

BCL ep306 Ensuring Excellence in Education, with Brian Polk

When you walk into your favorite local restaurant, it's reassuring to know that someone, like a health inspector, has certified that the place meets basic safety standards. But when it comes to private schools, especially classical ones, have you ever wondered who ensures that the teachers in the schools are equipped and certified to meet the high standards of excellence that we all value? It's a really important question, and the answer will encourage you as parents and school leaders. Stick around because that's exactly the topic we're diving into here on this episode of Basecamp Live.

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Welcome to another episode of Basecamp Live. Davies Owens here with you. It is such an encouragement to me to hear the many, many stories of what God is doing around the country and the lives of individuals and families and students who are a part of this great journey of classical Christian education, whether it's a school teacher that tells the story of years and years of teaching in a public school and just the joy and the freedoms that have come of now teaching in a classical Christian school and watching students come alive with a love of learning and a pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty, or whether it's talking to a parent who says, you know, I was just looking for a school for my childhood and found this amazing community for my family that's helping us all grow in our faith and connect to our church.

Or maybe it's the story of someone who's leading as a head of school and that journey and the impact that they're seeing in their lives. There's so many of these stories, whether they're in legacy schools or startup schools or collaborative schools. God is doing a great work right now, and I would love to hear your story.

And it's nothing else. I would just love to hear it. If you're open, might even be an opportunity to share it briefly on Zipcast or even on Basecamp here.

So reach out to me, info at basecamlive.com, and love to chat with you and hear some of your stories. In the past, if you've listened, you know we did a climber series, which was just a five or six minute kind of mini interview, which is kind of what I'm thinking about here. So reach out to me.

Love to hear from you. Hey, a quick shout out to Kat Jones and Nate Hennessy at the Legacy Academy there in Branson, Missouri. Thanks for being Basecamp Live listeners

and part of the Zipcast family.

We are so grateful for you guys and so many others who are listening. Again, info at basecamp.live.com. Love to hear from you. In this episode, Dr. Brian Polk joins us.

He has been in classical education for 17 years, serving in various capacities ranging from being a science teacher to an administrator and even a board chair. He has a great passion for the work that happens in classical Christian schools. He has a doctorate from Vanderbilt University's Peabody School, and he is committed to helping build strong school communities around the world, both in his work with the SCL, as well as his work director in the Center for Christian and Classical Education at the College of the Ozarks in Point Lookout, Missouri.

I can't wait for you to hear what Brian has to say about just the importance and the encouragement of the great resources from many organizations to help ensure there's excellence in our schools. Before we jump in, the interview with Brian is always a genuine thank you to organizations like Wilson Hill Academy, Classical Academic Press, America's Christian Credit Union, the Classic Learning Test, the folks at the Light Phone, and Gordon College. All of you have been a part of just making sure that what happens here in Base Camp Live is well resourced, and the work that you do helps us become better at what we do in raising the next generation.

So, without further ado, here's my conversation with Dr. Brian Polk. Well, Brian Polk, welcome to Base Camp Live. Brian Polk, MD Hey, thanks, Dave.

It's good to be here. Dr. Justin Marchegiani It's good to be with you. Folks that don't know you, tell us a little bit about the Brian story.

Brian Polk Yeah, the Brian story. I found classical education pretty early in my career, my first five years out of grad school. I was teaching chemistry at a college and then had the opportunity to switch to K-12 education.

Was surprised to find out that that's where God had wanted me all along. So I never—I never dreamed of teaching high school science. But that—that turns out I think that's what I was made to do.

And so after about 15, 16 years in the classroom, I decided that I wanted to give more to the movement. I wanted to—I wanted to grow as an educator and I wanted to see what the needs were out there. And so I enrolled in a doctoral program for educational leadership and—and since then have pivoted.

In fact, this is a—right now, this is the first time I have not been in a classroom in my entire career. So it's been exciting, but also, you know, a little bit weird. Dr. Justin Marchegiani Yeah, I'm sure it is.

And so what did you were teaching there? I mean, most recently, talk about your teaching experience. Brian Polk Yeah, so the—the last few years of my teaching were actually some of my favorite. I was the associate professor of natural philosophy at College of the Ozarks.

And we have a K-12 lab school on campus, School of the Ozarks that is classical Christian. And about three years ago, we launched an integrated humanities program with the goal of integrating science as natural philosophy into the—into the humanities. So, you know, most people are aware of what an integrated humanities program is, but there's not too many people that have actually integrated natural philosophy into that.

So that was an incredibly rewarding process. And, you know, the—the opportunities were just—were just tremendous to—to really get to see—to take science out of its silo and put it back in with the humanities. Science is a humanity.

It's done by humans. Brian Polk And I think it honors how God created the world. It honors the humans that—and the scientists that have studied it.

Dr. Justin Marchegiani Wow, that's—that's worth a whole another podcast because I know that's a—we'll have to come back because it's true. I mean, I think again, people so often think classical Christian, you think narrowly in a—in a humanities liberal arts tradition and—and the sciences and the quadrivium and all that are such a part of it. So I love your—your pioneering spirit and the work that you do to kind of help—help advance what we're doing because classical Christian in many ways is still, I mean, we can claim ties back to the Greeks, but in other ways, we're, you know, a 30, 40-year-old movement in terms of really starting to form things up well.

