

Three Year Education Plan for Hillcrest Christian School May 2022

Accountability Statement

The Education Plan commencing September 1, 2022 for **Hillcrest Christian School Society** was prepared under the direction of the Board of Directors in accordance with its responsibilities under the *Private Schools Regulation* and the *Education Grants Regulation*. This plan was developed in the context of the provincial government's business and fiscal plans. The Board has used its performance to develop the plan and is committed to implementing the strategies contained within the plan to improve student learning and results.

The Board approved the Education Plan for 2023/2025 on May 30th, 2022.

Sharon Ambros
Board Chair

A Profile of the School Authority

Hillcrest Christian School had its beginnings as an outgrowth of an intentional Christian community. Since those early days of serving its own community, the school has become a center of education for a number of families. This includes both parents and children who do not necessarily adhere to the Christian faith but believe that the values held within the school system provide a healthy environment for their children. Parental feedback over the years indicates that we have a niche in our community as a school that provides support for students struggling emotionally and/or academically, by ensuring a low student to teacher ratio and a strong emphasis on Biblically based character development. The staff also attempts to address student issues on an individual basis by providing extra support when needed in conjunction with the students' parents. Some of these students, when ready, move back into the public system, while others prefer to remain in the school. We are glad to be able to offer this support to the families in the Grande Prairie area.

Our enrolment fluctuates between 55 and 70 students, from kindergarten to grade twelve. We offer the Alberta Education Program of Studies, including Physical Education, Music, Art, Drama, and Dance, as well as CTS courses and Work Experience.

Our student body consists of a wide range of academic, emotional, and social abilities. Our focus on student leadership and character development helps the students learn how to reach out to individuals first within the school community and then beyond. For those students who struggle, the staff attempts to address these problems and provide support where possible on an on-going basis.

We encourage our staff and students to attempt to live by the teachings of the Scriptures. This allows us to work towards fulfilling one of the most important aspects of our mission; that of offering Christ's love to students through the way that teachers teach and deal with conflicts that arise with the students. To be patient, accepting, encouraging, and giving of unconditional love while remaining firm in our expectations of the students and fellow colleagues, is an ongoing challenge that we work diligently to meet.

Foundation Statements

Vision

- To increase the quality and diversity of our program using a Biblical worldview as a framework in order to help prepare students for society's demands.
- To foster interest and provide training in the arts.
- To develop peer leadership training opportunities so that students are prepared to participate positively in their communities.
- To give our teachers opportunities and support for further training through seminars, etc.
- To develop in the students a keen interest and joy in learning.
- To continue to develop an atmosphere, in the school in general and in the individual classrooms, conducive to learning.
- To ensure open communication between parents/guardians and school administration/teachers regarding all aspects concerning students (course progress, discipline, goals).
- To ensure that parents and society members have access to school information.

Mission

To set and maintain the highest level of professional, ethical, and educational standards for the students while granting them the opportunity to better understand the Christian faith and learn to live it out in their daily lives.

Principles

- Students are responsible for participating in the achievement of their educational success.
- Teachers provide opportunities for all students to acquire strong reading, writing, and math skills with which to develop critical thinking and self-directed learning.
- Teachers must endeavor to be exemplary role models in lifestyle, attitude, conduct, and life-long learning.
- Students are entitled to a safe, secure, and caring learning environment where each individual is respected and valued.
- Education, incorporating a Biblical worldview, is an important building block in a student's development.
- The education process involves providing our society with creative critical thinkers and problem solvers, who are prepared with a strong moral base to participate in the world of work, postsecondary studies, life-long learning, and citizenship.
- In striving for quality educational programs, six dimensions of student development are considered: social, physical, intellectual, cultural, emotional, and spiritual.
- All students are challenged to learn and achieve through high learning expectations.
- The success of students is the shared responsibility of students, parents, school, church, community, and government.
- Parents have opportunities for involvement in important decisions about their children's education.
- All those responsible for decisions about education, including the expenditure of government education funds, school fees, fund raising monies, and donations are accountable to HCS society members and Alberta Education.

Outcome 1 – Post-Covid numeracy/literacy recovery for grades 1-9

- Outcome 1A - Increase math proficiency so 50% of students will score 75% or higher on the Math Intervention Programming Instrument (MIPI) and our 3-year average of students who pass the grade 6 & 9 math PAT's will be 75% or higher.
- Outcome 2A - Develop cross curricula support to increase ELA levels to attain 75% grade level expectations with our in-house ELA tool, Logic of English (LOE) program and a 75% 3 year average of students passing grade 6 & 9 ELA PAT's

Two years of a global pandemic have disrupted student learning. Staff have observed a decline in math and ELA performance with students entering the next grade. Along with this observation, they noticed the general need for students to refamiliarize themselves with the social and mental structure/habits/skills required for successful learning. Examples of atrophied skills include meeting deadlines, applying focus, and navigating uncertainty. These concerns regarding the disruption in learning were shared at the semi-annual society meeting. Both parents and community members indicated that they had observed the disruption and decline in learning over the past years. All stakeholders have expressed the desire to address the gap in learning.

