



KEYSTONE SENTINEL

Protecting and Promoting Christian Education



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boardroom

By
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“I CAN DO ANYTHING I WANT!!!” – CHAPTER 3

In August, Chapter 1 addressed those six words to Christian schools and how some inappropriately view civil law. In September, Chapter 2 addressed those six words in the context of student aspirations in the current climate of self-esteem, self-determination, and entitlement.

“I can do anything I want” could be the position of some classroom teachers in Christian schools. In that it supplants institutional continuity and consistency, it is harmful.

It is quite unusual for observers to see illustrations of those six words being practiced by faculty in public and licensed private schools. The same applies to colleges (except for the rogue professor who asserts “academic freedom” rights). These institutions utilize a high level of “top-down” management of the institution’s academic program. So, for example, if a deeply committed Christian gains employment in a modern-day public school with the aim of integrating a thoroughly biblical worldview into the classroom, they will be disappointed. They *can’t* do what they want.

Through the decades, KCEA staff has utilized a “coined” phrase that describes some Christian schools. They are really not a “school.” They are a “teachers co-op.” In some Christian schools, it is not abnormal for an educator to view their work as largely self-determinate. Inside their classroom, they *can* do what they want.

Clearly, it is normal to see Christian schools utilizing a Student Handbook where the administration documents established expectations. There is an institutional coordination of the variety of elements that are part of the common life including calendar, dress expectations, attendance, and financial responsibilities, grading periods, extra curricular involvement, snow day announcements, etc. *That’s good.*

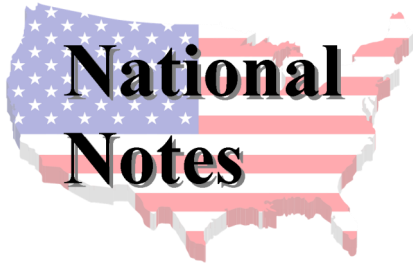
Established expectations of the academic and pedagogy side of a Christian school classroom is a different matter. In some Christian “schools,” classroom characteristics wildly differ even if each is mandated to utilize the same textbook series and its accompanying teacher’s guide. Differences include important areas of continuity and consistency with subject content, homework, implementing a biblical worldview, philosophy and techniques for assessment and grading, differentiated instruction to meet student needs, attention to learning styles and prudent accommodations, and diagnosing and remediating weaknesses. Thus, while in a single building under a singular school name, each classroom can have a “king of his/her own castle.” *That’s not good.*

Being a “teachers co-op” instead of a “school” does not occur in a vacuum. A teacher could be in the position where he/she “can do anything” through different circumstances, including: (a) a teacher might pressure the administration for this latitude, (b) the administration might allow this pattern because they do not have time or knowledge to devote to proper academic supervision, or (c) parents and school administrators may believe that employing an academic supervisor is not beneficial and/or not affordable.

At best, a “teachers co-op” is a sign of an institution without uniform characteristics and performance in its multiple components. In the norm, a “teachers co-op” is a sign of lost opportunity, of less than the best education for the student body. It communicates sufficient weakness as to negatively impact student recruiting and retention as even some dedicated Christian parents will choose a secular school or home education over a “teachers co-op.”

Observe this *secular* job description of a “principal.” Observe the oversight responsibility that is part of the job, especially in the area of overseeing the teaching-learning process. See [What Elementary, Middle, and High School Principals Do](#). Being a definition from a secular source, we would expect the definition to exclude any reference to overseeing the spiritual mission of the instruction. Observe that this job description leaves no room for a “teachers co-op” or the six words, “I can do what I want.”

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School Choice and Parental Advocacy Continues

In the 118th Congress, significant efforts have been underway to change public policy at Washington on the education front. As the 'wheels' of government (usually) turn slowly, the policy debate on school choice at the federal level faces headwinds from staunch public school supporters, teachers unions, and others chasing education dollars. Numerous bills have been introduced that are still squirreled away in committee, including the Educational Choice for Children Act (H.R. 531 and S. 120). Just because the issue isn't in the daily news doesn't mean it doesn't or won't affect us.

A recent opinion column recently appeared in a Harrisburg-based media outlet. The author told her story of the immensely positive impact of school choice on her daughter, after she repeatedly 'fell through the cracks' in the system by not receiving the help she desperately needed. Parental involvement includes retaining the power and ability to make the best decisions for educating their children and helping them learn to be able to succeed in the present and future.

