



**John H. Hitchcock**  
in association with the  
**Christian School Teachers' Resource Association**  
and

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The CSTR is a recently formed organization devoted to increasing the quality and excellence of Christian schools by creating a national forum that will produce an effective voice for teachers in the local environment.

You may find out more about the CSTR by visiting the website

[www.education-for-excellence.com](http://www.education-for-excellence.com)

and clicking on the link labeled **Christian Schools**



## Introduction

About five years ago, three teachers in a Christian school were discussing both the positive and negative characteristics of Christian education. This trio of educators had a combined experience of almost ninety years as classroom teachers and administrators. Their experiences encompassed both the Christian and public sector of education, and on both coasts of the country.

As these early morning musings continued, it became apparent that most of the difficulties or wrongs that were brought up for analysis arose because of a deplorable lack of effective communication between teachers, administrators and board members.

One of these teachers had taught over twenty years in public schools and had been extremely involved in union activities, having served as union president and heavily involved in negotiations. Repeatedly, the actions of numerous wrongs that had occurred to teachers in Christian schools mirrored instances of grievances or negations that had been satisfactorily resolved in the public sector.

Of course, the dreaded “union” word came up in conversation, but rather hesitantly in any form of realism for existence in the Christian school realm.

In fact, the former union president wasn't (and still isn't) a proponent of a traditional union formation in the Christian schools.

The group couldn't escape the enduring fact, however, and the discussion became intensely focused on the obvious need for the establishment of a functional “voice” for Christian school teachers.

From those continuing conversations arose the formation of the *Christian School Teachers' Resource Association*.

Designed originally as a dynamic website providing a mechanism for teachers in Christian schools to communicate with each other at the national level, it was obvious for the need of a loosely organized, but well-thought-out mechanism for establishing a dynamic and powerful tool to interact positively with administrators and boards of education.

Perhaps your Christian school already has a positive and effective system in place. If that's the case, you are indeed fortunate and should keep doing what's working well.

On the other hand, if your school is one in which sometimes bad and wrong things happen to good teachers, you will find the system proposed in this report to have quality increasing possibilities.

Knowing how a significant number of administrators and board members look on traditional unions with unfeigned disdain, the three co-founders of CSTRA committed to developing a system of interactive communication that was totally professional, steeped in scriptural foundations and sent the open message of simply wanting to increase the global and local excellence of Christian schools.

Join with us as we start this exhilarating adventure of increasing professionalism and excellence in your Christian school.

## The Nature of this Report

In selling real estate, it's often stated that the three most important things in determining the market value of a property are location, location and location.

Without question, the three most important characteristics of a professionally acceptable Christian school are communication, communication and communication. As you read the report, the critical importance of communication and adherence (or not) to scriptural principles will become obvious.

Therefore, the continuing thesis of this short but definitive report is in learning how to communicate with colleagues, administrators and board members in an open, honest dialogue that is infused with professionalism and integrity, all wrapped in the confirming truth of scriptural principles.

The specific examples we use are totally factual. They really happened. There are no names or places given to protect the culprits or victims, but the reality of the event and the horrific results still remain in the hearts and minds of individuals.

### Why Are We Doing This?

Several years ago, in a time that's gone forever, the three co-founders of the Christian School Teachers' Resource Association were colleagues in a Christian school. The school was led by a truly visionary leader who understood creative teaching and the need for collegiality. Unfortunately, this leader and some members of the board of education possessed some professionally fatal flaws (addressed later in this report) that precipitated a massive administrative change.

This ill-advised change created a dysfunctional situation for many teachers and other staff members at the school. In just over a year-and-a-half, over fifty-five percent of the most experienced faculty and staff were no longer at the school.

Those changes ultimately resulted in the writing of one book, *Radical Excellence*, by John Hitchcock, and the incubation of the CSTRA.

Those disastrous few months saw people fired, colleagues go to the public sector, enrollment decline, programs cut, decreasing morale and a sense of quiet frustration develop unlike anything we had previously seen.

As the situation worsened, we realized that our misgivings and musings were coming true.

Our professional integrity and passionate support of Christian education wouldn't allow us to sit by quietly or fade into oblivion without making an effort to enhance the quality of Christian schools in a professionally appropriate manner.

So here we go!

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Disclaimer: This report is compiled from the personal experiences of several very experienced Christian educators.

Our research is not formalized, nor does it draw from a significantly large body of evidence. The examples are anecdotal in nature, and are all factual.

