

Calgary Society for Christian Education

Information Session

March 21, 2023 at 7:00pm

Welcome and opening prayer: Jon Halford, Chair

Slide show presentation: Jon Halford, Chair

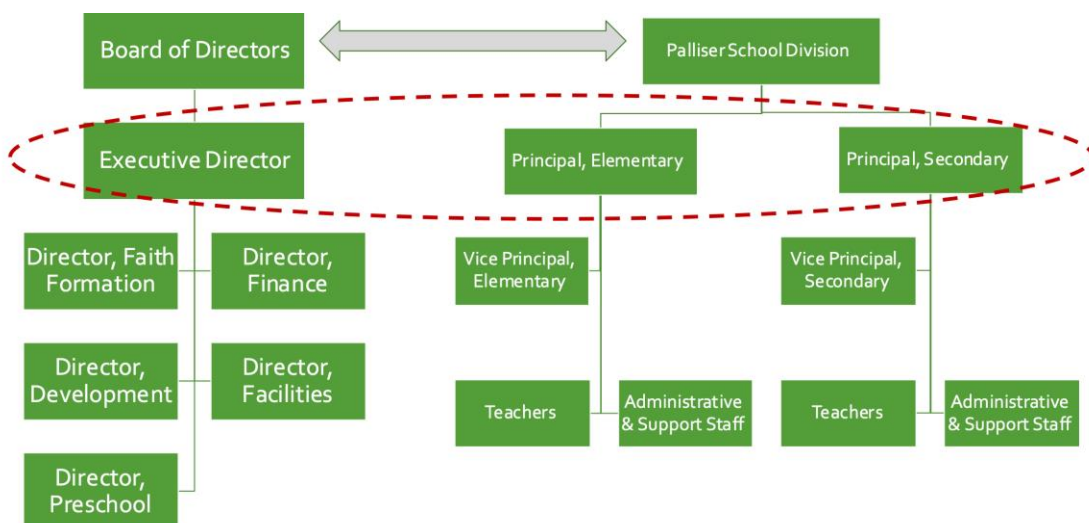
Introduction of the Calgary Society for Christian Education (CSCE) Board Members:

- Jon Halford, Chair
- Matthew Weening, Vice Chair
- Lynette Edwards, Treasurer
- Michelle Zuk, Secretary
- Olugbenga Adebayo
- Lenny Houweling
- Chris Radke
- Sandy Vander Ziel

CSCE Board Purpose:

- Establishing vision & policy for CSCE & Calgary Christian School (CCS)
- Palliser School District Agreement
- Managing the lands, buildings, assets & other property of CSCE
- Financial stewardship of CSCE
- Promotion of Christian education

Organizational Chart of CSCE & Calgary Christian School:



Christian Worldview Integration & Oversight Policy:

“To undertake and promote scripturally directed learning of children – so that the Word of God in all its power is brought to bear upon the whole of their lives – and to this end, to establish, control and develop Christian elementary schools and Christian secondary schools for their daily instruction and education.”

- Integration of Christian worldview in all curricular & extra-curricular activities at CCS
- Principals, teachers, staff & volunteers will refrain from promoting their personal theological beliefs except to the extent as specifically addressed in the Foundational Documents
- Foundational Documents:
 - CSCE Objects
 - Basis & Educational Creed
 - CCS Educational Vision & Philosophy
- Guiding Principles
 - Christian doctrine, theology and practice taught in a positive and apologetic manner.
 - Historic doctrine, theology and practice of the Reformed tradition may be the starting point for teaching or discussing Christian doctrine, theology, and practice.
 - CCS is established for the promotion and advancement of Christian education consistent with the Foundational Documents
 - **CSCE is not a church** and does not promote the doctrine, theology, or practice of any particular Christian denomination.
 - Integrating a Christian worldview in all subjects consistent with Foundational Documents
 - **Review and consistently affirm the primary role of Scripture in analyzing issues** including comprehensive reading and mediation on Scripture.
 - **Teaching of Christian doctrine, theology and practice at CCS is a partnership** involving school and parents, where:
 - **School** – teaches Christian doctrine, theology and encourages Christian beliefs and practices to develop the Christian faith in students; not to promote any particular set of Christian beliefs except those in the Foundational Documents
 - **Parents** – promote and encourage Christian beliefs and practices in their children and development of Christian faith consistent with Foundational Documents and your church community.
 - Topics involving matters known to be the subject of controversy or division:
 - **Confined to classes** set for such topics.
 - **Students are encouraged to speak to their parents** about their beliefs and practices and that of their church community.
 - **Parents may request the school to facilitate removal of students** from any lesson which is objectionable to parents.
 - Discussions on Christian doctrine, theology, or practice:
 - **Open, honest, gentle, and respectful discussion and debate** among students is welcomed and encouraged.