The opinion piece can be accessed through the PennLive website: [Parents need options in education to help their children succeed | Opinion - pennlive.com](#)

“I CAN DO ANYTHING I WANT!!!” **- CHAPTER 3 — continued from page 1**

It is a standard expectation for a “school” to have a leader of the academic program. The presence of that officer does not give assurance that you or I would enroll our student(s) therein, but a “school” is not a haphazard mix of teachers and classrooms. It is an entity with cohesiveness. By the way, that cohesiveness in a secular school contributes to why it is an unacceptable place for the children of Bible-following parents.

Christian schools should shun being a “teachers co-op.” Be a real “school.” Whatever the academic leader is called, whether “principal,” “academic dean,” or _____, it is most prudent for someone to perform key academic supervisory tasks. Whether that person is paid or a volunteer, full-time or part-time, there are significant benefits in prioritizing those tasks. A Christian school should not limit its effectiveness by having a faculty that functions under, “I can do what I want.”

Move Over, Greeks. The Babylonians Beat You to Trigonometry!

Until very recently, historians have credited the Greek astronomer Hipparchus with the discovery and application of mathematical trigonometry, essentially the study of the angles and sides of triangles. This all changed during the translation and study of a 3,700-year-old tablet from the Babylonian Empire, pre-dating Hipparchus by over a millennium. The Australian research team determined the tablet was actually the world's oldest (and completely accurate) trigonometry table, which “describes the shapes of right-angle triangles using a novel kind of trigonometry based on ratios, not angles or circles,” according to Dr. Daniel Mansfield. The discovery has potential applications in survey work, education, and computer graphics.

[3,700-year-old Babylonian tablet is world's first trigonometry table - Upworthy](#)

Ancient Tunnel, Arch, Monument in Israel



Image courtesy of EYECON

This past summer, an international archaeology team uncovered a Middle Bronze Age (about 3,800-year-old) tunnel and massive monument at Tel Shimron (at left), a short distance from Megiddo.

Shimron is no less impressive due to the discovery of the tunnel and an accompanying unfired brick archway, which is the first known in the area and which was part of the monument structure. The Mesopotamian building practice, known as corbelling, stacked the unfired bricks on top of each other, with the walls slowly tapering inward and creating a type of vaulted ceiling. Its existence indicates the significant importance Shimron had during that period, thanks to its location on a major trade route. Though it experienced some decline, it was still sizable enough to be ruled by a king many centuries later during Israel's conquest of the Promised Land in Joshua 11.

The tunnel was refilled to help preserve the excellent integrity of the architecture until the 2024 dig season.

[In northern Israel, massive 3,800-year-old monument stuns and stumps archaeologists | The Times of Israel](#)

The Bible and Society

Recent Items of Interest for Believers

Personal Injuries and Practical Theology

What we believe about God and His involvement in our lives is inseparably intertwined with how we live. Our thoughts and beliefs are practically reflected both verbally and physically. A great example of this came this week in the life of an American soccer player, with many lessons to be learned.

Megan Rapinoe is best known for her career as a soccer player on the U.S. Women's National Team and in the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), along with her outspoken advocacy for LGBTQ+ causes and transgender "inclusion" in women's sports. Six minutes into her final soccer game on November 11, and without coming in contact with another player, her Achilles tendon tore. While the injury itself was not necessarily life-changing (she will have surgery to repair the tendon, and she is now professionally retired as a soccer player), her response in the post-game press conference speaks volumes. When asked about the injury, she said, **"I'm not a religious person or anything and if there was a God, like, this is proof that there isn't."** (Her statement continued with other profanity-laced comments.)

Rapinoe's life already reflects a rejection of God. But her statement has drawn harsh criticism of a 'victimhood' mentality when it comes to the existence and work of God. Practically speaking, her expectation of God (and of His existence) is that she will be successful, have a good life, and not have major health problems. *How many in American society think the same way?*

The question for us is: Do we — or our students, their families, or those in our churches — think this way? It is easy in a practical sense to fault God for something that 'goes wrong' in life: major health issues; social isolation or persecution due to Christian testimony and beliefs; job loss, along with the associated income; or the death of a loved one.

Imagine the changes in our Scriptures if Paul voiced bitterness toward God because of his eye malady. Or if some of the disciples abandoned their faith because of Roman or Jewish persecution. Trials are opportunities for spiritual growth, but Satan can easily use them to plant seeds of doubt, blame, and anger.

Our view of God's sovereignty will be reflected in our responses to adversity.

