
BCS Renewal Plan Working Document (Nov/Dec 2001-- revised August 2003)

Why a Plan for Renewal

Bellevue Christian School is currently developing and refining a Plan for Educational Renewal as part of our systematic self-study process. The BCS self-evaluation occurs every seven years prior to reaccreditation and will be completed in 2003-2004. The renewal plan will affirm and renew the education envisioned by founders Al and Joe Greene, ensuring that all of our programs align with our mission "to prepare students to live fully for God in a rapidly changing world."

The framework for our Plan for Renewal is based on seven attributes of high achieving schools developed by a team of researchers, consultants, and members of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Finding a striking similarity among the principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools, the criteria for the New American High School Award program conducted by the Department of Education, and the foundation's research on successful schools, the team has identified "seven attributes of high achieving schools." Through our self-study process, we will evaluate these attributes and apply them to BCS, within the context of our distinctive Christian Education. More than anything, we must always make sure that our plan answers, "What is best for our students?"

Bellevue Christian School has a rich heritage and widely shared vision. We are grateful for the written documents pertaining to the philosophy, mission, and goals of BCS. These scripturally based documents provide the foundation for our school and vision for the future. Through our Plan for Renewal we will review existing documents, clarify our core values, focus on key learning goals that communicate our vision for Christian schooling, and unite our faculty around an instructional approach based on our shared beliefs about teaching and learning. Our use of time, tools, materials and professional development activities will be aligned with this instructional approach.

The following eight attributes describe how we envision the attributes of high achieving schools as they apply to a distinctive Bellevue Christian School Education.

1. Our Common Focus

“Our mission is to prepare young people to live fully for God in a rapidly changing world, with the ability to understand, evaluate, and transform their world from the foundation of God’s unchanging values.”

At the heart of education at BCS are “Essential Questions for Learning to Think through Life.” Recognizing that learning to ask the right questions is essential to all learning, members of the BCS community have worked diligently to identify a set of questions that clearly reflect our educational goals and communicate our vision for Christian education. Early in 2003 these essential questions were officially adopted to serve as a reference point for students, faculty and parents. These questions, central to all of our teaching and learning, serve to sharpen our focus and guide our thinking.

Essential Questions for Learning to Think Through Life

Habits of the Heart: *How is Jesus Christ at the center of my life and learning?*

- ? *Worldview: How do my beliefs shape my view of life and the world?*
- ? *Wholeness: How does what I learn help me see the wholeness of the creation and the glory of the creator?*
- ? *Worship: How does what I learn lead me to know and respond to God?*

Habits of the Mind: *How do I think clearly and critically?*

- ? *Evidence: How do I know this information is reliable?*
- ? *Perspective: Whose perspective does this represent?*
- ? *Point of View: How does a belief system influence a point of view?*
- ? *Connections: How does one aspect of learning connect with other aspects?*
- ? *Supposition: How might things have been otherwise?*
- ? *Relevance: Why is this important?*

Communication: *How do I receive and express ideas, truth and love?*

Ethics and Stewardship: *How do I practice what I have learned in a way that cares for others and the rest of creation?*

Giftedness: *How do I develop and use the gifts God has given me?*

Community: *How do I learn, live and serve with others?*

2. High Expectations

Affirming the value of clear expectations, the Plan for Renewal challenges faculty to set high standards of performance for their respective assignments. As a school, we seek to unwrap the gifts of each student and help them grow in their understanding of God's call. With the essential questions providing a unifying structure, we want all students to be engaged daily in purposeful learning activities, to use their Christian worldview to think critically, and to be prepared for the college of their choice or the work place.

BCS proposes to:

- ? Develop a core curriculum
- ? Continue a thorough curriculum review process, using the essential questions as a reference point
- ? Establish systematic evaluation/accountability for students, staff, and schools
- ? Develop expectations of parents (support collaboration, attendance, projects)

3. Relational Education

Reflecting our relationship to God, a BCS education is relational at its core. Accordingly, we affirm our commitment to relational education and seek to promote healthy, sustained relationships so that every student and family is known. This means maintaining the optimal enrollment that allows relationships at each grade level and in the classroom. In addition, BCS will continue to promote and honor partnership with parents in the education of students.

