



## Table of Contents

### Highest Standards

### GBA Values

### Learner Differences @ LRCA

### Construction Update

### Strategic Plan Update

December 2, 2008

Dear Fellow Warriors,

## Highest Standards

Last week, our K4-12 faculty gifted me with an oil painting by our elementary students. The face of the impressionistic painting is **an aerial view of our campus master plan**. Around the edge of the canvas, in four inch print, is our year verse, "Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord." (Hab. 4:6) On the back of the canvas, our young artists will soon place their signature thumbprints. I am greatly moved by this gift and invite you all to **stop by my office to see it**.

Our faculty has been diligent, even sacrificial, to fulfill our purpose and to live up to our potential as a school. Daily, they turn the flywheel of "**good to great.**" Like all of us, they understand the wheel never stops turning. The faculty's focus and discipline has significantly increased our torque and the RPM of our corporate tachometer. I thank God for such a dedicated ensemble of educators and followers of Christ. **The mission of Little Rock Christian Academy is in good hands. We are working hard in our pursuit of excellence but – in the end - that is your privilege to measure and, thereby, help us grow.**

In early 2009, we will circulate an **institutional assessment** for your careful attention. We will be asking you for your honest, edifying feedback on our "**mission-effectiveness.**" How are we fulfilling our potential in providing you a K4-12 education characterized by excellence in the pursuit of truth from a Christ-centered worldview? How are we academically developing your children? How are we developing them in the arts and athletics? **How are we doing** in the area of modeling Christ? Pursuing college prep? Serving learner differences? The survey will take 30 minutes of your time but the data will serve us well for the next 30 months.

During our recent professional development days, aptly named by Dr. Margo Turner, "Excelling Still More," a teacher asked a timely question: "**[The Excellence Project](#) refers to 'highest standards.' What exactly are those (highest) standards?**"

The tone of the teacher reflected the sincerity of the question. And, the question begged for a substantial answer. I held up five fingers to illustrate the bigness of the question ... and the "answer."

- **The Excellence Project** – a defined commitment to best instructional practices in the classroom. Last year I asked a small group of master teachers to define professional excellence in the LRCA classroom with which to measure ourselves.
- **The LRCA Statement of Curriculum** - a renewed articulation of our academic benchmarks for grades 5, 8 and 12 in every area of study at LRCA.
- **The Purpose and Expectations of Biblical Worldview** - modeling Christ to the next generation. As Dr. Margo Turner says, "We teach God."
- **Faculty and student achievement track records** – ACSI certification, National Merit Scholars, Quiz Bowl, professional development pursuits, ACT scores, very competitive performance in 5A state competition (even though we are, by size, a 4A school).
  - **Did you know that?** The Arkansas Athletic Association (AAA) registers all private schools in one division higher than their size qualification in order to "level the playing field" between public and private school teams. Nationally, more and more states that have tried this punitive approach are learning that – besides being not fair - it does not work.
- **The Faculty Job Description** demanding a passion for Christ, learning, students and subject matter.

In my mind, those are “highest standards.” But, regardless of my illustrations, it all points to our constant pursuit of truth “characterized by excellence.” Easy to say, difficult to do; we have no choice but to hunker down and **be warriors for excellence to the glory of God. We dare not slacken.** Ever.

Why not?

- Our competition won't let us. [*public and private*]
- Our constituency won't let us. [*you*]
- Our profession won't let us. [*accreditation*]
- Our conscience won't let us. [*ourselves*]

Though **the meat of our professional development days focused on best practices of learning and engagement in the classroom**, I was privileged to set the table with four words illustrated below.



**We should excel at serving “all kinds of minds” because of our Christian theology, if nothing else!** “*There are different kinds of gifts but the same Spirit, different kinds of service but the same Lord, different kinds of working but the same God ...*” (I Cor. 12:4)



“*A teacher affects eternity. [A teacher] can never tell where one’s influence stops.*” (H. Adams) **Need I say more?**



Dallas Willard tells us in his book, *Renovation of the Heart*, that “*we love something or someone when we promote its good for its own sake.*” **I charged the faculty to ask the question – every day – “Are we promoting the good of each and every student in our care?”** [Love] ... “*the still more excellent way.*” (I Cor. 12:31)



**“We teach who we are.” (Parker Palmer) Are we joyful? Are we teaching joyfully? Will the next generation be joyful? Our answers create the future.** On August 6, '08, the faculty and I committed to **“SHINE LIKE STARS”** (Phil 2) for you and for Jesus. The charge remains our goal. Pray for us.

**Coming on January 27th ...**

**“Learner Differences @ LRCA” ... hosted by Dr. Turner and Dr. Arnold**

Come and learn more about our philosophy of learner differences and our plans for reaching “all kinds of minds” at Little Rock Christian Academy.

- What steps are we enacting now?
- What does the future look like?
- What does this mean for my child?
- Does this alter the mission and focus of the school?

**Construction Update ...**

We await the delivery of concrete (December) and steel (January). We used October and November for extensive, albeit less-visible, infrastructure projects. **We remain on schedule to open the high school for the start of 2009-2010. Deo Volente.** [Lord willing.] Join me on **December 10 at the Chenal Country Club at 6:00pm** for even more information.

## Strategic Plan Update ...

If you were unable to attend our public progress report on the LRCA strategic plan at Fellowship Bible Church a few weeks ago, we have a audio recording of the session available here.

<http://www.littlerockchristian.com/resources/index.aspx>

In this season of advent, we are always mindful of the ultimate gift of God – Jesus Christ. The LRCA Board of Trust, the Faculty and Staff and I testify to His goodness, faithfulness and generosity as He continuously watches over His school and your children. Thank you for partnership with us on this journey forward. **Through scholarship, sport and the artistic senses**, we resolve to serve you by providing your family an excellent Christian education **grounded in the eternal truths of a biblical worldview**. May He be glorified and may you be pleased.

[back to top](#)

Abundant thanksgiving and a merry Christmas!



Gary B. Arnold  
Head of School

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