

Christian Children Need Christian Education

3 Options for K–12 Christian Education

Introduction

Parents, to provide effective spiritual instruction for their children, need to be very involved with all aspects of their children’s training, including their academic education. It is the responsibility of the local church to support and assist member families in providing Christian training for their children. But the question often arises, “What do we do?” Should the church begin a Christian school, or should all of the parents in the church begin home schooling? Due to the fact that more and more Christian families are providing a Bible-based education for their children, numerous alternatives are now available from which parents and churches can choose. These alternatives fall into three basic categories:

- Campus Christian Schooling
- Home Schooling
- Blended Schooling

Three Options for Christian Education

Most families are familiar with campus Christian schools and with home schooling. These options, however, do not express the various combinations possible.

Option I: Campus Christian Schools

In K-12 Campus Christian schools, formal instruction is given in a planned series of courses over a number of years. Most schools are associated with a local church large enough to provide the facilities and support. Generally, the cost is much greater for parents because the administrative staff and faculty must be paid, the facilities maintained, and school equipment and supplies provided. Students are on campus five days per week during the traditional school year. Although teachers provide the day-to-day instruction and give assignments, parents are encouraged not only to be actively involved in the homework process, but also to volunteer in various capacities. Volunteering parents are a source of much of the enrichment activities in a campus Christian school.

Guidance is available for the church body that chooses to start a campus Christian school.

Option II: Christian Home Schooling

Many parents prefer to educate their children at home instead of sending them to school. These parents plan their children’s academic education and do most of the instruction.

A frequent misconception about home schooling, is that home schooled children are closeted at home and never have interaction with anyone outside their family. For the majority of home schoolers, the opposite is true. One study found that 98% of home schooled students were involved in 2 or more activities, such as fine-arts classes, sports, scouts, volunteering, church-related activities, and support-group activities.

Since home schooling is growing so fast in the Christian community, the range of curriculum materials available for use in a home school has “exploded.”

Option III: Blended Christian Schooling

In recent years some Christian educators have begun proposing a third option or third way of providing of K-12 Christian education, by blending the best features of both campus Christian school and home schooling. If a local church cannot afford to start a traditional campus Christian school, perhaps it could provide the space for a *University Model School*. Parents may not feel that they can provide all that their children need through home schooling, but they may be able to share resources and teaching responsibilities with other parents or other churches in a cooperative arrangement (or co-op).

A local church can provide space for individual classes to be taught and for co-ops to be formed. Members of the church who can tutor can connect with those parents in the body who need help teaching certain academic courses. Churches can open their doors for extra-curricular activities and service-related learning projects for students.

- **The University Model School:** This type of school is a blend of the best aspects from traditional

schools as well as from home schools. The goal is to give students in elementary grades through high school a highly successful, college-preparatory education set in a Christian environment. The National Association of University-Model Schools is the organization that oversees these schools and provides a variety of services.

- **Individual Classes:** Stand-alone classes are usually taught by an expert in the field of study. The instructor may be a parent of a student in the class, a career professional, a trained teacher or a retired teacher.
- **Co-ops:** Co-ops differ in their purpose and in the structure they offer. Co-ops may be formed to provide academic courses for students that challenge parents to teach at home, such as lab-science courses or advanced math courses and language courses; others are formed to provide enrichment activities, such as music, journalism, debate, home economics, and/or art.
- **Parents team teaching:** There are occasions where a small group of parents with children of similar ages and/or grade levels share the responsibility for teaching their children together.
- **One-room Schoolhouse:** One teacher, with the help of the parents, teaches a small group of students in the same or different grade levels.

Online Christian Schooling: As the current costs of some campus Christian schools pricing some families out of the market and as other families feel uncertain of their abilities to home school their children, online programs are helping to fill the need for parents who wish to provide their children with a Christian education. Most online programs are much less expensive than campus schools and generally are easy to employ or execute. Since one adult can effectively supervise several children using an online program, this approach can work well with many schooling situations.

Conclusion

All too often, the choices for providing Christian K-12 education seem limited to either traditional campus Christian schools or home schooling. In truth, these are only two of the choices available to Christian families and churches. Parents and churches may choose from several models and curricula that are family centered, Bible based and Christ honoring.

With the emergence of educational services and various curricula offered online and through the technology of the Internet, there are now no limitations and no insurmountable problems left for families and churches not to provide a thorough K-12 Christian education to their children. DVDs, CDs, books, and curriculum materials of all kinds are plentiful. In fact, so many good choices are now available that the large number and variety offer a special challenge just trying to choose from among them.

Local churches, along with their member families, must develop not only a philosophy of Christian education, but also a unity of purpose. If a church is large enough to have a Christian school, the church should guard against an attitude that all of the families in the church should have their children attend. Such an attitude could place pressure on families who might prefer to choose from the other options. Churches need to have the mind-set that they serve the families of their congregations by assisting in their Christian education responsibilities regardless of the Christian education choice each family makes. All of the options should be supported within a local body and the third option models actively encouraged since these will allow families to provide a high quality K-12 Christian education less expensively.

For more detailed information about these options please contact:



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