

At Cornerstone

I have been hearing about declining standards in our nation's schools for years. My eyes were opened to the truth of this fact through my daughter who graduated from college in May and is teaching high school History and English this fall. She did her student teaching in a small high school in Michigan.

When she assigned seven pages of reading in Jane Austin's *Pride and Prejudice* for homework to her second semester Seniors, the students almost went into a full-blown mutiny. After all, they explained, they didn't get homework in that class and she had no right to assign them any. But it got worse. Because their writing was so poor, she decided to do a grammar unit testing the students on nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives. Virtually everyone failed it. She took a step backwards and began at the beginning only to discover that several of these students who were getting ready to graduate could not identify the nouns in a sentence. No wonder they had trouble with *Pride and Prejudice* ! This fall, she will be teaching in a very large high school in

northern Illinois. The chair of the English department has told her that with the lower level classes their goal is simply "to get them out." Sarah is determined to teach them, believing that at least some of the students will rise to meet her high expectations.

Unfortunately, these things aren't only happening "somewhere else." I saw the same phenomenon closer to home a couple of years ago. In my position as Teaching Leader for Bible Study Fellowship, I became aware of a 4th grade boy from a local school who was unable to read. I was heartsick. What will the future hold for this boy? I shudder to think about it.

Although these could be isolated incidents, I have the growing conviction that they aren't. William Bennett in his book, *The Educated Child*, writes:

Low academic standards plague many elementary and secondary schools. Signs of the dumbing down of American education abound. High school graduates show up at college struggling with basic skills, stumped by adverbs and bewildered by fractions . . . Too often in American education, we forget that attaining high standards means doing hard work.

We have not forgotten. We pray regularly that we will be found faithful in leading many children to become lifelong followers of Jesus Christ as we train them to think biblically. And if we fail there we fail miserably. But we must never forget that we are an academic institution. As in all things, God expects and deserves our very best. And we have found Bill Bennett to be correct: it *is* hard work. Our teachers work hard, our students work hard, and some of our parents would say that they work hard. Nevertheless, five years of experience at Cornerstone have taught me well that our students are up to the task. In fact we find that they are capable of doing so much more than even we sometimes give them credit for. I am thrilled every time I walk past our Kindergarten bulletin board displaying stories written in complete sentences in beautifully executed cursive handwriting. I smile when I walk through the halls and hear students practicing their Spanish. I'm excited to think that we have seventh graders studying Algebra and middle schoolers who have already read books my daughter will teach to her high schoolers.

All this is not to say that Cornerstone is perfect on the academic side. We still have a lot to do. New programs need to be developed and implemented, and there will always be some refining that needs to take place. But we want you to know that we are committed to academic excellence even when it's an unpopular stance (and sometimes it is). We pray that through God's leading, we will continue to develop a first-rate challenging curriculum that will enable our students to lead in the cause of Christ with confidence and excellence. Will you pray to that end?

Becky Shames, Administrator

Warning Signs of Low Expectations (from *The Educated Child*)

- Expectations are not clearly communicated to students and parents.
- Relatively little time is spent on core academic subjects.
- Students are passed along from grade to grade even if academic goals are not reached.
- Books and handouts are simple.
- Tests and assignments are usually easy.
- Teachers give little or no homework.
- Discipline is poor.
- Good grades are given for mediocre work.
- Standardized test scores are low.
- Attendance rates are poor.
- Many students are bored by the pace of learning.

& Numeric Increase

May 28, 2002 is a date that will be remembered at Cornerstone Christian Academy for a long time to come. That was the day we held our groundbreaking for our new building. Over three hundred students, parents, staff, board members, friends, and media were in attendance on that beautiful sunny day as we dedicated our 78 acres of land to God's glory and Cornerstone's future.

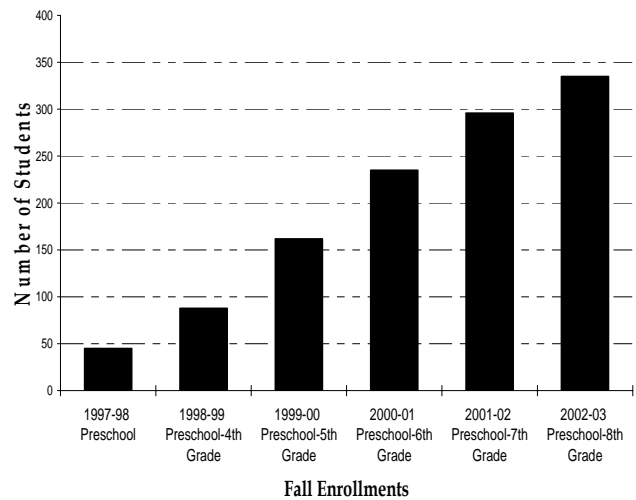
We continue to pour over blueprints and discuss things such as septic fields, well water, and gymnasium floor finishes. But even as that work will begin this summer to construct our 51,000 square foot Phase I building, we thank God for what He has accomplished here during this past academic year. Our academic program is strong, but there is so much more to us!