Strategies

- In order to better prepare our students for grade 1, we provide 540 Kindergarten hours, instead of the 475 instructional hours that Alberta requires.
- Review gaps and monitor growth as needed.
- Enable professional learning opportunities for literacy and numeracy.
- Analyze trends and develop pedagogical strategies to respond to negative outcomes.
- Due to the small numbers of students, Hillcrest utilizes the Mathematics Intervention/ Programming Instrument (MIPI) for grades 1-9, and our own English Language Arts (ELA) evaluation tool for the elementary. The ELA evaluation tool is based on several different standard evaluation tools that track phonemic awareness, spelling and vocabulary, grammar, and reading and comprehension. These tools along with the PAT's and Diploma results give a better and more rounded picture of learning at Hillcrest.
- Assessments include monitoring and mitigating academic gaps specifically experienced by FNMI students.

Measurements

- Evaluate student success periodically using in-house tools, such as LOE's and MIPI's, as well as PAT's, diploma exams, and high school completion rates.
- Responses from survey questions will provide satisfaction feedback from stakeholders on the school's work to address the gap in learning.
- Anecdotal feedback from parents and other stakeholders will be drawn from parent-teacher interviews and semi-annual society meetings.

Outcome 2 - Cultivate an Arts Focus within grades 7-9

Hillcrest Christian School recognizes the value of the arts education in the lives of our students. Going beyond enrichment, to creativity and innovation, the arts unlock potential in students that no other subject can. Students, alumni, and parents have given feedback indicating the positive, formative impact

exposure to the arts has had on their lives. They want to see the arts made a focus within the current school culture and curriculum.

We believe that increasing student exposure to the arts will have a wide array of possible benefits. Arts education fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration and innovation. It provides opportunity for students to develop empathy, kindness, and cross-cultural understanding. We want to provide instruction that will promote lifelong appreciation, understanding, creative expression, and active participation in the arts for our students. Additionally, student involvement in the arts is linked to higher academic performance, increased standardized test scores, greater involvement in community service and lower dropout rates.

Strategies

- To implement quality professional arts development classroom teachers and staff. This includes teacher-to-teacher mentorship from arts specialists.
- To focus Jr high course options towards exposure to the arts, including music, drama, and visual arts.
- To give students opportunity to demonstrate skills to a variety of school stakeholders through school productions, performances, and art displays.
- To create integral and comprehensive education opportunities that will be available for grades 7-9 students to access the arts, creating a life-long appreciation. This includes activities such as visits to local art galleries, viewing local performances, and participating in community arts programs.

Measurements

- Survey results from teachers indicating they feel sufficiently supported through PD opportunities related to the arts.
- Jr high students participate in publicly displayed arts-based activities at least once during the school year.
- Increased percentage of Jr high students enrolled in arts-related courses.
- A gradual improvement in baseline educational outcomes as measured by Provincial and school-based assessments.

Outcome 3 – Restore student sense of community/belonging through the reinstatement of school-wide activities

- Cultivate a faith-based family-based school environment where students feel they belong, that they have a place where they are respected and supported within the school community. To increase the sense of community and belonging by having school-wide activities.

Hillcrest is committed to the whole child. This encompasses the academic, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of each child.

Living in a pandemic culture has challenged our students' sense of security and belonging. Over the last few years, public and private communication has often become polarized and divisive. Unifying traditions and touchstone events have been unreliable. Meanwhile, a sense of isolation has been further entrenched through necessary cohorting and physical distancing. Our students are lacking a sense of security and belonging found in community and relationship.

Day-to-day student feedback strongly suggests the return of school-wide events and gatherings. The desire to work, play, and gather as a larger group is continuously expressed across the grade levels. Parents have echoed this sentiment in conversations with school staff and at the semi-annual society meeting. They value the experience of cross-grade relationships formed through larger, school-wide activities. The parents and staff see this sense of community – of belonging – as having a positive impact on the growth and mental health of the children. They want to see it return as a hallmark experience of the school.

Strategies

- Reestablish school-wide weekly assembly.
- Establish connectivity among students throughout the school by implementing programs and activities that encourage cross-grade interaction. This includes multi-grade clubs, led by school staff. It also includes major school-wide celebrations.
- Create opportunities for parents to be involved in school activities to help establish a safe family atmosphere within the school.
- Develop relationships with community partners to become a respected and visible part of the surrounding community.
- Strengthen staff, students', and families' understanding of the relationship between spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical health.
- Ensure all students are greeted at the school door each morning.

Measurements

- Weekly school-wide assemblies reinstated.
- Variety of school-wide celebrations and events reimplemented.
- Student, parent, and staff surveys that measure satisfaction with:
 - Student sense of community.
 - Student ability to identify safe staff when they need support.
 - Students feeling safe and cared for at school.
- Feedback solicited from stakeholders at semi-annual meeting.

Budget Link

<https://www.hcsgp.ca/>