2019-2021
Aberdeen Christian
School Improvement Plan
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Aberdeen Christian School
Mission, Purpose, & Philosophy

Mission Statement

Equipping students to glorify God and to fulfill the will of God for their lives.

Statement of Purpose

A basic responsibility of Christian parents is to “train up a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6). The goal is that each child “increase in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” (Luke 2:52).

Aberdeen Christian School is an extension of the home and church, and is established to train each student in the knowledge of God, the scriptural way of life, and the exercise of servant leadership. By providing highest standards for intellectual and spiritual learning, our goal is to equip each student to fulfill the will of God for their life.

Our desire is that our students be used by God to spread the Gospel to our community, our nation, and the world.

Philosophy

The concepts of Aberdeen Christian School’s philosophy of education are derived from the Bible and include the following:

1. The triune God is Creator, Sustainer, and Source of all truth, Knowledge, and wisdom.
2. The Living God is sovereign, loving, and personal.
3. All things were created for His glory.
4. Jesus Christ is God the Son, Savior, and Mediator, who died for our sins, was buried and rose again on the third day, ascended into Heaven, and is coming again.
5. Jesus Christ’s sinless life is the perfect example after which believers are to pattern their lives.
6. The Holy Spirit magnifies Jesus Christ, teaches the truth, convicts of sins, indwells, and enables believers to do God's will.
7. The Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God and is the authority and guide in the development of the whole person, spiritually, mentally, physically, and socially.

8. Man is the direct creation of God, created in the image and likeness of God.

9. Man is a sinner by nature and choice, and is redeemable only through Jesus Christ.

10. With differing abilities and spiritual capacities, each person is equal in God's sight. Each person is responsible to God. His purpose is to glorify God, to grow in fellowship with Him, and to delight in Him forever.

11. We believe that sex is a gift given by God for a man and a woman, only within the confines of a marriage. A marriage is sanctioned by God, only between a man and a woman. Homosexual/bi-sexual/transgender identification are not compatible with our statement of faith (Romans 1:24-28; I Corinthians 6:9; Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; Genesis 1:27; and Genesis 2:24; Deuteronomy 22:5).

12. Education is a tool used to develop each student's unique potential and abilities, and to equip him to effectively pursue the vocation to which the Lord leads.

13. Christian education is to be God centered, Christ glorifying, Spirit controlled, and Bible based, equipping the student for fulfilling God's will.
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In an effort to facilitate and enhance student achievement at Aberdeen Christian School, we have a school improvement process. The team’s findings are found in this document, which is a tool that will enable us to focus on school improvement at Aberdeen Christian. This plan should drive subsequent decision-making, interactions, activities, and planning processes to further the goal of student achievement.

Aberdeen Christian School Profile
Aberdeen is located in northeastern South Dakota, a primarily rural state. It is the third largest city in the state with a population of 26,000. Aberdeen has two post-secondary institutions, Northern State University and Presentation College. Its main employers are the hospitals, the public school system, and 3M. Agriculture is still the community’s predominant industry. Grain terminals, livestock sale barns, a grain inspection service, and related agribusiness help support the area.

Aberdeen Christian School is a Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 institution. Unique characteristics of the staffing patterns and student population of Aberdeen Christian School are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff FTE</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
<th>School Improvement Planning Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Education Teachers</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>ACS Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teachers</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Administration Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal Music</td>
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<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band</td>
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<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
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<td>0.70</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Breakdown of Tested Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aberdeen Christian School</th>
<th>Aberdeen Christian School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total, Grades 3-6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACT Aspire Results

Description of Data #1 (% of students demonstrating readiness or close to readiness)

Many private schools around the country have chosen the ACT Aspire to track academic progress. The table below shows three years of testing data (2017/2018/2019).