- **Words and actions to be in a spirit of love.**
- Intent to educate and inform.
- **Encourage all participants to engage.**
- **Apply the truth of God's Word**
- Christian doctrine, theology or practice will not be used to:
 - Belittle, insult or bully others.
 - Engagement in such actions will be subject to appropriate sanction.
- This policy applies to:
 - Board of Directors
 - All members of CSCE
 - Principals & teaching staff
 - All CSCE staff
 - All volunteers
 - All students

Constructively Addressing Concerns:

- **Get the facts** and seek to understand the context.
- First **approach those directly involved** in a spirit of **humility and love.**
- Ask questions, listen, and **seek to understand.**
- If resolution is not achieved, elevate to next level.
- **Resist gossip**, rumours, and heresy.
- **Focus on being united** and being part of our CCS community.
- We are **role models** for our children and CCS students.

Dialogue with CSCE Members & Parents:

- Be respectful.
- We are here to listen, please do not interrupt others when speaking.
- Clearly state your name & child's grade
- If your concern or question has already been raised, please allow others the opportunity to speak.

Open Floor: Jon Halford, Chair, opened the floor for questions and comments from CSCE Members:

Speaker: 1

Issue: A Wiccan was brought to the school for a religious studies class

Key Points: Lessons on other world religions should be taught from a Christian perspective and not directly from the source.

CSCE Board Reply: This was primarily an error of a first time lesson plan executed at the beginning of a busy school start without a proper vetting process, or parental notice completed. While it can be advantageous for Christians to learn about the beliefs and religions of others, no guest instructor in a faith formation class will be invited to participate unless an appropriate review of the impact on our

community is conducted between the instructor and principal/director of faith formation. Thereafter, even if there may be some controversy, the speaker may be allowed to present provided appropriate notice is given to parents well in advance of the actual class in order to allow them time to respond.

Speaker: 2

Issue: The author of the chosen Easter/lent devotional was not aligned with the creed/foundation of CCS (basis being scripture).

Key Points:

- How do we handle materials being taught at CCS? What is the vetting process?

CSCS Board Reply: Due to concerns raised by a number of parents, a decision was made by the Director of Faith Formation and supported by the Principals and Executive Director to change the Easter devotional.

Speaker: 3

Issue: Updates to the foundational documents.

Key Points:

- What is the frequency of updates to the foundational documents?

CSCS Board Reply: While the primary foundational documents have not changed in many years, (including the “Objects” stated in our Society-forming documents) the content has been re-emphasized, condensed, paraphrased, and re-organized in several other documents, including our Master Agreement, the CCS Learning Experience, and the Christian Worldview Integration and Oversight Policy (CWIOP). The mission and vision have remained essentially unchanged over the last 20 years. The logo, values and tagline were updated in 2017 and the CCS Learning Experience was added in about 2019.

Speaker: 4

Issue: Brought up that some teachers are in direct conflict with the *‘teachers, staff, and volunteers refraining from promoting their personal theological beliefs’* standard

Key Points:

- Speaker suggested some teachers are indoctrinating our children.

CSCS Board Reply: The Board has committed to meet with all Society staff, teachers, and administrators to review the Christian Worldview Integration & Oversight Policy and foundational documents.

Speaker: 5

Issue: School has immorality in its provided literature. Read aloud an excerpt from a book.

Key Points:

- Books in the school promote sexuality.
- Also was curious if this sexualized literature is mandatory reading.
- Suggested no matter what the context, this type of literature is inappropriate for young minds.

CSCS Board Reply: While the *context* of any lesson plan is imperative to understand the circumstances and intention of such teachings, the Board is committed to ensuring the teachers follow the Christian Worldview Integration & Oversight Policy and foundational documents so that their lessons plans are aligned with Christian education and meet the objectives set forth therein.

Speaker: 6

Issue: No issue, but offered that all students, including the LGBTQ+ students, need to be uplifted. Comment was directed to previous speaker.

Key Points:

- No key points but the speaker did later offer an apology for the misunderstood comment from the previous speaker.

Speaker: 7

Issue: Suggested that there are LGBTQ+ activists on staff.

Key Points:

- Report card used 'They' and 'Them' pro-nouns.
- Quoted scripture and suggested that Canadians are too nice and the school should stand up against school board/government policies.

CSCE Board Reply: We are grateful and supportive of our teachers and staff in their care and concern for all students. As previously stated, the Board has committed to meet with all Society staff, teachers, and administrators to review the Christian Worldview Integration & Oversight Policy and foundational documents.

Speaker: 8

Issue: Suggested that there are conflicting interpretations of the foundational documents.

Key Points:

- Is there a Biblical reference to support the governing documents?

CSCE Board Reply: The Basis and Educational Creed is based on several Biblical references that support the confessions that are outlined. The Basis relates to the historic creeds of the Reformation, specifically Articles 2-7 of the Belgic Confession, which use following Biblical references:

Article 2: The Means by which We Know God (Romans 1:20)

Article 3: The Written Word of God (2 Peter 1:21)

Article 7: The Sufficiency of Scripture (Galatians 1:8, Deuteronomy 12:32, Revelation 22:18-19, 1 John 4:1 and 2 John 10).

For more information on the Belgic Confession, the following link is provided:

[https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/belgic-confession.](https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/belgic-confession)

(CCS and the CSCE are not a part of or directly affiliated with the CRCNA or any other church denomination)

Speaker: 9

Issue: No issue, brought up the point of what the ultimate outcome of graduates post high school.

