

## **Our New Paradigm**

As we see in Ezekiel 37, known to many as the dry bones passage, God is in the business of bringing things to life and we believe he is bringing new life to West-Mont Christian Academy. But before we can see the direction he wants us to go, it is worth contemplating where we are. There are three areas we want to give overview to:

### ***1. The state of education in America***

We strongly recommend watching the short video which features Sir Ken Robinson's theories at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U) ... He speaks to the outdated methods of teaching that most schools utilize to develop workers for the wrong jobs; jobs that are no longer plentiful in the United States.

### ***2. The state of the Christian School Movement***

John Story, Regional Director of ACSI, when sharing the highlights of the Christian School Movement, said "With the removal of Bible reading in government schools, in 1962, Christian Schools began opening at a rapid pace (400 per year). These schools tended not to follow best practices. More recently, there has been a downsizing of Christian schools not, just because of economic reasons, but also because of educational mistakes and the decline of the spiritual culture of North America. During the past 7 years, PA Christian schools have decreased by 15% in their enrollment. At present, there are 5 schools that close for each school that opens.

### ***3. The state of West-Mont Christian Academy***

We are in the beginning stages of a paradigm shift. We believe that, considering the state of education in America, and the state of Christian education, we cannot afford to become stagnant. We must be moving forward and we must be willing to change due to the demands of our culture while staying true to our foundation of truth. It is our belief that God is directing us and we are beginning to see the specifics of this direction.

When we started sense a change was coming for WCA, we believed that building a Performing Arts building was where God was directing us. As it turns out, the vision is getting broader and deeper. A building would create a great deal of excitement and momentum, however, we began looking at our current programs and asking the overall question of whether WCA had strong arts programs to support a building structure. Originally, we began talking about the possibility of having a track of study for the arts. As these conversations were evolving it became clear that programs could not answer the deeper issues of meeting the deeper need within the individual student.

WCA doesn't just want to be an institution that has great programs and wonderful buildings, (although, these would be greatly appreciated) we want to have an environment that has synergy, where students are engaged in their studies with passion

and enthusiasm and above all is filled with students that are growing in a dynamic spiritual way.

Thomas Friedman, author and journalist, says, “passion and curiosity are key components for education in the world where information is readily available to everyone and where global markets reward those who have learned how to learn and are self-motivated to learn.” If it is true that by connecting students to their passions, and from a spiritual perspective, their giftings (or leanings) we can create inspiration for learning, we must investigate that potential.

In a recent visit to Lehigh Valley Charter School For the Performing Arts, we witnessed a school full of students that were bustling about, seemingly energized in their environment. Michael Platt, the principal, claims that their students are doing better academically, and their absentee rate is considerably lower than their counter parts. The connection is being made that if you have an environment, which engages a student’s passions and giftings, those students will excel in most or all areas of study. Although this is a secular public school and although their goal is to elevate the human spirit, it is apparent that the same could be true for a Christian School environment. We have the potential to greatly impact the individual life of a student by zeroing in on their God given gifts, passions and aptitudes with the goal of elevating, not the human spirit, but the Spirit of God.

What if we could formulate a school experience for each student, based on his or her unique tendencies (i.e. Passions, gifts, aptitudes)? We think this is possible and we believe this is the direction God has called us. But first, we have to change the way we think about educating...we have to have a “paradigm shift”.

### **The Point Project**

We believe God is calling WCA to establish a program that emphasizes our original "Hedgehog concept" and still maintain the excellence of academic culture that we've worked hard to develop over the last 30 years. WCA became known for its interaction between students and teachers... mentoring relationships. We believe that by formalizing such relationships, we will better prepare students spiritually, emotionally, academically, and physically to serve our Lord and Savior. Ultimately, we seek to bring God's truth and purpose into the lives of our students.

To accomplish this task we are introducing "The Point Project." This effort requires the entire staff of WCA to focus on the individual student rather than the system developed for the students. Faculty will better understand their pupils and seek teach to the passions of those students. Assigned mentors will evaluate, along with parental input, student input, and various assessment tools (surveys) the spiritual gifting of the student and will look for ways that the student can utilize those gifts.

The Point Project uses an acronym of "P-O-I-N-T" to emphasize the areas that this initiative addresses.

**P - Purpose and Passion** - WCA will seek to find a student's passions and develop purpose in his life by utilizing assessment tools (possibly a spiritual gifts inventory, a spiritual formation assessment, parental interviews, etc.) As a student comes into WCA, he would be given a temporary mentor (possibly a Spiritual Formation Leader) to evaluate these areas and eventually would be reassigned to a regular mentor (a faculty member, a youth pastor, administrative staff, etc.)