BCS proposes to:

- ? Provide programs that develop student/student, student/staff, and student/staff/parent relationships centered on life interests and issues
- ? Provide opportunities for class/grade level small groups to address student needs
- ? Provide programs that foster relationships among adults and students dealing with life interests and issues.
- ? Engage the "three legged stool" of home, church and school throughout the education process

4. A Supportive Learning Environment

Parents frequently indicate that a safe, caring environment is a high priority among their selection criteria for a school. BCS will continue its effort to provide a safe, enfolding, respectful learning environment in which differences are appreciated and inquiry is valued. Faculty and staff will teach, model, and expect responsible behavior based on relationships of mutual respect.

BCS Proposes to:

- ? Define, teach, and model specific virtues. These include diligence, patience, honesty, courage, charity, creativity, empathy, humility, stewardship, compassion, justice, faith, hope, and wisdom, kindness, faithfulness, goodness, self-control, and persistence. Consistent standards of behavior are expected of all members of the BCS community.
- ? Faithfully practice the conflict resolution policy

5. Time to Collaborate

Individual and collaborative planning time is essential for the professional growth of our teachers. We want our teachers to improve their skills and experience the value Bellevue Christian places on their development. Our plan is to find creative ways to improve the school calendar and workweek to provide more time for team planning. In addition, we want to utilize the tremendous resources available from our school community by partnering with individuals, businesses, and universities that will help us cultivate work-based professional development of our teachers and enhance the education of our students.

BCS Proposes to:

- ? Encourage faculty to participate in professional growth opportunities
- ? Encourage faculty to participate in professional education organizations
- ? Provide frequent and regular collaborative planning time for every faculty member
- ? Use every creative alternative for providing teachers with time for collaboration with peers and in their subject areas.

6. In-depth Learning

BCS educational philosophy affirms the Biblical principle that “learning is doing.” As our students become skilled in the basics of reading, writing and mathematics, they will dig deep into certain topics and learn life-long skills of research and critical thinking. We want all students to be given the opportunity to learn through varied and meaningful projects that connect their classroom knowledge with real-world experience. Collaborative, in-depth projects are encouraged to improve our students’ ability to work in teams and experience the synergy of group work. We expect that, as our students mature through BCS programs, demonstrations and presentations that reflect application of the BCS essential questions will become part of our recognition and celebration of learning.

BCS proposes to:

- ? Require elementary students to complete one project per trimester.
- ? Require secondary students complete one project per semester.
- ? Utilize parent partnerships to help students complete projects, providing guidelines for appropriate assistance from parents
- ? Include business and professional internships for students in some courses of study

7. Engaging and Transforming Culture

At the heart of the BCS mission we strive to prepare students for a rapidly changing world with a worldview that helps them make a difference wherever God’s call places them. Our students need to practice what they are learning and to improve their proficiency in the ethical and practical use of technology. With access to best practices and professional growth opportunities, BCS teachers will design engaging and imaginative curriculum linked to BCS learning goals and essential questions, analyze the results, and evaluate student performance, based on learning standards. We want to be transparent and share our students’ accomplishments with the school community, and as appropriate with the greater community, thereby creating a conversation of continuous improvement.

BCS proposes to:

- ? Encourage proficiency in the use of current technology
- ? Ensure that BCS’s educational heart and practices are transparent to its community

8. Quality Use of Time

The pace of life in our culture often makes it difficult to coordinate family and school activities and answer the question, "What is best for students?" Parent volunteers and the expertise available in our community can help improve instructional time, and we hope to use them more efficiently. We encourage BCS faculty and parents to give instructional time high priority, seeking a commitment by all to decrease the number of conflicts between non-school activities and class time.

The calendar should reflect, "What is best for our students?"

BCS proposes to:

- ? Encourage parents to use the collaborative planning time for family appointments, class parties, parent coaching, student projects, internships and enrichment opportunities
- ? Schedule no athletic and performance activity practices and events during the collaborative planning time
- ? Provide a period of rest/vacation at strategic intervals
- ? Provide for instruction regarding holidays in the curriculum and honor holidays as family time.