Key Points:

- Parenting is changing.
- Reflected on 'looking back' and perceiving the school experience in its totality and the overall value proposition of considering differing viewpoints.

- Suggested that Jesus is bigger than a lesson plan and that discussion of tough issues created more 'equipped' graduates

Speaker: 10

Issue: Offered a reminder that interpretation of scripture can be different from person-to-person ex. topic of same sex relationships.

Key Points:

- We need to remember that students still need to be loved and encouraged in a Christian way
- 'Love' over 'Details'

Speaker: 11

Issue: We must make a decision whether to interpret scripture through experience or interpret experience through scripture

Key Points:

- 'Scripture is the basis to education.'
- Influencing groups are running behind the scenes.
- How does the board view the questions of: *What is the authority? Who interprets this authority?*

CSCE Board Reply: There is no "influencing groups running behind the scenes". Leadership is faithfully and prayerfully doing their best to help our school community to live and learn more fully the ways of Jesus.

Speaker: 12

Issue: Our children are being indoctrinated by Biblical interpretations

Key Points:

- Proposed that curriculum stay on topics we all agree on and leaving tough topics for home and church.
- Brought up the issue of using Knox United Church as venue for Easter concert.

CSCE Board Reply: The CWIOP states and supports this. With the significant number of church denominations represented in our CCS community, there will inevitably be some differences in the understanding and interpretation of Christian theology, doctrine and practice. The CWIOP states that CCS is not a church but seeks to be a partnership with parents. We seek to foster a learning environment that encourages all participants to engage in open, honest, gentle and respectful discussion and debate with the intention to educate and inform through the application of the truth of God's Word. Regarding the use of Knox Church, this was simply a matter of scheduling, capacity, and availability.

Speaker: 13

Issue: Has the viewpoint that we want to challenge our students and expose them to controversial issues

Key Points:

- We as parents can't raise our children in a comfortable box.
- Trans youth need be loved; choose love over violence (violence includes personal harm)

Speaker: 14

Issue: We need to affirm the love of Christ for everyone

Key Points:

- We need to promote a safe learning environment.
- We need to pursue both knowledge and curiosity.
- As a community we need to push for respect and not tell others that 'they are going to hell'
- As parents, we are not in a position to discern what is right or wrong, God is the ultimate authority.
- Bible can have different interpretations, all of us as individuals have our own unique experiences.
- Need to love children outside of specific religious perspectives.

Speaker: 15

Issue: Underlying theme of 'we need to love'

Key Points:

- Believed that people are scared.
- Brought up the concerns with Wiccan guest speaker and how this can frighten children.
- Concerned that parents don't know what their children are being exposed to.
- Mentioned there are more issues being faced by children than just gender identity.

Speaker: 16

Issue: Wants daughter to be raised in a school that embraces differences.

Key Points:

- The school can't be a bubble, yet we need to stand firm on our Christian values.
- Christian school shouldn't teach worldly lies, but instead (scriptural) truth.
- 'Safe Place' means challenge Biblically when child is curious with sexual identity.
- Scripture must always be first.
- Directly said, 'The board is not endorsing the teaching of truth but instead to liberal topics.'

Speaker: 17 – School Teaching Aid

Issue: Clarity on Knox church as Easter venue

Key Points:

- Booking was based on scheduling and seating, not on churches belief system.

CSCE Board Reply: The Board is not involved in the planning or delivery of school events. We have inquired with CCS administration on this matter and provide the following clarification to the booking of Knox United Church for the Easter Concert. (Administrative Response: Teachers are responsible for finding venues for concerts and class presentations that cannot be held on campus. The venues normally used by CCS for up to 800 spectators were not available this year for our concerts. The church proved to be an affordable, available option well suited for presenting music.)

Speaker: 18

Issue: Teacher in the public system feels that children are more protected in the public system from liberal views than at CCS

Key Points:

- Provided example of teacher in public school system that told a student not to discuss sexuality or gender identity at school.

CSCS Board Reply: Teachers are (and will continue to be) reminded to remain aware of what lesson plan topics might be of a sensitive nature to various students and their families, and to provide adequate notice in advance of covering such topics to give parents time to share with teachers their preferences for their children/students as per the CWIOP.

Speaker: 19

Issue: Clarified the point that nobody ever said 'don't love'

Key Points:

- Interpretation of scripture doesn't matter on some issues.
- Scripture is clear on issues such as LGBTQ+
- Reinforced that there is no disagreement that children should be loved.
- Stated that children don't come to school to be taught issues that are in direct conflict of Biblical teachings.

CSCS Board Reply: The very nature of Christian education (learning) requires us – at developmentally appropriate times – to consider and review human experiences, beliefs, and actions to examine how they reflect or challenge to the ways of Jesus. Through contemplating these things through the lens of Scripture and person of Jesus, students learn to identify what truly is of God, and how they can be better attuned to the “mind of Christ”.

Conclusion: The Society Members were invited to stay and speak directly with Board Members once the session had concluded. Everyone was thanked for their continued support and dedication to CCS.

Closing prayer: Jon Halford, Chair