Grade 3: English 100/100/100, Math 85/100/94, Reading 60/77/75, Science 60/79/81

Grade 5: English 100/100/100, Math 100/94/100, Reading 94/100/95, Science 94/100/85

Grade 7: English 100/93/100, Math 85/100/83, Reading 92/93/83, Science 100/93/89

Grade 9: English 91/100/100, Math 73/94/73, Reading 82/87/100, Science 55/87/83

Description of Data #2 (National Percentile for 2019)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>Grade 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Data

ACS students fared well on the exams. Our strongest school-wide area continues to be English with 100% showing readiness or close to readiness, followed by Reading and Math at 88%, and science at 86%. Our students exceeded national readiness in 94% of the tested areas, the same as 2018.

Implications of Data

Aberdeen Christian School staff will continue to provide support for students lacking proficiency in subject areas through the use of small group help when possible, repeated review and drill, directions given in a variety of ways, recommended home practice, and teacher-directed accommodations as necessary (differentiation). Staff will continue to monitor progress after assessments to ensure all students are improving their academic skills. We will continue to emphasize the importance of developing partnerships with parents. Technology will be used when appropriate to enhance teaching/learning. We are emphasizing the importance of
maximizing academic learning time for reading/writing by focusing on the 5 core elements of good reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension), as well as writing across the curriculum, using Institute for Excellence in Writing (IEW) principles. Repeated readings will be also be used to build fluency. The use of ABEKA and ACSI Math in the elementary, Holt McDougal math curriculum in 6th – 11th grades, and Saxon math for Senior-Level courses will help our students be better math thinkers and problem solvers. The one area our students did not exceed the 50% national readiness was 5th grade math. The ACSI Math presentation in this grade level is significantly different than Holt McDougal, introduced in 6th grade. Our team has decided to partner with our professional organization, Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), to administer the IOWA Assessment, beginning in the spring of 2020. We believe this assessment will be a better fit for our school improvement/instructional delivery process.

ACT Test Results
Description of Data

Aberdeen Christian students voluntarily participate in the ACT Testing Program, in preparation for college and career. Here are the results from the past three years:

2017: English – 16.7 Math – 18.3 Reading – 17.7 Science – 18.4 Composite – 17.9


Analysis of Data

In 2016, we had 7 students take the exam, with our composite score raising to 27.4, significantly higher than the state average of 21.9. We had 7 students take the exam in 2017, with decreases in all tested areas. At that time, the ACS composite was 17.9 and the state average was 21.8. In 2018, we had 12 students take the test with a composite score of 22.3, a significant increase in all four tested areas, higher than the state average of 21.9. In 2019, we had 18 students take the exam and our composite was 22.1, a slight decrease from 2018, but still exceeding the state average of 21.6.

Implications of Data

In 2016, we had several students demonstrate scholastic excellence, which was evidenced by the increase in scores. It is important to reflect on our curriculum and the delivery of it, to ensure students are gaining the appropriate skills to meet state-wide averages and college-entrance requirements, in addition to having career-readiness skills. In 2018, scores were right at the state average. In 2019, our students continued to meet and exceed state averages. ACS will continue to reflect and deliver quality core content instruction to its students.
It is important to note the school has gone through many transitions over the past decade. These challenging times resulted in a ‘survival’ mode versus a ‘thriving’ mode. We are looking forward to walking in more stability as we’ve settled into a permanent location and divided administrative, financial, and teaching duties, to maximize efficiency and productivity. The addition of a business manager will allow for more educational/development duties to be more defined. It is also pertinent to note that during the past five years, there was an increase in transfer students, who did not get to benefit from the continuity of curriculum offered through the grades. As Robert Marzano’s research has shown, a ‘Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum’ is essential for academic success.

**CLIMATE SURVEY**

Aberdeen Christian School has sought narrative feedback on the school improvement surveys this year. Themes were identified as responses were reviewed, and the following is a summary of the findings. The two questions asked of parents, students, and staff were:

1. What do you appreciate about ACS?
2. What specific ideas do you have that could make the school better or more effective?

**2018 Parent Survey Results – Summary/Implications**

Overall parent feedback was quite positive. It was encouraging to note how parents valued the smaller class sizes, safe environment, family-friendly culture, integration of biblical truth, and celebrating the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. In addition, parents valued the quality of education and the visibility, transparency, and support of administration.

