



### **Making the Most of the Minutes**

By Nancy Shonamon, Christian School Representative

During an evening conversation with my family a few days ago, we found ourselves reflecting on our years of serving at a Christian school near Fort Worth, Texas. My husband and I are both Christian educators with three children now in their mid-twenties. It began with picking up our lives and moving from the Midwest during the summer of 2004. Despite getting introduced to Texas in the heat of the summer, it has been a rich journey with our entire family going to school and working under one roof.

In the middle of the conversation, the reality of being an educator for almost 30 years made me realize how time had flown. School years have a way of marching to a rhythm that seems to make the years blur. Each academic year starts in the fall with teachers, students, and parents looking forward to the next event, the next holiday, the next challenge, and before you know it, here comes summer vacation again. Another year has flown by.

#### **A Decision About Education**

For our family, the decision to raise our children in a Christian school came in their early elementary years. A large dynamic behind this decision was watching our children grow up way too fast and feeling an urgency in our hearts about our responsibility as parents to train them in a biblical worldview. How were we going to prepare them spiritually to face a world that seems to increase in challenges that pull at their faith? How were we going to raise Kingdom warriors who make a positive impact in today's world?

Somewhere in the middle of wrestling with school choices, a simple fact was pointed out to me that dynamically impacted decisions about how to educate our children. Raising children, especially to disciple them in a biblical worldview, takes a great amount of intentionality. When we saw the math behind whether to choose a public or Christian school for our children's education, we knew right away what was going to be best for our family.

### **Do the Math**

In a typical kindergarten through 12th-grade experience for a child, there are 13 years of education. If you think about raising a public school child who attends church weekly from kindergarten through 12th grade, it is reasonable to think that attending a Sunday school class or youth group, a child is exposed to approximately two hours weekly of biblical training outside of the home. Two hours a week multiplied by 52 weeks a year and 13 years of training equates to approximately 1,300 hours of discipleship.

If that same child is enrolled in a Christian school that intentionally fosters a biblical worldview, the discipleship opportunities outside of the home become exponential. With 13 years of education at approximately 36 weeks per year multiplied by 7 hours daily and 5 days weekly, the discipleship hours total to approximately 16,000 hours over the course of their pre-college educational experience.

Not only is this a great fact to point out to families who are considering Christian education, it should especially move all Christian school educators to reflect on the responsibility of being intentional throughout the school day of the precious minutes they have to pour into the minds and hearts of young people. How can we make the most of the minutes we have with our students while they sit in our Christian school classrooms? That process begins with intentionality. How can Christian school educators point students toward practical application of their faith? How do we teach them to think it out and live it out daily?

### **What the Children Said**

Two of my three children are currently living at home. One will soon be transitioning to a ministry school in Tennessee. The other is on furlough as a missionary in Southeast Asia. My third child lives out of state and serves as a worship arts director in a local church in addition to traveling the nation with a praise and worship band. All three were raised in a Christian school environment. I asked them for insights about their experiences in being raised in a school that promoted a biblical worldview and what had the most impact on their faith.

All my children agreed that being surrounded in an environment with adult Christian mentors who intentionally built relationships with them, attended their events, and consistently provided a listening ear and wise counsel had the greatest impact on their faith journey. They felt some classes and teachers were more intentional than others in consistently prioritizing a Christian worldview within the subject matter. The best experiences were the classes that promoted critically thinking about their faith and how they could put their faith into action. These practical applications made sense to them. Being free to discuss faith topics in class, the ability to ask questions without judgment, and feeling loved as they traversed the challenges of being a teenager were valued greatly.

One of my children remembered memorizing weekly Scripture verses. Her teachers implemented the Swedish Bible Study method that promoted the meaning of the verses rather than simply memorizing the verse. The required volunteer hours and community service during missions month greatly impacted

my son's call to ministry. Being given opportunities to foster musical talents in student-led chapels was key for my daughter. Guest speakers giving their testimonies about a transformed lifestyle, prayers and pledges each morning, and morning announcements over the intercom always closing with "remember, you are always loved" were all instrumental in building the faith of my children and pointing them toward a life of serving Christ.

As Christian school educators, please join me in praying daily as we ask the Lord to show us how to intentionally make the most of the minutes we have in our classrooms.

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