

The Integration of Faith and Learning at Denver Christian Schools

Education at Denver Christian Schools is based on certain fundamental theological convictions.

- We believe that this is God's world and that there is no part of the cosmos that He does not rightly claim as His own.
- We believe that the world was made good by God, distorted by sin, redeemed in Christ, and awaits the fullness of God's reign.
- We believe that as sinners saved by grace alone, we are called to commit our lives to grateful service to God and to devote our efforts to being agents of renewal in a broken and hurting world.
- We believe that every part of the believer's life is affected by and expresses his/her faith—there is no area of the believer's life over which God is not Lord. This means that all of life is worship, that nothing done in the Lord's name is useless or wasted, and that whatever our specific vocation, all of us are called to and involved in ministry.

Within this overarching context, a Denver Christian education has specific goals, purposes, and methods. As stated in our mission statement, our central and passionate goal is to inspire and equip young Christians to engage the world with Christ's transforming power and love.

Educationally, this goal is achieved in a number of ways.

- Although we teach Bible as a specific and deliberate curricular component, and we also organize and implement many activities designed to encourage and support faith development in our students (e.g., daily devotions, chapel), we work hard to integrate faith and learning seamlessly together both inside and outside the classroom. Because we believe that God speaks to and works within the whole person and because we believe that faith encompasses all of life, we avoid identifying certain things as "sacred" and others as "secular." Rather, we seek to ensure that our faith perspective permeates and shapes all that we do and are.
- As children grow from elementary students into middle school and, finally, into high school students, we increasingly seek to help them understand and become able to evaluate culture from a Christian perspective, to recognize and reject the false messages implicit in much of modern culture, and to grow into young people who are intellectually and spiritually equipped to help transform that culture.
- Because we desire to help young Christians mature in *their own faith*, we welcome and attempt to give honest answers to even the toughest questions students raise. We also support and encourage them as they become increasingly able to clearly and passionately articulate and defend their faith.

- Because we desire to help young people become capable of making good choices *on their own*, we consciously give our students some latitude within which they can make age-appropriate decisions about dress, use of time, and so forth. That is, we define the “spiritual atmosphere” of the school as much more than simply how our students dress and talk. Sometimes students make “poor” choices; these, however, become opportunities to discuss the reasons for and consequences of their choices.
- Because we understand that one of the most critical influences in a child’s spiritual development is the opportunity to develop strong relationships with believing adults, we deliberately and explicitly seek in all things to walk both *with* and *before* students as we ought—to love and care for and about them, and to let them see us and invite them to join us as we celebrate our world’s beauty, exclaim in awe at our Creator God, acknowledge our world’s pain, recognize our own faithlessness, and proclaim the salvation and healing that God offers in Jesus Christ.

How does this play out in the classroom?

At Denver Christian Schools, this perspective on education and spiritual development plays out in the classroom on a daily basis.

- At all levels, but especially at the elementary level, we focus on helping children appreciate the beauty and complexity of the world God has made, experience joyful and zestful worship, and develop a healthy self-esteem and strong personal faith that are grounded in a deep understanding of their God-given gifts and inestimable worth in God’s eyes.
- As students grow older and both intellectually and spiritually more mature, we talk about worldview often, challenging students to understand that all humans—even atheists and agnostics—have a faith perspective, and that one’s faith perspective colors and shapes how we understand the world, events, people, and even ourselves.
- Additionally, we help students understand that a person’s behavior proclaims his/her worldview/faith perspective even more loudly than words, and we consistently challenge ourselves and our students to live in a manner that is consistent with the claims we make about our faith.
- As students become developmentally ready and able to do so, we analyze and probe with them the worldviews implicit in literature, art, historical events, ethical and political decisions, and so forth, and work hard to foster their increasing ability to think critically about such questions on their own.
- We dialogue frequently with students about ethics, stewardship, responsibility, excellence, service, humility, joy, and authenticity.

Ultimately, our goal at Denver Christian Schools is to graduate students who, in every academic subject and activity of life, grapple meaningfully, productively, and very, very personally with the question, “How shall I then live?”