

PREAMBLE

The classroom and the relationship between teacher and student are central to Christian education, for it is here that the students begin to understand how faith and learning are one and what it means to be disciples of Jesus Christ in all of life. According to John Van Dyk, the ultimate goal of the Christian school is to lead the students into *knowledgeable and competent discipleship* (*The Craft of Christian Teaching*, p. 64). The Bible describes knowledge as *wisdom*, the beginning of which, according to Psalm 111, is *the fear of the Lord*. A wise person wants to do the will of God; and doing the will of God is the *essence* of discipleship.

Consequently, it is crucial that teachers in a Christian school:

- ◇ love Jesus Christ and know He is their Lord and Saviour.
- ◇ demonstrate their commitment to Jesus Christ in their “walk and talk”.
- ◇ are members in good standing of a church whose teachings are compatible with the constitution of the Christian school that employs them.
- ◇ are committed to Christian education and have an alert awareness of the place of the Christian school in contemporary education.
- ◇ realize teaching from a Christian perspective does not happen automatically but requires continual study and reflection.
- ◇ understand the importance of and are willing to engage in ongoing professional development.

The Christian School Teacher’s Certificate (CSTC) is an Ontario Christian School Teachers Association (OCSTA) certificate, administered by the Credentials Committee. Endorsed by the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS), it is a unique certificate in that it attempts to integrate theory and practice in Christian education. Therefore, it is important that all teachers in OACS-affiliated schools be required to obtain this certificate as a priority for their professional development.

A. PHILOSOPHY AND RATIONAL

1. Introduction

The Christian School Teacher's Certificate (CSTC) is a major component in determining the teaching qualifications for teachers in the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) system. The CSTC is awarded by the Ontario Christian School Teachers Association (OCSTA) and endorsed by the OACS. Both organizations desire to encourage and maintain an independent school system with appropriate professional standards.

2. Guiding Principles

- 2.1 The existence of OCSTA and the OACS indicates the presence and significance of a unique vision of educational organization in Ontario; a vision that requires the articulations of independent standards.
- 2.2 The level of professional expertise and excellence required in the Christian school system is equal to that of the accepted standards in the Ontario professional educational community, but not necessarily identical to it.
- 2.3 General qualifications for the certificate have been developed in consultation between OCSTA and the OACS. The specific implementation is the responsibility of the OCSTA Board via its Credentials Committee.
- 2.4 These principles lead to the following features of the Christian School Teacher's Certificate:
 - Its existence embodies the vision of education endorsed by OCSTA and OACS educators. See #A.3 for a brief vision statement.
 - The balance of perspective and professional courses required for the certificate is of practical benefit to the schools and in the long-term best interest of the reputation of Christian education in general.
 - As an independent alternative to the existing educational systems, it is important for the OACS to have unique professional standards in place and functioning properly.
 - The OCSTA and OACS memberships believe it to be essential that the certificate standards be maintained in order to ensure the general public that a specifically identifiable level of Christian expertise is available in OACS schools. Thus the certificate includes the following special features:
 - ☑ it requires that courses be taught from a Reformed perspective;
 - ☑ it requires foundational courses as described in section 4.7: CSTC Areas of Study;
 - ☑ it incorporates standard requirements of teacher education in North America.

3. **Vision of Christian Education**

We live between the ascension and return of Jesus Christ. We know the outcome of the drama of salvation, but we are still writing the script using the Bible as our guide. Therefore, as citizens of the Kingdom of God and participants in God's redemption and reconciliation, we are called to live as *children of light* (Ephesians 5:8), to be *transformed by the renewing of [our] minds* (Romans 12:2) and to give witness (in knowing and doing) to the lordship of Jesus Christ over all of life (Colossians 1:15-23). This means that in a Christian school, students are taught to discern the spirit of our times and to bring about the restoration begun by Jesus Christ to be completed when He returns.

To help the students in their learning, they first need a basic understanding of these four common world and life view questions:

- who they are (children of God);
- where they are (on earth, God's world);
- why they are here (to maintain, enjoy and develop God's earth, as God's representatives);
- what their ultimate goal is (the new creation as described in Revelation 21 & 22).

Secondly, the students need to learn how God sustains the laws of nature and provides us with norms for human culture and society that help us to be co-workers in His Kingdom. These norms include love, faithfulness, compassion, righteousness, integrity, justice, responsible stewardship and peace.

Thirdly, the students need to know that the fall into sin distorted God's good creation, perverted human relationships and alienated us from God. However, it is through Christ's death and resurrection that restoration is possible.

Fourthly, we need to equip the students to discern the spirit of our times. That means they need to understand where we have gone in the wrong direction, what needs to be done to set things right, and how they are to make responsible choices that honour God.

In summary, Christian education is about the lordship of Jesus Christ. That means, we need to train the students to be kingdom citizens, to think Christianly and to be actively involved in reclaiming the kingdom of God.

4. **Definition of a Reformed Worldview**

A worldview is how a person or a community understands life and the world. Worldviews have to be more than theories; they need to come alive in our teaching and learning.

Our schools are based on a Reformed worldview and aim for the renewal of minds and the transformation of lives (Romans 12:2). What that means in more detail is clearly described in the two articles included in this handbook:

- ▶ *Education Within the Reformed Tradition: What Are We Really Talking About?* written by Dr. Jack Fennema. Taken from *Christian Educators Journal*, December 1998; reprinted with permission.

- ▶ *Ten Worldview Statements For Christian Schools* by Bert Witvoet. Taken from *Christian Educators Journal*, February 2002; reprinted with permission.