UPDATE: Roman Catholic Doctrine Redefined

In the October issue of *The Sentinel*, we reported on several key questions facing the Catholic Church, revolving around official blessings for gay marriage and for women being ordained as priests that were raised for discussion at the Synod on Synodality. Some resolution — and scandal — resulted from the posting of the official declarations on October 31 by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The biggest response came on the issue of transsexual persons, those who have had hormonal and surgical changes to changes to their appearance as male or female. Transgender and The Church's new official position is that transsexuals are eligible to be baptized "if there are no situations in which there is a risk of generating public scandal." Transgender persons would also be permitted (by extension of the new policy, or by a lack of prohibition in Church documents) to:

- ◆ Serve as witnesses at weddings and baptisms
- ◆ Receive the sacrament of Confirmation (applying Canon 890 as related policy)

In summary, Pope Francis has amplified and magnified the weight of social perspectives upon Church doctrine and practice. This pragmatism boldly weakens their current and future positions, with the perspective that changes are okay as long as the social conditions are favorable. With the Church's doctrine of papal infallibility also being attached to the proclamations, reversing the new declarations would be both cumbersome and problematic, since the Church would not accept inconsistency between popes. Rather, adjustments or clarifications of the new policies are to be expected in the coming years.



Image by [Annett Klingner](#) from [Pixabay](#)

As Christians, Scripture is our absolute standard for faith, doctrine, and how we are to live. Yielding to social 'norms' or other pressures undermines a core, foundational doctrine: the holy, God-given inspiration of our Bible (2 Timothy 3:16). If our core doctrines are as redefinable as Roman Catholic leadership has done to their own tenets, all of Scripture comes into a state of continual doubt and question. Doctrine must be consistent, maintained, and defended in the face of social pressure and persecution.

[Pope Francis says transgender Catholics can receive baptism - Washington Times](#)

In the Classroom

Progressive Education Theory Continues to Advance

Across the country, we continue to read of the replacement of generally sound educational practice in favor of progressive instructional interpretation and methods. These not only are vastly inferior in academic quality, but they are also failing to prepare students for future life responsibilities and participation in the workforce. Recent examples include:

- ◆ **Equity- and social justice-based mathematics instruction codified in California.** Its Board of Education reviewed and voted unanimously to impose the 1,000-page framework on teachers and students. Now officially called the 2023 Mathematics Framework for California Public Schools, it is running into increasing public skepticism both inside and outside the state. A Stanford University professor of mathematics delved into the plan and saw glaring flaws, like delaying the teaching of Algebra 1 (instead of in 8th grade for STEM-track students) and making math “culturally relevant” instead of personally integrative using traditional concepts. The Stanford professor, Brian Conrad, published an article in *The Atlantic* magazine that addresses the policy’s massive failures. (The article was published October 2.) [California’s Math Misadventure Is About to Go National - The Atlantic](#)

- ◆ **Pittsburgh Math Classes to Combat White Supremacy.** The Pittsburgh Public Schools Board voted on Oct. 25 to hire a consulting group to conduct workshops for teachers. The sessions would help staff to “identify, disrupt and replace” views associated with white supremacy among students. With mathematics instruction being “oppressive,” the effort would focus on the “wellness of students of color.” Teachers would benefit from additional antiracist instruction and learning opportunities. [Pittsburgh public schools approve measure to instruct teachers on ‘White supremacy’ in math classes | Fox News](#)

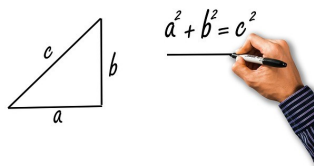


Image by [Tumisu](#) from [Pixabay](#)

- ◆ **Oregon Removes Standardized Test Score as Factor in Determining Graduation Status.** In 2021, the state legislature originally suspended the mandate for “essential skills proficiency” until the end of the 2023-24 school year, citing learning-loss effects from Covid (actually the result of implemented policies put in place to ‘protect’ students, not from the health effects of the virus). In October, the State Board of Education approved an extension of the policy through the 2027-28 school year. Requiring students to

take the state’s standardized test was a “harmful hurdle for historically marginalized students” in addition to an improper use of the tests as “inequitable.” While graduation rates from Oregon’s public schools have jumped to record highs, proficiency in core competencies among graduates remains dramatically low (43% proficient in English, 31% proficient in math). [Oregon just dropped all graduation standards, failing all of its students in the name of ‘equity’ \(msn.com\)](#)

[Oregon Moms Union slams removal of standardized test from high school graduation requirement: ‘Not surprising’ | Fox News](#)

Your school can distinguish itself as a beacon for common-sense, life-applicable, traditional — and effective — instructional methods in a Biblical setting and with an integrated Christian worldview. Encourage rigor and excellence with your staff and your students. Be able to effectively communicate how any given subject — the math content, phonics instruction, the accurate study of history, proper writing methods, even the appreciation of arts — is a benefit to the student’s life development and how it will be useful in the future.