**O - Organize** - Along with the student's academic advisor, he develops a track of study that best suits his passions, spiritual gifts and aptitudes. This might mean that a student will graduate with a diploma that has a specific emphasis in a "major", meaning that they will take courses focused toward one area. Students would continue to take the typical outstanding courses that WCA has developed (Math, History, English, Sciences, Bible, Foreign Languages, etc.); however, many of those classes would be taught with an emphasis toward the student's passion. For example, a student that seeks to have a Fine Arts Major at WCA would still take required classes in all the major subjects, but might take an Art History class rather than a Civil War course. A Math Major would take additional Math classes rather than other potential classes... but still take the regular required classes for graduation.

**I - Investment** - Each student has been given a passion or gift(s) from the Lord. It would be the desire of the student's mentor to help him seek to develop those passions and gifts through service, mission activities, community outreach, etc. With the guidance of the student's mentor, the student will invest himself in others to develop his own strengths.

**N - Nurture** - It is expected that every staff member at WCA will seek to nurture students. By knowing the "bent" that a particular student has, along with his spiritual gifting, each staff member will seek to "bring God's truth and purpose into the lives of our students." When hiring staff members, those that have the ability to develop mature teacher-student relationships will be sought after for all positions.

**T - Teach** - We expect that all faculty members will teach God's truth with excellence, passion, and creativity. The Lord's ministry and His precious students desire nothing less!

### **Mission Statement**

"The purpose of West-Mont Christian Academy is to assist parents in the training of their children to honor God, by providing a quality educational and spiritual environment where Godly character and unity in Christ can flourish in order to develop productive servants for the Lord, who will impact their world through biblical thought and action. "

The above fifty-five word directive for the mission of West-Mont Christian Academy has been a long standing, four-part objective for WCA. Though the statement covers all aspects of the mission at WCA, it appears to be so long as to not be easily understood, let alone memorized by most stakeholders. For some time, we have sought to utilize our

wordsmith skills to develop a shorter, more functional, and easier to memorize mission statement that maintains the heart of the original statement. With input from staff members, students, and board directors, the following statement was developed:

***"Bringing God's Truth and Purpose Into the Lives of Our Students"***

Keys words speak to the original emphasis and present direction of the Academy.

Bringing - Taking the time to provide for students in a mentoring relationship.

God's - Shows the ownership of our students, programs, etc. (All that we do!)

Truth - Speaks to the accuracy of God's Word and the focus of our academics.

Purpose - Speaks to the passion that God has given to each believer (Motivation Gifts) as well as their "bent" in life (methods of learning and vocation.) This is drawn from Proverbs 22:6.

Into the Lives - The focus of our mission is internal, but the goal is to effect an external change in the life of each individual student.

Our - Refers to the Parental and School Staff partnership that is maintained in all aspects of our ministry.

Students - The point of our ministry!

**How Do We begin to Implement the Point Project?**

The vision God has placed before us will take time to implement. We will need to make a gradual transition, adding a few aspects/courses each year until the project is complete. It is estimated that this will take 4-6 years to fully implement.

- Our first responsibility is to pray and seek God's direction for the plan individually and as a school.
- Secondly we need to begin to prepare at all levels; elementary, Middle School and High School.
- At the elementary level we need to begin to observe and note the student's gifting, talents, spiritual commitment and passions of the students. We also need to implement more creative and divergent thinking opportunities for the students.
- At the Middle School level we would continue to assess and observe student's gifting, talents and spiritual commitment as we do at the elementary level.

We would also start to give students more opportunities for service and development of their giftings.

### Changes for next Year

- Tracks of Study - By offering tracks of study in various disciplines (Math, Science, English, Phys. Ed., Fine Arts, etc.) students will be able to focus on the interest, gifting, and “bents” God has given them. Some of these tracks are already in place for the major subject areas but have not been formally laid out. A few courses will need to be implemented and or reinstated (i.e. Sports Science, Music Appreciation, Worship, Art History etc.) each year to accommodate such a system.
- Winterim is another curriculum addition that would support this system. Winterim is a two week period right after Christmas break that is set aside for students to take missions trips, internships, and take classes they would typically not be able to in a typical school setting. By implementing such a term we would open opportunities to students, helping them to explore and develop their gifts, talents and interests to allow them to seek God’s direction for their life more clearly. Students would have the opportunity to take four different classes as each would be one week/half day sessions. Some courses may be offered as full day or full term experiences.
- Modified Block Schedule - The modified Block Schedule is also an idea that would be proposed for adoption next year if the Point Project is approved. The modified block schedule opens the students’ schedule for more concentrated time in the various disciplines. This gives the teacher the ability to expand the thinking and experiential aspects of learning more effectively. Also if the adoption of the tracks of study happens, this structure allows for students to spend a large amount of time in their “major” (i.e. Science, History, Fine Arts, etc.).

### **Summary**

This proposal is designed to be a "skeleton" on which we will be able to put flesh and skin on as the Lord continues to guide our planning. We will seek to involve all stakeholders (parents, staff, board members, and students) in this process so that everyone will play a part in its development and hopefully have greater ownership. We might have committees to: (a) create a training program to develop mentors, (b) create more opportunities for student involvement and service, (c) develop student mentors\leaders, (d) establish guidelines for various "majors" at the high school level, (e) etc.