It has been a blessing to the staff as we watch children come to a deeper knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our Chapel services each week have been a time of worship and great teaching from area pastors. We have listened to hundreds of verses that the students have committed to memory. We celebrated our annual spiritual emphasis week, "Spirit Week," and saw salvation decisions in our elementary grades. One 4th grade boy stayed after Chapel that Thursday morning to talk with our Spirit Week speaker, Nate Best, and prayed to receive Christ as his Lord and Savior. What he didn't realize was that his mother was in a prayer group at the school that morning who prayed during that Chapel service for God's moving in the lives of the students.

Numeric Increase –

As the chart below depicts, our student body continues to grow numerically. We are amazed that God continues to bless Cornerstone by bringing to us the students of His choosing. Each year, our enrollment increases steadily. As of this writing, we have already enrolled over 330 students! Not only have we increased our student body, we have also increased our staff. Additions this past year included a resource teacher who worked one-on-one with students, a full-time music teacher, additional office staff, and more classroom teachers to handle expanding grades. This fall we're adding a full-time band teacher, additional classroom teachers and middle school teachers, as well as a coach who will begin to implement our athletic program. We praise God for the increase!

Cornerstone Christian Academy Growth
1997-2003 (Projected)



CCA's Administrator Receives Award

Becky Shames, CCA's founding Administrator, was awarded the 2002 *Head of School Award* from PAIDEIA, Inc. at their annual conference held at Chicago's Union League Club this past June.

PAIDEIA, Inc., which takes its name from a Greek word connoting the best of education and culture, was founded by Dr. D. Bruce Lockerbie. Dr. Lockerbie spent 35 years in secondary and higher education at The Stony Brook School in Long Island, New York. He is the author of more than three dozen books on religious education in America, and is a recognized scholar in the field. The PAIDEIA organization counsels schools, colleges, universities, and seminaries on corporate structure and governance, administration and services, financial development and advancement, and institutional planning.

Upon presenting the award, Dr. Lockerbie cited Mrs. Shames' leadership and dedication to academic excellence as well as her commitment to the school's spiritual environment. He noted, "She is the chief advocate of the school's mission – to provide a superior college preparatory education integrating the Christian faith and learning in order that its students might be equipped to be leaders in their communities and lifetime followers of Jesus Christ."

Also recognized at the conference was Dr. Peter C. Moore, founder of the Episcopal School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, (National Leadership Award), and William Graf III, Bryan College in Tennessee (Board Leadership Award).

Annual Fund, Building Fund & Tuition Assistance Fund

One of the philosophies that sets CCA apart from other private schools is our Fundraising Policy. It states that we will not hold fundraising events, or sell products in order to fund the school. Recently we heard from a Christian school with an enrollment of over 1000 students. They had completed a magazine drive that netted them about \$40,000 for their Annual Fund. It is a yearly event that takes a crew of people to manage, hundreds if not thousands of man-hours, as well as every student selling subscriptions. With another event planned in the spring, that school hopes to have close to \$100,000 in their Annual Fund by the end of their fiscal year. Where do we stand in comparison?

No magazine or candy sales. No crew of people in the Development Office managing hours and hours of paperwork and week after week of publicity. No student going door-to-door selling subscriptions or candy bars. No parents having to go to their offices in order to sign up co-workers.

No, at Cornerstone, we have committed donors who have given **almost \$700,000** in the past 12 months. They give to the Annual Fund, the Building Fund, or the Tuition Assistance Fund. And because of their generosity over the past years, Cornerstone Christian Academy has operated completely in the black since day one.

What is the Annual Fund you might ask? It is a yearly fund that meets operational costs not covered by tuition. Last year we had 143 active donors who supported us in this way. The breakdown for this fiscal year ending June 30, 2002 is as follows:

Operations (Annual Fund) - \$75,095.35
 Tuition Assistance Fund - \$43,477.63
 Building Fund - \$577,302.95
Total: \$695,550.94

All Glory to God!

