.
   c. That schools develop collaborative group approaches involving students of different abilities and avoid grouping or streaming students by ability (except by self-selection in specialized studies in senior high school grades).
   d. That schools include experiences throughout their program that help students in their journey of faith at each level of development.

8. That schools implement an integral curriculum in which knowledge entails a personal response of insight and service.
   a. That schools plan learning activities that involve a rhythm of immersion in experience, withdrawal to focus on a problem or phenomena in particular ways, and return to the experiential context to apply their deepened knowledge in new ways.
   b. That schools enculture students in our Christian and common human heritage and enable them to experience the awe and wonder of God's creation, by including relevant and challenging curriculum content that the students imaginatively engage with and apply.
   c. That schools undertake curriculum planning in schools communally and systematically under the leadership of a school based curriculum coordinator.
   d. That schools schedule weekly periods used solely for staff curriculum planning (e.g., from 2:30-4:00 P.M. on Wednesdays).

9. That schools develop structures that facilitate implementation of the school's vision.
   a. That schools broaden their enrollment base and work toward racial, cultural, and academic diversity among students, teachers, and board members.
   b. That the curriculum rely less on one-per-student textbooks and more on a variety of resources.
   c. That student service projects become a regular and coherent part of the school curriculum.
   d. That schools organize the curriculum at the elementary level and the foundational core at the middle and high school levels using mainly integral units, gradually increasing the proportion of specialized studies as students progress through the grades.
   e. That large schools, in order to build a sense of community and belonging, structure themselves into divisions or "houses," with a team of four to six teachers being responsible for planning and implementing the curriculum for each house.
   f. That schools change their calendars to allow for increased time for student learning, and staff development and planning. Below is one possible arrangement for the 1993-94 school year that would include 187-189 instructional days (depending on local holidays) and 18 staff planning days:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 16-24</td>
<td>Staff development, team planning, individual preparation (7 days)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 25-Oct. 15</td>
<td>36 instructional days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 18-22</td>
<td>Student break; parent-teacher-student conferences; teachers' conventions, staff planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 25-Dec. 17</td>
<td>38 instructional days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 20-Dec. 31</td>
<td>Christmas vacation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 3-Feb. 25</td>
<td>39 instructional days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 28-Mar. 4</td>
<td>Student break; staff work on report cards and curriculum planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar. 7-Apr. 29</td>
<td>38 instructional days</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2-May 6</td>
<td>Spring vacation</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 9-June 29</td>
<td>36 instructional days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30</td>
<td>Year-end staff planning and wrap-up</td>
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This calendar assumes that teachers, as part of their contract, will attend all days set aside for planning, and that boards and teachers will adjust their contracts accordingly. Courses and institutes would be scheduled during July.

10. That the integral units focus on areas that have creational integrity and are rich in meaning, and that such units include:
   a. a consideration of God's intention for the area being studied, how this purpose has been distorted by sin and the avenues by which we may hope to bring healing and reconciliation;
   b. an investigation, within the context of Christian values, of pertinent issues addressed at the appropriate level;
   c. the posing of problems (e.g., spiritual, ethical, social, stewardship, aesthetic, kinesthetic, and technological) by teachers and students that leads to the making of decisions in real-life contexts;
   d. learning experiences for students with different abilities and interests;
   e. content and activities that deal with student questions and concerns;
   f. skills that are developed as an integral part of the unit.

11. That schools use their mission statement and objectives to formulate principles for student assessment and evaluation.
   a. That schools broaden their range of assessment and evaluation procedures to include, for example, portfolios of student work, informal observation on the basis of specified criteria, performance tasks, student self-evaluation, and exhibitions.
   b. That schools, on the basis of the principles delineated, consider the extent to which they can replace standardized tests and grades with more formative and informative assessment procedures.

12. That Christian school boards require teachers to pursue regular professional development.
   a. That boards support this by providing time and finances.
   b. That schools consider using strategies such as study groups and collaborative action research as means of sustaining this program of staff development.