

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLING - EXPECTATION VS OPERATION

As a Christian school, we exist for the determined purpose of training our students to utilise the knowledge, skills and gifts that God gives them to serve people and love God in the area that he has called them to.

We realize that there is an expectation on us to operate according to the paradigms advanced by global education theorists, the dominant Christian youth culture and our own Christian parents, but that these paradigms are often flawed and counterproductive.

IN WHAT WAYS TO OUR PARENTS HAVE A FLAWED EXPECTATION OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLING AND HOW DO WE RESPOND TO THIS?

- The Icing on the cake syndrome – Parents sometimes have the understanding that education is simply about the accumulation of academic knowledge and a Christian school simply adds 'icing on the cake' by devoting a short period of time to Biblical teaching e.g. during assemblies, chapel or morning prayer. Such a time would necessarily be limited to allow maximum coverage of an essentially secular curriculum. At The King's School West Rand, we believe all truth is God's truth – God is the author of all knowledge and reveals something of himself in all learning material. We strive for a deliberate and rigorous Biblical integration into all learning outcomes and operations.
- The Hothouse Effect – Parents might have the mistaken perception that Christian schools exist to safeguard students from the 'real' world and encapsulate them in a protected environment. The school then is required to isolate students from what is perceived as unwholesome. At The King's School West Rand, we believe that children must be exposed, at an age-appropriate level, to the realities of our world and taught to evaluate their response to these realities with a Biblical Worldview.
- The Horse before the cart – Parents might opt for a Christian school because of
 - Reaction to the public school deficiencies
 - Personal charisma of the founder(s) and/or
 - Following what another group of Christians has started successfully elsewhere

At The King's School West Rand, we are founded and operate in obedience to God's Word and His leading. Our vision and mission supersede the personal giftings of any particular leader and are not reactionary to events in the public educational context.

IN WHAT WAYS DO CURRENT EDUCATIONAL THEORISTS PROPOSE A MODEL OF SCHOOLING THAT IS, IN OUR OPINION, UNACCEPTABLE?

Educational theorists in the last century have consistently proposed a model of religious neutrality in schools. This concept is based on a moral relativism approach – each one's right to make their own decisions about what is acceptable and right. According to moral relativists each one should determine for themselves what values they will respect and which ones they will disregard, provided they cause no harm to others in an unlawful manner. Working from the presupposition of moral relativism, religious neutrality claims that teachers should always be impartial in matters of faith, avoid discussions of religion and stress that value education is exclusively the domain of the home.

At The King's School West Rand, we believe that God's truth is absolute – not different according to personal preferences. We believe that Christianity is relevant and essential to all of life and that it is impossible and undesirable to be religiously neutral.

IN WHAT WAYS DO TODAY'S CHRISTIAN YOUTH HAVE A MISTAKEN UNDERSTANDING OF CHRISTIANITY AND ITS TEACHINGS?

Sociologist Christian Smith gave the name 'moralistic, therapeutic deism' to the dominant understanding of God he discovered among younger Americans. In his book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, he describes this set of beliefs. God blesses and takes to heaven those who try to live good and decent lives (the 'moralistic' belief). The central goal of life is not to sacrifice, or to deny oneself, but to be happy and feel good about yourself (the 'therapeutic' belief). Though God exists and created the world, he does not need to be particularly involved in our lives except when there is a problem (that is 'deism').

References:

Counterfeit Gods; Keller, T (2009), p115

The Cause of Christian Education; Edlin, RJ (1999)