Our 2002-03 giving has begun! We are praying for God's abundant provision.

Tuition Assistance Fund

During the 2001-2002 academic year, CCA awarded assistance to 15% of our students. These monies come directly from donors – they are not a budget item for Cornerstone. As our new academic year begins, we have already committed to over \$70,000 in assistance awards! Where will this money come from? It will come from people who have a burden to see children come to Christ and receive a Bible-based education. Following is a letter from a family who received tuition assistance last year:

Our family has been so blessed to be a part of Cornerstone Christian Academy. We had been home schooling for years, but had come to a point when it just wasn't as effective. Trying to meet the education needs of three children at three different grade levels eventually was beyond our abilities, but we still felt God was not calling us to enroll them into public school.

We had decided long ago to forsake traditional education because of the Godless focus, moral relativism, disregard for parental authority, and rejection of high academic standards. However, we knew we could no longer provide the structure and guidance they needed academically, but didn't know where to turn. Then God began working on our hearts and led us to Cornerstone.

Although we felt God was calling us to send His children to Cornerstone, we questioned our understanding of His will as the tuition appeared to be an overwhelming obstacle. We laid our needs before Him, seeking His provision in order to be obedient. A friend of ours knew our dilemma and shared a philosophy of Cornerstone which stated that no one would be denied admission because of a financial need. It was then we learned of the scholarship program and applied.

When we had been notified we would become recipients of the scholarship, we knew God had indeed provided a way for us to obey Him and a way for the donor to obey Him by giving to the scholarship fund. Although we may never know personally who the donor or donors are, it is exciting that both of us serve the same awesome God who orchestrated it all.

After having completed their first year at CCA we have seen our children challenged, encouraged, and loved into maturity in the Lord identical to what we strive for as parents. Coming into a more conventional educational environment was a concern initially; however, we found the environment at the school to be more like an extended Christian family than merely an institution.

We are all looking forward to a great second year and wait with anticipation to see what God will do!

Your gift could make an eternal difference in the life of a child. All donations are welcome! Mark your check 'tuition assistance fund.'

Gift Made to CCA

We thank each and every one of our donors for their commitment to the Lord and their ongoing financial support of CCA. We think they're wonderful! Recognizing our integrity and commitment to financially sound principles, a key donor has committed to give a large gift for our building fund with one stipulation – the money must be matched by new funds in order to retain it! Imagine how you could maximize your giving potential with a larger gift! It's a wonderful

opportunity for you to 'double' your giving! If you would like to participate in this match, please indicate 'Building Fund' on your check.

This leads us to another question –

“What’s Happening with the Building?”

Indeed, what *is* happening with the building? It’s a question we hear daily. Let us share with you what has transpired since the ground breaking on May 28th:

- ☞ All the necessary permits have been secured. This took longer than we anticipated. It seemed as though when one question was answered, another one was asked. But at this point, all the questions have been answered and we have what we need to proceed.
- ☞ Construction documents are nearing completion. We meet with the builders and the architect every two weeks for updates. As of mid-August, the drawings were 95% complete. This is a huge step and is on-going. We continue to refine and perfect what Phase I will look like when it’s completed. It’s very exciting to watch it take shape.
- ☞ We’ve started selecting some of the finishes. We know, for instance, that the roof will be hunter green and we’re getting close on selecting the masonry color. We’ve talked to kitchen designers, sound engineers, gym floor experts, and others. There are literally hundreds of details to be attended to. We take them one at a time praying for God’s direction with even the smallest of details.
- ☞ The steel for the building itself is ready to be ordered. It will go into fabrication very soon unless we apply the brakes. Let me explain what I mean by that.

As we made clear at the groundbreaking ceremony, we were taking a step of faith that day. We do not have enough money at this point to complete Phase I. We have enough to do the excavation work on the site and even enough to do the foundation work and purchase all the necessary steel. But then what? Our dilemma is whether to “pull the trigger” (so to speak) and let all the sub-contractors get started, or to wait until we know more.

We are praying about that decision with diligence. But we are not just sitting around, either, waiting for the money we need to drop out of heaven (wouldn’t that be nice?). We continue to explore several avenues: the possibility of tax-exempt bonds, loan options, and continued fundraising. Our on-going prayer, though, is that God will provide what we need in miraculous ways through His people.