Critical Thinking Plays a Role in High School and in the College Admissions Process

For years, admonitions have been abundantly published on the benefits of integrating critical thinking activities across the curriculum. With the glut of

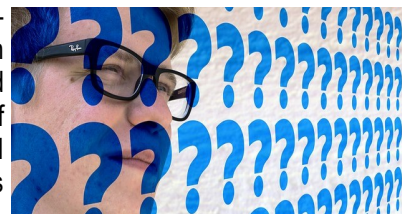


Image by [Gerd Altmann](#) from [Pixabay](#)

technological advances making it easier to conduct research — or to cheat — a new emphasis on student critical thinking is being called for. The goal of ‘standing out from the crowd’ for a college/university application becomes the motivation to take shortcuts on admission essays (using AI to write it for them) or in getting an article published in a peer-reviewed journal, even if the writing may not be entirely original or legitimate. (This would be called academic fraud, and it can be a career-ender for even well-regarded individuals. The former head coach at the University of Notre Dame resigned due to resume’ fraud. A former president of Stanford University likewise resigned due to faked information in a dozen published papers.)

Knowing what to write, and how to properly cite sources in research papers, is a worthy skill to learn. Teach your students to give credit where credit is due.

[Let’s not teach high school students how to commit academic fraud | Opinion - pennlive.com](#)



School Records Retention: Still Relevant, Still Crucial

KCEA staff periodically hears reports of individuals or institutions wanting to discard 'outdated' school academic records in the interest of a building renovation, storage space, or elapsed time. Similarly, we hear of some storage in cardboard boxes in an attic or storage room or in non-secure filing cabinets. Be assured, these are terrible, horrible, no good, very bad ideas. [credit to Alexander]. Consider three thoughts:

- ◆ *Official school records* are important for many students for decades. Destroyed records can cause one to lose employment opportunities or similar disadvantages. Some applications require records since kindergarten.
- ◆ A fundamental legal principle underlying the school/student-family relationship is "contract law." The family contracts with the school to supply an education in return for payment of tuition. Part of education is permanent records. Just as a school can expect a parent to pay the tuition, the parent/student has every right to expect the

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school (or successor) to honor the contract .

- ◆ While there is not direct mandate in PA law for a Christian school to maintain records, IF one fails to do so, and IF there is a legal action, common sense and professional expectations will likely lead the court to apply a penalty for failure to maintain important records permanently. The professional expectations are applied to public schools in 22 Pa. Code, Chapter 73.

Bill Introduced to Delay Public School Start Times

In the interest of addressing educational effects from a public health crisis of school-age children's sleep loss, State Representative Cooper introduced H.B. 1848 in November. *If enacted*, it would force "public secondary schools" to implement a later start time for the school day, at least 8:15am. *If enacted* as drafted, the change would not take place until the 2026-27 school year.

This bill currently sits in the House Education Committee. It illustrates how cultural changes may impact all schools.

- ◆ Student Transportation: With many of our affiliating schools beginning their school day at 8:00am, families who rely on public school bus transportation would face increased pressures from public school transportation directors to conform to bus schedules.
- ◆ School Schedules: Leaders may be pressured to rethink their academic schedule. This could affect instructional hours and extracurricular opportunities for students, whether they be field trips, sports teams, or academic clubs/committees like Yearbook.

New Penalties for Failing to Stop for a School Bus

Senate Bill 851 was signed into law by Gov. Shapiro on Oct. 23 as Act 19 of 2023. The law now allows the following, with significant permissions and reporting also attached:

- ◆ Installation of a side stop signal arm enforcement mechanism (i.e., cameras or related technology) on buses
- ◆ Larger fines for the owner of a vehicle violating the flashing red lights and stop arm of a stopped bus. Fines would be distributed between the school entity, local police, and the School Bus Safety Grant Program.

[2023 Act 19 - PA General Assembly \(state.pa.us\)](https://www.state.pa.us)

KCEA is a loose association of Bible-believing churches and Christian schools in PA uniting under a common banner for the furtherance of a common goal: the protection and promotion of Christian education as a philosophy and methodology of training our youth.

The Association is a faith ministry that serves Bible-believing ministries in Pennsylvania. Churches and other ministries are encouraged to support the Association with regular prayer and financial gifts. Dr. Allen Harris, President. Rev. Ross Ritchey, Vice-President. Mr. Michael Boole, Secretary-Treasurer. Dr. Theodore Clater, Executive Director.