The evidence we present is all first hand, coming from events that affected us personally or from people with whom we had first-person contact.



## Chapter One

### *What Happened on the Way to Utopia?*

*"Think of it. We are blessed with technology that would be indescribable to our forefathers. We have the wherewithal, the know-it-all to feed everybody, clothe everybody, and give every human on Earth a chance. We know now what we could never have known before -- that we now have the option for all humanity to make it successfully on this planet in this lifetime. Whether it is to be Utopia or Oblivion will be a touch-and-go relay race right up to the final moment."*

BUCKMINSTER FULLER

Christians are great optimists.

Or at least we should be.

You see, we know the end of the final story, but sometimes reality intervenes on the way towards that utopian place we envision.

The trouble is, people live there. They live there with imperfections, shortcomings and sometimes, plain old incompetence.

### **Just the Facts...**

#### **God Told Me...**

Open and professional dialog is essential to constructive progress in almost any situation. In one school, there was an issue of professional debate that had many nuances and was being appropriately debated by the administration and faculty. The group was closing in on consensus as the meeting ended, and the intent was to complete the process the next day.

**Well, kiss discussion  
goodbye, because who's  
going to argue with God?**

The administrator started the meeting the next day by saying, "I was praying about this situation last night and God told me..." and she continued on with the words that, in her opinion, God had spoken.

Well, kiss discussion goodbye, because who's going to argue with God.

Sometimes Christian school administrators are too narrowly focused in their interpretation of what it means to obey leadership that God has put in place. These administrators are often too fearful of the perception (see above) that someone beneath them in the organizational chart is actually more capable and expert in the area of teaching than the administrator. Other times, these "I am in charge" types of administrators genuinely, but mistakenly, feel that God has put them in the position of being able to make all the appropriate logistical decisions that need to be made in the school.

I know that sounds extreme, but those types of leaders still exist. A former teacher-colleague of mine recently became administrator of a Christian school. When he left the school where he had been a faculty member, the Boss-guy administrator gave my friend some advice, the context of which was to not hold large group faculty meetings where items of critical importance are discussed. To do so only "opens the door for Satan to get a foothold." This highly authoritarian administrator then advised that important decisions should be made by the administrator alone. Only after these unilateral decisions should the faculty be informed and told to comply.

Such an authoritarian style of management (notice, I didn't say leadership) is the direct opposite of the style and professionalism rightfully expected by the highly skilled professional teacher. Graduate level classes, interactions with colleagues in collaborative types of schools and the reading of many effective leadership books all combine to produce a faculty that is ready and able to conduct open and effective professional dialog in the school.

When a high level of professionalism in the faculty is combined with an "I'm the boss" administrator, intense conflict is bound to result.

## **I Have the Gift**

One of the exciting strengths of a Christian school in which I taught was the interview process. A prospective teacher was required to teach two or three classes, and be interviewed by separate committees of faculty, department chairs, students, administrators and a combination of board members and parents. This two-day process provided an excellent opportunity for both parties to develop knowledge about each other, and created an effective system of hiring.

A new high school principal was hired, and shortly in his reign he announced the following to the department chairs.

"I've decided to change the interview process. From now on I will do all the interviewing and will make the decision. If you as department chairs want to be involved, I will introduce you to the candidate for your department." were his clearly autocratic words.

**I have the gift of hiring.**

As department chairs we were intrigued by this unilateral decision. One of the chairs asked the question, "Why are you making this decision to do away with such a good process?"

"Because I have the gift of hiring." was his unexpected and discussion-quelling response.

I admit to not being a theologian, but the reader is encouraged to assess how you would have reacted upon hearing that statement from your principal.

## And the Point is...

There are at least four major violations of professional protocol illustrated in those scenarios.

- an apparent lack of scriptural sensitivity or wisdom
- failure to consult with others who might have valuable knowledge
- an illustration of *approval by acquiescence*
- and an even bigger problem (described below)

In summary, the consensus of the faculty members who were present at each of the meetings was that the administrators in both cases made the entirely wrong decision. There were factors that teachers were aware of that were not considered by the boss. Had those factors been known, a different, more appropriate decision would likely have been made.

Even more critical than the failings of the administrators were the actions, or inactions, taken by the faculty.

First, by “giving in quietly” to the professionally terrible decisions and the unwise method of deciding, the faculty gave quiet approval to those actions. Thus, they acquiesced to the decision and, by default, gave approval to the decision.