When will we be in the new building? We still don’t know. If we had the money today, we would be in before this academic year is over. But we have known from the beginning that the money issue is beyond us. God has to do it, and so we keep

moving forward even as we pray, knowing that it has to be “*In His Time for His Glory.*”

Don’t be discouraged by our lack of answers. We are not. On the contrary, we are on tiptoes of anticipation anxious to see what our Mighty God will do next. Our humble thanks to go all of you who have given so much in money and prayer to see this happen. We are holding onto God’s promise that *the one who trusts will never be dismayed.* We hope you will do the same.

Building Fund Status

Received: \$698,183.39
Pledged: \$459,381.06
Still Needed: \$3,312,435.55

Article “Christian” Kids Without Belief

This article, by Tom & Mary Ruth Bisset, was featured in “Power for Living” – Feb. 2001

The other day we went to lunch with a friend who directs a local youth ministry. Bright and well informed, Bob is exactly the right person to ask about teenagers.

“What’s your biggest concern about Christian young people today?” we asked.

“The biggest problem with Christian kids today,” he said quietly, “is that they know very little about their faith. They don’t know the Bible, and they certainly don’t know doctrine.”

We must have looked surprised, because Bob didn’t wait for our response.

“They’re deeply influenced by the relativism in our society,” he explained. “They’ve grown up in a world where it doesn’t matter what you believe, so they don’t feel a need for Bible knowledge or theology.”

Christian young people who don’t know what they believe – and why they believe – are not far removed from believing nothing. Well-presented intellectual challenges to their faith can prompt serious doubt and disillusion.

Another danger of content-less Christianity is that empty heads produce empty hearts. Christian character and maturity depend directly on the grace and wisdom that come from knowing and understanding God’s Word.

We encourage parents to talk about Bible doctrine, church history, and Christian apologetics. Discuss faith problems and difficulties. Go beyond talking; role-play by taking the non-Christian viewpoint and insisting that your children defend their faith. Christian bookstores have plenty of helpful resources that can help build your children’s faith – and yours at the same time.

Long ago, God warned Israel that they were being destroyed by their lack of knowledge of Himself (Hosea 4:6). The same is true today. If Christian young people aren't well taught in their faith, they too will face great spiritual danger as they go through life.

*Tom Bisset is the author of the books, **Why Christian Kids Leave the Faith** and **Good News About Prodigals** (both published by Discovery House).*

founder's

Banquet to be held October 24th

Mark Thursday, Oct. 24th down on your calendars, get a babysitter, and make plans now to attend our 5th Annual Founder's Banquet. This year's banquet will be held at the Radisson Hotel & Conference Center on Veteran's Parkway in Bloomington.

Our special speaker this year will be David Bates, the Executive Director of the Mid-America Region of A.C.S.I. (Association of Christian Schools, International). Mr. Bates was our very first Founder's Banquet speaker back in 1998 when he was still the Administrator at the Rockford Christian Schools. We are excited to welcome him back.

We'll enjoy a time of praise together, a great meal, and a slide show featuring Cornerstone students. It's a great opportunity to invite grandparents and friends. And what's even better – it's FREE! Watch the mail for ticket information and we'll see you there!

God

At Work !

God continues to provide for us in amazing and delightful ways. From the very first day we became Cornerstone Christian Academy, we have been operating with two donated copiers. One of them has over 2 million copies on it, the other over 1 million! We are convinced that just as Israel's shoes and clothing did not wear out during their 40 years in the desert, so God has kept those machines running. Surely there have never been two copiers that have been the object of so much prayer. But even as we prayed that God would keep them working, we began to pray that He would provide a new one in His time. And He did. On the last day the teachers were here in June, a big, beautiful, almost new digital copier appeared from a donor. We were so excited that we literally surrounded the machine and watched while it moved paper through in what seemed to be nanoseconds. We have since discovered that it copies and collates. It scans, sorts, stores, and staples. It does one-sided and two-sided copies. It does everything but cook us breakfast! We were so struck by God's goodness to us. We were like children on Christmas morning that had received their most hoped-for gift.

But the day got even better. It was the last day the staff would spend together for a long time. So we went to Famous Dave's as a group for lunch. While we were eating, our server came to the table and got our attention. He told us to be sure to save room for dessert because an anonymous donor had already paid for our lunches (there were more than 20 of us!). It was as though God had patted us on the backs for our efforts. And as we are wont to do, we broke out in song right there in Famous Dave's singing *Great is Thy Faithfulness*.

Now we find ourselves at the beginning of a brand new school year. We may not know what the year will hold for us, but we have no doubt that whatever comes He will get us through. A God who cares about copiers and lunch will surely take care of His own. **Great is His faithfulness indeed!**

Check out our Website – www.cornerstonechristian.com