

Enduring Understandings of Reformed Education

February 2, 2009

Foundation

Basis

The school has been established to assist parents to fulfill their baptismal promises regarding the nurture of their covenant children. Reformed education aims to equip the students to employ their talents in the service of God and his kingdom, and to help students to develop a discerning mind within the boundaries of God's Word. The entire curriculum will be taught in obedience to the Holy Scriptures, the infallible Word of God, as we confess in the Three Forms of Unity.

Application

God

1. There is one God, perfect, omnipotent, omniscient.
2. This God has revealed himself to man in his Word.
3. God's word, the Bible, is absolute truth. As a revelation, it is complete, but not exhaustive.
4. In Christ, God holds all things, including creation, together.

Man

5. Man was created by God, in the image of God.
6. Having divine descent, man exists to serve God, and to enjoy him.
7. Man was placed in creation to be the representative of God on earth.
8. Man thus has a high office that is prophetic, priestly, and regal, and must not be limited in expression to the personal realm.

The World

9. The universe was called into being by God, who maintains his creation, for his glory.
10. The universe therefore has meaning, purpose, and direction.
11. There is a creation-order, defining a place for man, the animals, and the environment.
12. All of reality is not visible. There is a spiritual dimension that is of ultimate importance.
13. Man's fall into sin had repercussions for all life upon earth. There is now, for all men a "human condition": there is suffering everywhere, of infinite variety.
14. The redemption of this fallen world, through Jesus Christ is apparent through the eyes of faith, but not apparent to the unbeliever.

General Principles

1. The role of the school is the education of children of the covenant.
2. The reformed identity is confessional, covenantal, recognizes the antithesis, and has a unity of purpose among church, home, and school.
3. This education is to guide God's unique children to develop a Christian mind able to use biblical revelation to discern the world in which they live.
4. The school has to create an environment conducive to learning, Christian love, and respect.

5. The education is directed to glorifying God and loving our neighbour, developing an awe of God's creation, following Christ in all of life, and demonstrating responsible stewardship in obedience to God.
6. Students and teachers are co-heirs who must live a life of discipleship, of by dying of the old nature and coming to life of the new, so that we may also attain the resurrection of the dead (Phil. 3:1 ff). Therefore, the relationship between teachers and students is based on mutual respect and Christian love
7. The significance of "covenant" is as a reality in which God binds us to Himself, and in so doing He binds us to one another. By grace alone, God promises us salvation in Christ and life eternal. We are called upon to demonstrate repentance, daily renewal, obedience, commitment, piety, trust and prayer.

Implications for Curriculum and Instruction

1. In all subjects an historical overview is required to demonstrate the impact of different philosophies and time periods (modern, post-modern, evolution) on human endeavour. This implies the following:
 - .1 Human beings create many worldviews, and have done so in the past. Without a worldview they would have to admit that reality is chaos.
 - .2 The worldviews created by men-without-God are of necessity humanistic (recently anti-humanistic), incomplete, flawed, and temporary.
 - .3 Today, the western world's opinion-leaders are post-modernists who believe that there is no worldview, no over-arching vision of reality.
 - .4 Today's world is much more hostile to the Christian point of view.
 - .5 We are all children of our time, involved with both the good and the bad, although that reality is guided by God's faithfulness.
2. The Christian worldview is informed by the teaching of the Bible in its entirety, and should find its way into all aspects of instruction. This view includes:
 - Belief in God as he reveals himself in the Bible and through his works (creation).
 - Divine creation of all things;
 - Historicity of the human fall into sin;
 - A cosmic spiritual warfare between God and Satan, and between believers and unbelievers;
 - Redemption is brought about by Christ's sacrifice on the cross;
 - The coming of God's Kingdom and the renewal of the world.
 - Stewardly care and concern of the environment.
3. Grace restores nature rather than ignoring it or leaving it under a curse (Romans 8).
4. The cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 to develop the earth continues to the present. God gave the mandate, man failed, but as a result of Christ's work, we are enabled to take up this mandate again.
5. Students need to be taught to recognize the current spiritual warfare in an increasingly secular world dedicated to humanism.
6. Teachers should make use of guided confrontation to help students learn and see not only because they have been told, but because they have become personally convinced.
7. The respective history of various subject areas must be studied to recognize the great benefits that Christianity has brought to society and how the Lord in history continues to gather his church. However, we must also recognize the misdeeds of man in the past and present.

8. The relationship between faith, learning, and understanding can be summarized by the ancient Christian motto, “Faith seeks understanding”.
9. Teachers need to create a classroom atmosphere of respect and love. To teach is to create a space in which obedience to the truth is practiced.
10. Our teaching needs to develop our students’ discernment (Phil 1:9-11) their critical thinking, and open the windows to God’s world to inspire a response of wonder and awe.
11. Our daily walk with God should also result in a daily walk with our students, where our footprints leave imprints for life.
12. The teachers’ task is not one of leading students to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, but in helping them to live obediently in the context of the subject that we are teaching, and to see that subject’s connection to other subjects. Students need to understand the unity of creation, knowledge, and action.
13. It is the Holy Spirit who instills faith. Teachers can be reassured that if we work in obedience to God, our work will be blessed.
14. We should not tell students that they must transform society for Christ for that makes it appear that we do it on behalf of Christ. We do need to be active in the world but always in obedience to God’s commands.
15. Teaching for meaning implies selecting important information that is worthy for the students to know and placing this information firstly within the context of God’s creation, and secondly within general subject principles.
16. In order to teach the integration of faith and life, reformed Christian teachers must have a clear understanding of the Bible and the big picture of God’s creation of the universe, the fall and its consequences for us today, God’s love in sending his Son, Christ extending his rule in all of creation, and the consummation when Christ returns to restore all things to their former glory.
17. As members of Christ by faith (LD 12), teachers live out their high calling as:
 - prophet: faithfully confess God’s name and work in all of creation;
 - priest: model a life of thankfulness and joyful service to God through care and instruction of students;
 - king: model and teach to fight against sin in the relational dimension of schooling, and the academic context of the curriculum.
18. Our students are “...a chosen people, a royal priesthood..” (1 Peter 2:9) and should be educated as such.
19. God allows even unbelievers to discover the truth and laws of his creation and share this with his followers. (Isaiah 28:23-29)
20. All covenant children share in a common status before God and a calling to serve and glorify him. Within this common task, the Lord has given them unique gifts, talents, and opportunities. Teachers must, therefore, give recognition to the diversity of abilities and gifts in its instruction, curriculum content, and assessment.