



## Jen Rysdam

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### WHY DO YOU FEEL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT?

Christian schools provide a faith-filled foundation for students as we train them to understand the truth in the Bible and share their faith confidently with others. The way that students are treated regarding behavior, the intentional times for worship, and the ways in which teachers integrate their faith into the information they teach become moments where Christian schools can nurture students' Christian walk. In addition, Christian schools provide a safe environment for students to ask questions and see God in all aspects of their learning, taught by teachers and staff who share the same faith. Christian schools exist to work together with home and church, with the goal of nurturing Christian teaching and life. Existing in a community together allows us to build a strong foundation of faith for each child. Christian schools help build that strong foundation of faith for their students by being rooted firmly in God's word and world, and pointing to God's truth as it permeates every academic subject and educational initiative.

### EDUCATION AT SOUTH CHRISTIAN IS BASED ON A REFORMED UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE AND THE WORLD. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU, AND HOW DOES THIS MAKE SOUTH CHRISTIAN DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PRIVATE OR PAROCHIAL HIGH SCHOOLS?

A Reformed worldview embraces the idea that everything belongs to God and that students learn about everything through the lens of Christian faith. This lens goes beyond Bible class; it assumes that the entire curriculum is shaped and nourished by our faith. Christian schools like SCHS are foundationally rooted in Christ, being certain that all things were created by Him and for Him (Col. 1:16-17). When we are rooted in Christ, we stand firm in our foundation, and our practices are shaped and formed by what we believe. A reformed worldview in education provides teaching in which Christ shines through all learning and recognizes that all students are created in God's image and play an important role in His story. Viewing students as image-bearers of God should be the overarching factor that influences each decision and permeates every relationship within the classroom.

### HOW IS YOUR LIFE CHRIST-CENTERED?

Jesus Christ is my personal Savior, and my desire is to continue growing each day in my relationship with Him. I seek to grow in His word through studying Scripture, to abide in Him, to be a disciple, and to prepare my heart for eternity. I know that in this faith journey, God doesn't promise that things will always be easy, but I am confident that God is glorified in all of the moments of our lives, and He is faithful to those who trust in Him. It is my prayer to serve and honor Him through everything I do- at home, at work, and in the community.

### WHAT SPECIFIC SKILLS OR ABILITIES DO YOU SEE YOURSELF BRINGING TO THE BOARD? (Examples might include education, legal, finance/budgeting/planning, building facilities, fundraising, promotion or marketing, strategic planning, interpersonal skills.) ALSO, IDENTIFY ANY LEADERSHIP OR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES YOU HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN.

I have always considered myself a learner at heart and felt God calling me to education from a very young age. I began my teaching career in the elementary classroom, shifted to consulting for various local Christian schools, spent time teaching in the education department at Calvin University, and am currently the Director of Curriculum & Instruction at Hudsonville Christian School. I am organized, detail-driven, and I have the ability to think the big picture to support schools in living out their mission and vision both in their daily work and in planning for the future.

### WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU SEE FACING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN GENERAL (AND SOUTH CHRISTIAN SPECIFICALLY) IN THE COMING YEARS? FEEL FREE TO SHARE IDEAS YOU MAY HAVE FOR FACING THESE CHALLENGES.

Students in the 21st Century bring different needs and learning styles to the classroom. Schools must be equipped to support the various needs of students, continue to provide courses relevant to student interests, remain current with technological and academic advancements, and engage learners in new ways. Christian schools need to continue to support students in their faith, giving them the tools to stand rooted in God's truth as the world around them sends them messages contrary to God's word. Christian schools also need to continue to remain partners with parents, providing resources to support the challenges of parenting a child in the 21st century. In addition to these things, SCHS must consider growth and how to plan academically and physically for students desiring a strong Christian Education.