Perhaps even more disastrous than the *approval by acquiescence* was the greater message sent to the other faculty members who were not at the meeting.

By not taking a definitive stand, those in attendance sent the message to their colleagues that, when wrong things were occurring, it was ***acceptable to stand by and do nothing!***

The biggest flaw in human nature  
might possibly be the  
failure to address those flaws  
either individually or corporately.

That is the essence of this entire project.

Too long teachers in many Christian schools have stood by quietly acquiescing to professional, scriptural and ethical wrongs, and thus have been giving continuing approval to those horrible actions or decisions.

Our goal is to help provide a definitive guideline of attacking these deficiencies head on.

By being courageous enough to take a hard first step, the world of Christian education can become the leader we are destined to be!



## Chapter Two

### Mission... or Money?

*Criticism is something you can avoid easily  
by saying nothing, doing nothing,  
and being nothing.*

*Aristotle*

Money, or the lack of it, is almost always a major issue in Christian schools.

In fact, the money issue is likely one of the major problems confronting Christian education, and might even be at the root of many of the other problems.

### And Now, the Money Facts...

#### It's Time to Get Off Your Buts

One school board for whom I worked lived in a constant state of financial crisis. Each year at contract time, as they offered us the next year's financial package, they said, "We'd really like to do more, but..." And this was followed by a litany of excuses explaining why the raise was minimal at best or non-existent at worst.

Teachers were actually invited to one board of education meeting to propose possible solutions for many of the school's difficulties.

I admit to a lack of tact when I started my suggestions with the sentence, "It's time to get off your 'butts' and do something constructive about the financial picture."

One of my living principles has been to never complain unless I could propose some possible solutions to the complaint, even if those suggestions only served as a springboard to constructive discussion. Such was the case at this meeting, and I proposed several possible events.

Many of the board members were extremely successful car dealers or real estate investors, thus I suggested large discounts on used cars, free oil changes for teachers, radically reduced rent for teachers, and similar reduction in services that were provided by the board members' businesses.

My encouragement soared when the board president and treasurer invited me to dinner the following week to discuss my proposals. After the pleasantries of a dinner were over, that encouragement dissolved into despair when I was verbally attacked by both the men.

"We think you were grossly out of line to even think that we as board members should get personally involved in your salaries. How could we make a profit in our businesses if we gave such discounts to all the teachers?" were their exact words.

My reply certainly didn't mollify their animosity when I indicated that each teacher in the school was giving at least a thirty-three percent discount on our services off the public school salary as we educated their children.

Dessert after dinner wasn't really sweet.

### **We Are Committed...**

Another school board seemingly made a commitment to bring salaries into reasonable alignment with the public sector. To their credit, the board instituted a raise of about three-percent that brought salaries from sixty-nine percent of the public school up to a seventy-percent level.

In announcing that raise, the board president stood before us and said convincingly, "We are committed to a program which will bring our salaries to an eighty-percent level of the public schools in the region."

The next year the raise was one-percent, and the salary gap between the public school and Christian school widened. The second year after this *commitment* the increase in salary was two percent, but a radical increase in the amount that teachers paid towards health insurance essentially nullified any net increase in pay. The third year a similar event occurred, this time the elimination of dental insurance caused further financial drain on the teachers' budgets.

Public school salaries in that region have been increasing at approximately four percent per year, thus systematically increasing the differential between the Christian school and the public sector. For instance, the starting salary for teachers in the Christian school mentioned is currently less than \$30,000 while in some public schools in the area, new teachers start at \$44,000. Staying with the Christian school doesn't lead to much improvement, since after twelve years of experience the Christian school teacher with a Masters Degree and full state credentialing makes only \$5,000 more than the first-year public school teacher with a Bachelor's Degree.

The money issue is not trivial. In my role as a department chairman, I have talked with several career teachers who wanted to leave the public sector and join the Christian school profession. Unfortunately, many of these teachers simply couldn't afford the decrease in pay the transition demanded.

Even if being a teacher in a Christian school is the "mission" it's purported to be, the "laborer is still worthy of his hire." Traditional missionaries who leave the comfort and safety of home often have to raise their own support by visiting churches and soliciting support. Though the money raised by this system looks pale when compared to local salaries, it frequently provides a rather upscale style of living in the country to which the missionary goes.

