

KEYS TO A CHRISTIAN'S EDUCATION

ANDREW YODER

I am currently enjoying my 4th year as junior and senior high school teacher at our church school. I also fill the role of principle. In the past few years we have added four years of High School to our K-8 program. While working with that project I have often asked myself and others what should be included in a Christian high school education. This article is a compilation of my ideas but I am still learning.

Education in general is looked at as an opportunity to learn the fundamental skills needed to survive in this world of communication and commerce. This education then magically becomes "Christian" when we use books that quote Bible verses and teachers who worship in our churches. If that is what makes our schools Christian we may not get the education we are looking for.

Webster defines "educate" as [to provide schooling for]. We teachers can easily get stuck in the "provide schooling" rut where we exemplify Webster's second definition of "educate", [to provide with information]. We go from day to day delivering lectures, expounding fundamentals, and presenting microwaved devotionals. We think students are learning Christian ways because we are giving them Christian information. Sadly, it doesn't work that way. We have only given knowledge and even the devil can quote Bible verses.

We must look at our Christian education as an opportunity to learn the principles and skills for survival in the Christian's life as a pilgrim and stranger in this world. Our students need to be taught how to apply knowledge practically. The first key to a Christian's education is to remember where true wisdom comes from---the Holy Spirit and Word of God. We must spend time in prayer when looking for any answers regarding our schools.

The second key of a Christian's education lies in the third definition of "educate", [to persuade or condition to feel, believe, or act in a desired way]. This gives me a picture of walking alongside the student, coaching the beginner, tempering the responses, and showing how it really is to act like a Christian in this world. It will take time, sacrifice, and much concentrated effort to make this kind of Christian's education happen. Since school schedules are always tight and homework is rarely appreciated, it may mean laying aside some Mathematics, Sciences, and other courses that are considered "core" to an education to make room for Music, Discipleship, Biblical business, etc. which are core to a Christian and the Church.

So what are some fundamental skills needed for survival as a Christian? Well, think about what a Christian does in his life time. He participates in his local church, he

works in his community, he is commanded to be a light at home, and he may even travel to the uttermost parts of the earth with the Gospel of Christ. While school is not the only place these things can be learned, it is helpful to Christian development in students if they are given considerable effort in school.

To aid in his participation in his church, we can teach Bible study skills such as using *Strong's Concordance* effectively, Bible reading (personal and public), and public speaking skills. Our young men often struggle to have an inspirational devotional, so teach them to organize their thoughts in a logical, interesting manner. Girls will also have plenty of opportunities to use the skills in teaching Sunday school, Bible school, and women's meetings. Teach them how to study and prepare lessons. Teaching writing plays a key role in public speaking and the rest of life because writing is thinking. If your student can't write down what he is thinking or what he believes, he probably isn't quite sure what it is himself.

Music is also an integral part of church life. Make sure your students can lead singing to the best of their ability. Furthermore, as we become increasingly disturbed by modern "Christian" music, the need becomes so much greater for Anabaptist hymn writers.

I am sure church ministry would appreciate if discipleship was taught according to the spirit of the law. Are your teachers free to discipline a student for having a

bad attitude about a rule even if he hasn't broken it? Are your teachers good role models? Would you as parents feel comfortable if the teacher told his students "Follow me as I follow Christ"? Have discussion and practical applications of the teachings of Christ as a regular part of school. For example, over Christmas break one year I gave my students the assignment of finding a way to use their talents in their own neighborhoods. After vacation, each was called upon to give an account for how he did. Some were quite creative and some who had "hid their talent in a napkin" had to use their "one" talent and sing a song for the class.

At some point, most of your students will do business with your local community. Get them thinking about how a Christian business man would do business unto to others as he would have it done unto himself. My students love to discuss money, so I teach them what it's like to "give to him that asketh of thee and him that would borrow of thee turn not away." I have discovered that even though our students aren't in business, they have already developed plenty of ideas on how it should work. Gary Miller's new book, *It's Not Your Business*, is a great addition to any business math class and can help develop convictions.

Rather than only talk about being a Good Samaritan, I like to take my students to local food pantries. I also work with senior centers, churches, and village administration to help them actually feel

