

Five Ways . . .

the local church with a college ministry or Monday morning quiet time. . . . But our maturing love for God and our neighbor is inseparable from the work and worth of the local church. Try and think, rather lie, to yourself that this small school in your city is the axis of salvation, and you will waste your education.

As educators, we believe in what we are doing, and that what we are doing by partnering with your parents is to set before you the best literature, authors, and courses for the development of your whole person at this stage of your life. . . . Still, it's important that you not waste your education in this time, and that we all guard against the slippery slopes to which our hearts are prone. You are only here for a short time, and that short time is the most foundational in the grand scope of your life. In this surge of classical Christian schools, faith is necessary. And an understanding that God both gives and takes away is imperative, but blessed be the name of the Lord. And may you become a better refinery of Egyptian gold than any of us.

Top Five Tips for Administrators

by Travis Ketner, Student at Texas A&M-San Antonio

School administration is a challenging and rewarding profession. Equal parts educator and manager, a successful school administrator performs a vital role in the lives of his students and faculty. The administration of a classical and Christian school is made more complex because of the demanding curriculum and the duty of the school to impart biblical values and a Christian example to students.

The following "Top Five Tips" were taken from an interview by Travis Ketner with Mr. Brad Ryden, head of school at Geneva School of Boerne, Texas.

1. Delineate spheres of influence between school administration and the board of directors. An ideal solution is for the board of directors to handle "big picture" ideas such as policies and vision while the full time headmaster or head of school works to implement these policies using his specialized knowledge and background. Mr. Ryden described his relationship with the board of directors for Geneva School as based on "trust and understanding" (1 Peter 4:8). Communication between the board of directors and school administration fosters respect and provides the administration with the latitude to make the day-to-day decisions necessary for Geneva School to run smoothly (Mt. 7:12).

The goal of a successful administrator is to remember that he is responsible for communicating "up" to the board

of directors all of the needs of the school and concerns of his faculty and staff. At the same time, the administrator is also responsible for communicating "down" to the faculty and staff the vision of the board of directors and the policies that the board wishes to see enacted. It can be difficult for the administrator, caught between these two groups; but honesty, humility, and communication are three useful tools for navigating this responsibility.

2. Members of the board of directors have no living constituents. Geneva School sets their goals in terms of a five-year plan. Each summer, the school administration and the board of directors participate in a weekend retreat during which they collaborate on specific goals for the next year. The board of directors, in charge of policy and vision, has the final word on the direction of the school, but all decisions are made with input from Mr. Ryden. It is during this retreat that monthly agendas are written for the entire school year. This provides Mr. Ryden with a set of short-term goals for each month that fit smoothly within a well-crafted, long-term plan. Mr. Ryden prefers that his board of directors think even more long term than five years, but of future generations. "I tell them, you have no living constituents," he says. This motivation and coordination between the board of directors and the administration provides for a truly long-term plan for Geneva School (Proverbs 15:22).

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Top Five Tips . . .

3. The teaching faculty is where “the rubber meets the road.” It is important to recognize that maintaining a low teacher-student ratio is integral to student success. Mr. Ryden says that “the teaching faculty is where the rubber meets the road” and he works diligently to keep tuition low while providing small classes and highly trained instructors. One way to accomplish this is through staffing assignments. For example, instead of hiring multiple college counselors, Geneva School has one and requires administrators to “wear many hats.”

Additionally, Mr. Ryden teaches seventh grade logic. This means that he gets a firsthand view of the needs of his teachers and can quickly respond to their needs. This also keeps Mr. Ryden’s teaching skills sharp and serves to ameliorate any philosophical divisions between the teaching staff and school administration.

4. Work to empower teachers. A teacher who feels empowered about his or her job is more likely to be able to solve problems on their own without the need of school administration. This saves work and spreads the leadership responsibilities around to different parts of the school. This is “distributed leadership,” not a division of labor, and can assist the school administrator in handling the various complex tasks of school leadership.

One of the unique challenges in administering a classical school is the dearth of teachers experienced in classical education. To counteract this need, Geneva School developed their own “in house” professional development program. Called “Geneva Institute Faculty Training” (GIFT), this program is designed to improve

teaching ability and educate new faculty on the skills they need to teach within the classical tradition.

5. Live out your theology. This is more than a tip, it is a requirement. Everything that is done at a classical and Christian school should be focused on the glory of God, our Creator, and His Son. The mission of Geneva School is “*to provide a classical education from a biblical worldview, to equip students for a lifetime of learning, service and leadership to the glory of God.*” This mission permeates the entire school.

Geneva School is a classical and Christian school and the faculty and administration strive to live out these principles every day. Each morning, the staff begins the day with a devotional, and accountability and responsibility are taught to students from a biblical perspective. Mr. Ryden says it is important, especially when dealing with teenagers, not to be a hypocrite. He says that nothing “turns off” a teenager faster than the feeling that an adult is hypocritical about his or her Christianity.

The task of being a successful school administrator is challenging, but it can also be rewarding. Running a classical and Christian school brings with it a unique set of challenges not seen in other traditional private schools or secular public education. However, a dedicated administrator, like Brad Ryden, who seeks to serve his subordinates and wants to see them succeed, can have an enormous positive impact on the lives of young people.

On Chess and Classical Christian Education

Jonathan Kenigson, Paideia Academy

Classical and Christian education is a three-stage process spanning the entirety of a kindergarten through twelfth grade education with the purpose of nurturing and forming biblically minded and well-educated students (utilizing the great books of the Western world as a curriculum). The first stage of the classical progression—the grammar stage—begins in kindergarten and terminates roughly in fifth grade. Students in this stage are especially apt to memorize and are encouraged to commit many facts and premises of literature, history, grammar, poetry, arithmetic, science, and Bible to memory. The logic stage roughly spans grades six through nine and (as students of this age seem by nature particularly apt to argument) has an emphasis upon linking the facts so committed in the grammar stage to practical utility through the use of formal argument. Finally, the poetic stage, roughly spanning the balance of high school, is a time in which most students feel a natural yearning for self-invention and self-expression, and are encouraged to draft and defend properly factual (grammar level) and properly reasoned (logic level) arguments in aesthetically appealing forms.

As is maintained above, classical and Christian education beyond the grammar level is founded upon the notion that clear, precise, and rigorous thought is a more important attribute of student achievement than the memorization or regurgitation of facts. And perhaps no intellectual activity demands, for that matter,