Such is not the case with the Christian school salaries. The career Christian school teacher often requires a summer job in order to support his or her family. In my career I have been a summer barn builder, office worker, car detailer, computer salesman, computer programmer and other short-term employment adventures. Ironically, in most

of those summer careers, I would easily have exceeded my Christian school salary had I chosen to do that job on a regular basis.

I have observed an interesting syndrome that is, in my opinion, tied intimately to the significantly lower salary in the Christian schools. This syndrome is not only related to low pay, but also to the growing lack of visionary administrative leadership and professionalism inherent in many Christian schools.

Many Christian schools are appropriately and necessarily accredited by one of the major accrediting boards in the country. To become accredited a school must have a reasonable percentage of its teachers who meet requirements for a teaching credential issued by the state in which they work. National Christian school associations such as the Association of Christian Schools International also have their own accrediting system, although the state credential still appears to hold a higher professional status in many Christian schools.

The syndrome I've observed starts when a young teacher attends graduate school and attains the state credential. A new teacher in the Christian school likely may have graduated from college with an appropriate subject-matter degree, but without the necessary courses needed to acquire the teaching credential for that state. To satisfy the accrediting requirements, the new teacher then begins a Master's degree program or some other route to becoming a credentialed teacher in that state.

Acquiring that credential is a good thing, and does satisfy the accrediting process for the Christian school. It also qualifies the teacher to now be employed by the public schools in that state.

Once that qualification is met, more frequently than is generally acknowledged, that teacher then leaves the Christian school and gains employment in the public sector.

Two generalized scenarios usually produce this transition. First, the highly motivated career teacher who wants to start a family or own a home finds that the Christian school salary will not allow that to happen unless his spouse has a full-time job. If that couple wants a live-at-home mom, the only viable option is a change to the public sector.

The second type to make the transition is the person who entered the Christian school arena with high idealism and genuine mission in mind. While doing graduate work, whether in a secular or Christian institution, the new teacher is suddenly confronted with the outside world of public education by interacting with public school colleagues in their classes. This interaction illuminates the radical difference in professional leadership and behavior that sometimes exists between the Christian school leadership and that in the public schools.

This was vividly illustrated to me one morning when a fourth-year teacher showed me the highlighting he had made in his graduate level textbook about effective school leadership. His comments were sadly true.

"Look at this. Everything in this book and what my professor says about good school leadership is the opposite of the way it is here," were his words.

Unfortunately, he was absolutely correct.

Newly married, professionally credentialed, highly skilled and idealistically motivated, this person is now employed in a public school.

### **And the Point is...**

If we look at the financial situation from a strictly historical situation, pessimism would reign supreme.

On the other hand, if we really believe what we say we believe, then the problem should be attacked head on.

It appears to me that many boards of education are genuinely sincere when they say they *want* to do more in the financial arena. The problem is, they give in when the going gets really tough.

What's needed is not only the verbalization of the problem, but a commitment *to solving* the problem. Deciding to <commit to mission> [create internal link to <http://www.education-for-excellence.com/mission.html>] is addressed more fully on the website [www.education-for-excellence.com](http://www.education-for-excellence.com).

As teachers, we have made individual attempts increasing the economic viability of the Christian education community.

- Trying a multitude of summer jobs
- Working part time during the school year
- Coaching multiple sports or advising extracurricular activities
- Purchasing our own classroom supplies
- Tutoring students on weekends or evenings

There is a better way. The initial implementation of this better way is short-term, but the final fruition would be more stabilizing and efficient.

First, a short-term, but with long-term ramifications, a system of the board of education providing startup fees for an internet business. Find a full description of this system at [link to the subsidy plan]

For better stability, a system of gradually increasing the salaries of Christian schools to become competitive, perhaps even exceeding, the public sector of teaching.

### **But the REAL Point is...**

Once more, for whatever reasons, communication turned out to be the root of the problem.

In the first example, I tried communicating in a semi-positive manner and in the appropriate forum, but got severely chastised for *what* I proposed. Because I didn't say what the board wanted me to say, the wrath of the individuals was heaped on me as an individual rather than responded to in the public square where the attempt at dialogue occurred.

In the next instance, a board of education presented encouraging "promises," yet failed to really be committed to following through on them.

Once more we sat by in frustrated silence.

Well, not totally.

Our silence was what the board of education heard.

Had they been in the faculty room or when we gathered in off-campus events. Then our conversation focused quite intently on the failure of the board to even make a feeble attempt to increase salaries.