Comments that summarized the parent feedback were: “Appreciation for academic rigor, quality friendships, dedication to excellence, sincere concern for what is right, and the quality education.”

Some of the suggestions included encouraging college and career education for secondary students, increasing supervision at recess, continued professional development for faculty, commitment to increasing teacher wages, and ensuring consequences are appropriate for those not complying with expectations.

We are grateful for the trust parents have placed in the school and we desire to maintain that trust through transparent relationships, clear communication, and placing high value on safety/orderliness and biblical integration. We will also continue our student services coordinator position for secondary students, be diligent in recess supervision, and do our best to handle discipline issues with a balance between assertiveness and compassion. Finally, we are seeking school board and association approval during the 2019-2020 budget discussions, to increase salaries for our teachers.
2018 Student Survey Results – Summary/Implications

Once again, we were pleased to see that students in grades 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12 shared their appreciation for the school, its teachers, love of friends, and the safe and small class sizes. Students also expressed gratitude for faith integration, worship, and chapel.

A fourth grade student commented by saying, “It’s like home – I love it here – it is the best school ever!”

An eighth grade student said, “The teachers care about us and I appreciate how hard all the teachers work to help us learn.”

Two seniors shared the following:

“I always feel like I can approach a teacher and they care about what I have to say.”

“I really appreciate the education I am receiving here at ACS. I know that when I head off to college, I will be prepared to take on the challenges I face, both educationally and spiritually. Thanks to ACS, I feel as though I am standing on a firm enough foundation to enter the world with confidence in my God.”

Some suggestions included the desire to have more elective courses, more project-based (hands-on) learning opportunities, placing a high priority on college/career readiness, and more teacher availability/tutors for before or after school help. In addition, a desire to see the cell phone policy more closely monitored, and to have the high school Personal Finance course offered before the senior year.

It is rewarding to read the positive comments from students. Our hope is that our students have a positive experience that will build a strong foundation of faith, academic excellence, and establish memorable relationships with friends and faculty. Based on the feedback received, this goal is happening. Reflecting on opportunities to provide extra assistance for students needing help is a worthy consideration and our team will also reflect on adjustments to the cell phone policy.

2018 Staff Survey Results – Summary/Implications

Just as parents and students expressed appreciation for the positive, family-oriented culture of the school, staff had similar sentiments. Faculty also expressed gratitude for administrative support, encouragement, and approachability. There was an appreciation
for the positive relationships developed amongst staff members, students, and families. Staff valued being able to share about God, having small class sizes, and the priority of making a difference in the lives of children. There was an appreciation for chapel time and being able to work in an environment where discipline issues are minimal.

Staff expressed the following sentiments:

“I love the atmosphere and how the school is run...a good balance between excellence and enjoyment.”

“I appreciate all the people that make up the school and the God-centeredness in everything that takes place.”

Staff offered the following considerations for improvement: Maintain visibility in hallways during passing time, come up with a new cell phone policy, emphasize the importance of teachers being consistent in recess expectations, continue to improve the technology infrastructure, continue quality professional development for staff, and maintain consistency in discipline practices, making sure we are helping students gain quality interpersonal skills that will help them interact with each other in a positive/respectful manner. Finally, they encouraged us to keep in mind the importance of maintaining balance in training the hearts, as well as the minds of students, with priority placed on shaping the heart.

A goal of administration is to create a healthy, supportive, and transparent work environment. Based on staff feedback, this is occurring. It is critical that staff are supported and empowered in their roles. We will continue to do our best to be consistent in discipline policies, provide quality professional development, and open up discussions regarding the cell phone policy.

**UPDATE:** Since the surveys, we have made the following changes:

1. Increased supervision and visibility during the lunch hour.
2. Amended the cell phone policy and enforced it more consistently.
3. Split recess between PK-2 and 3-6. This allows for a safer recess experience.
4. Made technology improvements by installing projectors in all classrooms.
5. Provided more consistent consequences for discipline issues.
6. Added two hours of community service for twenty tardies.
2019-20 Goals, Objectives, and Intervention Strategies

Goal 1: All children will improve their ability to read, write, and comprehend a variety of literary texts in all curricular areas.

