

Kingdom Culture in Education: Leading Students to Jesus

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Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me; and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Matthew 19:14, NIV)

What marks a Kingdom school? The presence of King Jesus and His Preeminence.

While academics are vital to a child’s success, and knowing the Scriptures is central to a Christian education, knowing the person of Jesus is paramount in a Kingdom school. Students are not just taught about Jesus; they are brought to Jesus each day. They are encouraged to discover not just what Jesus did for them, but to seek Him and develop a growing relationship with Him. This in turn, helps them to focus on what is important for each day and prepares them for their future.

For ten years, staff and students at the Comenius School for Creative Leadership (CSCL) have started each day with student led prayer and worship. We have seen an exciting change in behavior and success in and out of the classroom when the day begins by focusing on Jesus. At the beginning of the school year, student chaplains lead informal prayer for grades six through twelve to draw attention to the Lord. Sometimes prayer is offered for a student, a family, or a faculty member in need, and when that happens, the student body will surround the person asking for prayer and implore Heaven to move on the request. As the school year progresses, other students voluntarily stand and pray for something that has touched them. There are mornings during which the prayer emphasis is on a specific aspect of Jesus – perhaps his goodness or his healing power. Prayer is followed by a time of worship, often led by one or more students who sing, rap, dance, recite original poetry, perform a skit or sometimes just play a

worship song and encourage the others to “soak”, i.e., connect silently with God. In the words of one seventh grade girl, “One real special thing is [that] we all worship God together.”

Last year the children in the elementary grades voluntarily met in a separate corporate chapel to pray, worship, and start the day with a focus on Jesus. As time progressed, teachers led the morning meetings less and children in the lower grades began to pray and even preach! It has never been difficult for younger children to engage in worship, but now they spend time in silent adoration, they prophesy, they declare who Jesus is, they invite the Holy Spirit to come and help their teachers teach and the students learn.

Keeping Jesus at the focal point of education is just as vital in the classroom as it is in administrative meetings. Having the “right” curriculum helps, but having a school culture which values the presence of the Lord at all times is most important. Hiring the best and most qualified teachers serves to build a great academic program. Those who additionally introduce students to the Lord and model a relationship with Him give them essential confidence, direction and purpose in Him. However it is vital that teachers help students discover who God made them to be, the talents He has given them, and how to combine those abilities with what they are passionate about to glorify God and give direction for their future.

The classroom, then, becomes as much about discovering who “we” are in Christ as it is about academics. In Kindergarten, students learn how to become good citizens of school, our country, and of God’s kingdom. Added to that, as students progress through grade school, they are quick to share the love of the Lord – in this way a field trip to an historical site can quickly turn into a ministry opportunity as they ask a guide if they can pray for him or share extra snacks that they brought in hopes of speaking with others. In Middle School, an Outdoor Leadership course combines Math, English, Geography and Science with the study of the Bible and great

leaders. These students learn useful skills as they plan camping trips, go on adventure hikes, canoe on a local lake, enjoy whitewater rafting, all the while discovering God's creation and how they are fearfully and wonderfully made. Recently, in a high school English class, students were discussing rhetoric in a non-Christian book and how the ideas in the book influence and can manipulate a reader. The students were actively dismantling arguments based on an author's bias, targeting fallacies, and replacing these with God's truth.

The evidence of the power of the presence of Jesus in school is transformation in the lives of its students. Students of any age should be changed not only by what they are taught, but also by what they experience every day in school. A recent CSCL graduating class compiled a list of favorite things about school – at the top of the list was *“Everybody loves the fact that we have chapels in the mornings and on Tuesdays. [Equal with that is] keeping God in everything we do.”*

What a testimony to cultivating a culture in which the King of Kings is ever present! No special anointing or extraordinary talent is necessary except the dedication to providing a clear pathway to Jesus. When students and staff are intentionally seeking to get closer to the Lord, healing occurs, breakthroughs happens, love, peace, and joy permeate the atmosphere. And best of all of, the learning process is enjoyable, engaging, and fulfilling.