Every reduction in benefits or other financial efforts rekindled those comments, yet not once did we communicate in a proper, professional manner with the board of education.

At the very least we should have written and signed a group letter reminding them appropriately of their lack of commitment to mission. Along with reminding them of their failure, we should have given logistical and practical ways we could help in the quest to solidify the financial base of the school.

In the next chapter we will explore some even more serious and extreme professional disasters that elicited ongoing silence from the faculty group. We will also address some of the reasons why *the silence of the teachers* is so easily adopted.



## Chapter Three

### *The Silence of the Teachers*

*“To sit back hoping that someday, someday,  
someone will make things right  
is to go on feeding the crocodile,  
hoping he will eat you last—  
but eat you he will.”*

*Ronald Reagan*

The process of firing or “not being offered a contract” in many Christian schools is often an amazingly unprofessional event.

Frankly, equally unprofessional is the response, or lack thereof, given by the teachers in the school who weren’t “let go.”

The following brief scenarios give a glimpse of only a few of the rather deplorable ways in which teachers found out their job was gone.

### **You better go see the boss...**

Near the end of one school year, early in June, a list came out giving appointment times for the faculty to talk with insurance representatives about changes in the health plan.

One teacher saw that her name wasn’t on the list, so she went to the human resources secretary to rectify the matter and find out when she was to meet about insurance.

“Oh, your name isn’t supposed to be on the list. You better go see the Headmaster.” was the secretary’s reply.

Now quite concerned, the teacher went into the Headmaster’s office and started to explain the situation.

His response bordered on the bizarre, yet held an awful terror.

“We decided not to offer you a contract for next year.” His words were short and impassive, yet radically changed the life of a family.

### **And the Response Was...**

Once more, the at-large faculty response to this injustice was essentially silence, at least in any official or effective manner.

Yes, there was plenty of faculty room grumbling, but nothing said officially to the administration or the board of education about timeliness or proper professional accountability.

### **That's just the way it is.**

In another instance, a married couple teaching in the same school were told one week before ended that their contracts were being evaluated for the next year. They were told officially on the last day of school that they were not being given a contract for the next year.

Both teachers had completed extremely successful years in other schools with never a derogatory evaluation. In fact, in this school there were no derogatory evaluations given, either verbally or written. Actually, there were NEVER any evaluations given, either positively or negatively that would in any way indicate there were problems that would place their employment in jeopardy.

To their credit, this couple did make the situation known to the rest of the faculty and did file an official grievance with the board of education listing several violations of professional protocol illustrated by both the principal and the head of the school.

After the hearing the teachers were told they would be contacted with the final decision.

When two weeks had passed without any contact at all, the couple called one of the board members who had expressed a degree of support for the position taken by the teachers.

The precise words of this board member were, "The board voted unanimously to support the administrator in this matter. We realize that what was done to you *was a terrible wrong* (italics added), and want to assure you that it will never happen again."

The fact that such a professional evil wouldn't occur in the future was little consolation to the teachers in their immediate emotional and financial needs.

#### **The support of the faculty...**

As is the case in many situations in Christian school conflicts, there was a high degree of support *in the faculty room when the bosses weren't around*, but absolutely none in a public forum.

The only public reaction was an emotional plea for prayer during the last faculty luncheon before summer about a "serious problem" that was occurring with some faculty.

Interestingly, more than a few faculty came to one of the teachers with serious laments about the lack of professionalism by the administration and board.

One telling sentence summed up the feelings expressed by several faculty members.

An elementary teacher who was considered a "favorite teacher" by the administration said, "What an awful place this is to teach. If I had another job, I'd tell this place to go to H\*\*l and walk out of here in a minute."

In meeting a former colleague after about a year, one of the released teachers was told that some of the faculty had gone to the Head of School privately to issue their displeasure with the situation, but were told they wouldn't be listened to.

### **It's just my gut feeling.**

Finally, another example of almost bizarre decision making by an administrator involving faculty observation and evaluation.

In radically condensing a very long story, a very experienced, extremely competent teacher was told by the administrator that he (the administrator) felt the teacher was incompetent to teach the subject that had been taught by that teacher for forty years with consistent outstanding results on both school and standardized exams.

After asking for the evidence on which this decision was made the ONLY rationale for this decision was given by the administrator as he said, "There is no evidence. It's just by gut feeling."

Repeated observations of very good lessons over the next several months produced literally ZERO comments or written evaluations.