Objective: Increase the percentage of all students reading at the readiness or close to readiness levels, to a minimum of 90%. Spring 2019 = 88%.

Activities/Strategies: 1. Continue auditing State Standards and matching them to curriculum (through teacher-prepared course outlines). 2. Implementing effective teaching strategies to engage learners using reading and writing across the curriculum (IEW). 3. Identifying students who fall into basic and below basic categories and implementing teacher directed accommodations to help them experience success. (Example: Flexible reading groups/differentiation. 4. Tutoring. 5. Integrating technology.

Assessments: 1. ACT Testing for 10th-12th grades & IOWA Assessment for 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th grades. 2. Review individual progress, based on mid-term & quarterly report cards. 3. Identify mini-assessments to monitor progress/performance, for immediate feedback (chapter quizzes/review).

Goal 2: All students will use mathematical and scientific concepts, procedures, and computation skills to solve problems.

Objective: Increase the percentage of all students performing math/science skills at the readiness or close to readiness levels, at a minimum of 89% for all students. Spring 2019 = 87%.

Activities/Strategies: 1. Continue auditing State Standards and matching them to curriculum (through teacher-prepared course outlines). 2. Implementing effective teaching strategies to engage learners using ABEKA, ACSI/Bob Jones Science, Holt McDougal, and SAXON curriculum. 3. Identifying students who fall into basic and below basic categories and implementing teacher directed accommodations to help them experience success through differentiation. 5. Tutoring. 6. Integrating technology.

Assessments: 1. ACT Testing for 10th-12th grades & IOWA Assessment for 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th grades. 2. Review individual progress based on mid-term & quarterly report cards. 3. Identify mini-assessments to monitor progress/performance for immediate feedback (chapter quizzes/review).
Other Goals:
The School Board and Superintendent will review school’s strategic plan at each monthly board meeting.

Highly Qualified Staff
Our goal is to have all teachers at Aberdeen Christian School meet the definition of being highly qualified as determined by the South Dakota Department of Education. We do our best to staff our school with teachers who are certified in their content area(s).

Parent Involvement in Education
Aberdeen Christian School provided parents with written notice of the school’s improvement plan process in the October patron update. In addition, the school improvement plan will be discussed and approved at the November board meeting and posted on the website. Finally, mid-term grades and quarterly report cards are shared with families. Parents also have an opportunity to sign up for the JMC Parent Portal.

Transition Processes
ACS implements the following processes to assist families with transitions:

1. The registration process for incoming kindergarten students begins in January.
2. During the enrollment process, families and students learn more about the school through a meet and greet/tour.
3. After school begins, families are invited to attend an open house in August.
4. Parents are encouraged to provide the school with child and family information, birth certificate, and immunization records to complete the registration process.
5. In the spring, the Principal provides an orientation for 6th graders, to prepare them to transition to junior high.
6. During the 3rd quarter mid-term conferences, the Principal and Student Services Coordinator provide an orientation for 8th grade students and their parents regarding the transition to high school. A student services link is also available on the web site.

Monitoring and Support
The Superintendent and Special Education Teacher meet twice a month to discuss student concerns that would arise, either academically or socially, as part of the Student Assistance Team (SAT) process. Teachers are encouraged to attempt accommodations/behavior plans in their classrooms, using ‘tools’ they’ve learned over the years to help students experience success. After several attempted interventions, with a lack of success, a referral is made to the SAT, where further brainstorming is done. If these new interventions are not successful, the team will decide whether or not special education testing is warranted. We rely on the Aberdeen School District to complete the testing. If a student qualifies, we write a ‘service plan,’ outlining areas of strengths, weaknesses, and goals to help them experience success. The service plan is reviewed annually and children are re-tested every three years. The Aberdeen School District also provides speech therapy to qualifying students.

Ongoing Program Development
The school improvement plan is a two-year systematic process, with periodic evaluation needed to assess progress toward meeting goals. It is evaluated annually and revised as needed. Future revisions in the plan will be made according to data obtained from assessment results, surveys, state mandates, and student needs.