Ultimately, the teacher left of his own accord because he found it impossible to live in such a situation of repeated negativity and totally unprofessional assessment of teaching ability.

That teacher left for public school where, ironically, he was treated with exceptional professionalism and given nothing but outstanding administrator evaluations.

### **And how did THIS faculty respond?**

Once more, the behind-the-scenes support was profoundly supportive of the teacher.

Publicly, the same syndrome of silence was the prevailing environment.

One courageous and vocal teacher did write a letter to the board of education and took it to most of the faculty. The hidden support was consistent, but none of the faculty built up the courage to actually sign the letter.

Their reasoning made sense. Almost without exception, the reason for not signing was fear of losing their own job or hurting their own perception in the eyes of the administrator.

## **Why the crocodile always wins!**

In all these serious cases, the silence of the faculty arose because of ignorance and fear, and was understandable when the often occurring environment of administrative dictum exists.

The ignorance arises because in many Christian schools, teachers frequently think they are going it alone. Since many serious issues are seldom discussed openly in meetings or appropriate committees, individual teachers may or may not have information about what's really going on, even with their closest colleagues.

The fear comes from always letting others make things right when the whole situation goes wrong. If a teacher has never been part of that which produces serious conflict, the fear of putting themselves in that position produces a stifling hesitancy to take any action.

But as Ronald Reagan said, if you hold to the misguided hope that "someone" will fix the problem, the crocodile always wins... and you will someday be the meal.

## Chapter Four

### *Is There ANY HOPE at All?*

*“To sit back hoping that someday, someday,  
someone will make things right  
is to go on feeding the crocodile,  
hoping he will eat you last—  
but eat you he will.”*

*Ronald Reagan*

Harry Blamires, in *The Christian Mind*, says, "There is no longer a Christian mind. It is commonplace that the mind of modern man has been secularized."

Blamires continues.

*“There is still, of course, a Christian ethic, a Christian practice, and a Christian spirituality. As a moral being, the modern Christian subscribes to a code other than that of the non-Christian... But as a thinking being, the modern Christian has succumbed to secularization. He accepts religion - its morality, its worship, its spiritual culture; but he rejects the religious view of life which sets all earthly issues within the context of the eternal, the view which relates all human problems - social, political, cultural - to the doctrinal foundations of Christian Faith.”*

Written in 1963, Blamires' views are profoundly more prevalent today. Even in the Christian school environment we see an increasing tendency towards the secularization of learning and thinking. More insidious yet, students arrive in our classes seemingly having lost the ability to think, even from a secular viewpoint. IM's, text messaging, iPod music and the point & click mentality have replaced the pensive musing that accompanies efficient and lasting learning and productivity.

Blamires goes on to say.

*"Idealists are the most tortured people in our midst. We get along very nicely with cranks and foreigners. We are tolerant of rogues and criminals. But idealists - those people who insist on logically relating principle to practice, end to means, purpose to process, goal to route - we have no time for them. Literally no time." (p. 19)*

Tortured idealists we may be, but as teachers we are also enthused optimists.

It is within that context that the Christian School Teachers' Resource Association is exploring the idea of creating PACT, the Professional Association of Christian Teachers.

We are convinced that too many Christian schools have assumed a degree of secularization that is counterproductive to the real reason Christian schools exist in the first place.

Furthermore, we are convinced that the *leadership* in many Christian schools has abdicated the responsibility of bringing those local schools back to the proper emphasis and proper professional interaction and treatment of teachers.

Thus, it falls to the teachers, one school at a time, to reestablish the high degree of Christian emphasis that should exist in ALL Christian schools.

There are some very practical activities that you can implement to help school administrators and boards of education to stay on the right professional and scriptural track.

1. Learn how to speak up safely and openly in faculty meetings.
2. Learn how to ask probing questions, bluntly and professionally.
3. Go see the boss with a buddy.
4. Select a faculty representative to go to the boss with sensitive questions.
5. Write letters to the boss with a cc to the faculty representative.
6. Request a hearing with the board of education
7. Keep requesting a faculty representative as an informational person on the board of education.
8. Write letters signed by multiple people to the board of education.
9. Consult with colleagues in other Christian schools who may have had similar problems. (NOTE: this is one function that CSTRRA could provide)
10. Follow the scriptural principle of bringing in an intermediary Christian to hear both sides of a problem.
11. When promises are made by the administration or board... hold them accountable. If minutes of school board meetings are not available, a faculty member should write down all public "promises" made by board or administration and keep an active journal of those statements.
12. Work to have a viable grievance procedure established.
13. Remember that open, functional and professional dialogue is NOT an unspiritual endeavor.
14. If all else fails, don't be afraid to use a Christian lawyer to assist you.
15. Document everything that you think might become a conflict issue.

## Is There a Next Logical Step?

In our opinion, a rather disconcerting system exists within much of Christian education. There is one simple question we ask.

**Who is on the *teacher's* side?**

One very practical example that illustrates the need for that question is found in the Legal Defense Reimbursement Program offered *to schools* as described on the website of the Association of Christian Schools International.

ACSI is an international association that does many remarkably good things for the world of Christian education.

Those good things notwithstanding, an ominous focus appears in reading the legal resources that are available *to schools* through ACSI.

The following is taken directly from the official website of ACSI.

### **A Brief Explanation of ACSI's Legal Defense Reimbursement Program**

The LDRP program covers such suits or claims as:

- Student evaluation, discipline or graduation practices
- Suspension or dismissal of a student
- Failure for the school to meet standards of student educational preparation
- Discriminatory conduct toward students
- Employee references, breach of employee contracts
- Employee EEOC or state agency charges of discrimination

As you can see from the above, ACSI will provide legal defense funds *for schools* in defending legal suits brought by students or *employees*.

We are not arguing the fact that ACSI (or any other organization) can choose whatever component of a system for whom they wish to provide legal resources. That's their choice, but the question remains, "Who is on the teacher's side?"

## **And the Point is...**

In an ideal world, conflicts could be resolved mutually and satisfactorily by the parties involved.

The real world isn't ideal, however, and conflicts or shortcomings exist that can't be satisfactorily resolved internally.

Many Christian schools place in the Faculty Handbook that "we resolve our disputes using the Matthew 18 principle."

“<sup>15</sup>If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. <sup>16</sup>But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.” Quote from the NIV Bible.

The unfortunate fact, however, is that when the daily grind starts, that principle somehow evaporates into the abyss of lack of commitment to stated mission and policy.

Another area of scripture addresses the issue more directly from the legal side.

### **1 Corinthians 6 (from the New International Version of the Bible)**

#### **Lawsuits Among Believers**

<sup>1</sup>If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? <sup>2</sup>Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? <sup>3</sup>Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! <sup>4</sup>Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>5</sup>I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? <sup>6</sup>But instead, one brother goes to law against another—and this in front of unbelievers!

<sup>7</sup>The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? <sup>8</sup>Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.

<sup>9</sup>Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders <sup>10</sup>nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

It's not just administrators who are at fault for following the Matthew 18 principle or ignoring the message of I Corinthians 6. Sometimes a Christian school teacher who has

been professionally or ethically wronged won't take the time or summon the courage to pursue the principle to its end.

The failure to use those strong principles often results from an intrinsic fear that the teacher will be thought less of for being somewhat controversial, or even more fearfully, will be in danger of losing their job if they are perceived to be too aggressive in trying to resolve differences or wrongs.

Our premise in this document is that if it became the national norm that teachers in Christian schools understood *and stood up for* proper professional and scriptural principles, the Christian schools could start becoming the standard setters we should be.

### **How Can This Be Accomplished?**

Here's where we need your help and feedback?

Simply put, we don't want to presume that a relatively small group of Christian school teachers know all the problems and some of the answers to what needs to improve in the Christian school environment.

We are, however, willing to run the risk of exploring some options that might exist to make us all improve in the areas of professionalism and commitment to the important mission of Christian schools.

We value your feedback immensely!

The following questions can be found on the **Contact CSTR**A page of [www.education-for-excellence.com/contactestra](http://www.education-for-excellence.com/contactestra) .

- Should CSTR
- Should we seek out and attempt to get group rates for pre-paid Christian legal assistance?
- Would a professional journal produced by teachers, for teachers, be useful?
- Is there a need for some video-based professional development workshops addressing communication and professional issues be beneficial?
- Is there any benefit in holding some in-person workshops to discuss these issues more thoroughly and see if a national need really exists?

### **And In Conclusion...**

Look! We know this will seem like a preposterous, almost ludicrous idea to some. To others, it may seem like a good idea, but impossible to attain. And certainly, there are teachers who work in a situation where this type of need doesn't exist.

Whatever your case, we genuinely seek your feedback and suggestions.

Thanks for taking the time to think over this document and giving us your input.