Dr. Justin Marchegiani Which leads us to kind of our topic here, which is really around the question I know I asked when I was a young parent and most parents at some point ask when they're looking at a classical Christian school or really any Christian school for that matter, and that is sort of, you know, is anybody, like, who—who approves you people? Who certifies you? How does that work? You know, you walk in a restaurant, and I don't think we think about it a lot, but if we thought about it, we would hope at least there was some food inspector that occasionally came by to make sure they're washing their hands in the kitchen. And, you know, it always troubles me when I'm standing at the—probably more of a fast food environment. They have the little, you know, the framed 8x10 there, and it's like, you know, a bee, and I'm reading like, you know, small rodents under whatever—and I'm like, wait a minute, why are we eating here again? So, you know, those are—so I joke a bit, but at the same time, you come over to the school world, and you think, well, you just kind of hope that somebody's making sure the teachers are qualified, and the school is.

So we're going to talk about that. So help us with that, Brian. When you walk in a school, especially classical Christian, but really any school, how does that work? If I'm a parent

and I don't know that, give me just sort of a general frame of reference of how does it work to qualify teachers.

Yeah, that's a good question. I mean, the short answer is it depends. It depends on the state.

The independent school or private school world is an ecosystem that is expressed in different ways in different places. I mean, for the most part, the idea of us being independent is that we don't want to be under state regulation or state control, right? If you wanted that education for your students, there's options for that. The fact that you're pulling them into a private school says that you're looking for something different.

With that said, there are still certain aspects, certain benchmarks that schools have to meet, again, depending on the state. And so some states, Texas, for example, keeps a pretty close eye on what's happening in the independent school world through a separate non-governmental agency. Other states, Florida, for example, is completely agnostic.

They don't really care what you're doing. But then again, they don't recognize what you're doing either. You have to be registered with them.

But in terms of being accredited, it's not required. But again, the flip side of that coin is nothing is expected of you. But then again, you're not recognized in any way for providing a high-quality education.

ISKRA So it seems like, you know, again, in starting with thinking about teachers, I know as a head of school, I used to always say there's a lot of things I can do in my humanness and the flesh. But when it comes to finding people, I found myself on my knees more than ever just praying that God would bring the right people. And I learned early on that when you're looking at hiring, obviously, the strength of a school is the quality of the teacher.

And it's confusing because one would have thought in 20, I think I'm in my 24th year, but 24 years ago, for sure, there was some value in a teacher having gone to, you know, teacher college or a master's program and be state certified. But that seems to have definitely changed. In fact, I think what we're seeing now is sort of the opposite.

If you're looking to hire somebody and they've been through that, you probably as a head of school would be a little bit more suspicious. What do you see? Why do you see that change happening? KURT Yeah, that's a good question. And I don't, you know, I mean, it's always tricky, right? We paint with broad strokes here.

KURT But I, you know, I felt like when I first entered into the classical school world, our school was very focused, at least in the upper school and having content specialists. So none of us actually had any training in education. So at that point, we're basically just

trying to pull what we observed as good educational practice from our own experiences.

The lower school teachers still seem to have a little more training, at least that was my estimation. I was actually certified in the state of Florida to teach chemistry in grades six through 12, which basically just meant I got up one morning, drove to Gainesville, you know, bubbled in the Scantron for a couple of hours and then got a certificate in the mail. It didn't really speak to anything other than my content knowledge, which was fine.

You know, I think the flip side of that point, too, again, still speaking of the secondary model, is sometimes we get critiqued for being a little too college. You know, some parents will sometimes say that, oh, man, they're doing a college level education to my kids, or they're reading books that I didn't read till college or whatever, which is probably an unfair critique. But it also speaks to the idea that the school leaders really have to take responsibility for making sure that not only are their teachers qualified from a content perspective, but also are aware of what some of the best practices are in a class.

Yeah. Well, you know, I think it's helpful to separate for those that aren't professional educators, you think about it, this again, it is broad brushstroke, but a teacher has to know kind of two key areas. One is the content, just the knowledge of the information.

But the other is the methodology or the pedagogy, as we like to talk about it. And in my observation, I'm sure yours is the same, that we often, by default, we teach so often the way we were taught. And as a classical educator, it's difficult, because most of us were not trained that way.

So a lot of the work that has to be done in preparing teachers to come into our classrooms is not only making sure they know the information, but they really know that methodology. I saw that really hit home. One of my early hires when I was in Atlanta was a teacher that she was probably in her 50s, and she had won for multiple years Teacher of the Year Award in DeKalb County.

And I thought, oh, my goodness, I'm so fortunate to find this wonderful lady and got her into the grammar school classroom. It didn't work. She was there for about a year, sweet as she could be, but she her methodologies had been so formed progressively, like a public school, that the idea of challenging students or even doing anything where you have to critique a child's academic ability, she found that very troubling at a philosophical, practical level and just wouldn't do it.

She wouldn't put a no child left behind, happy face on everybody's page. And we're thinking, no, that method is not our method. Our method is actually asking children to be raised up to their God-given abilities lovingly, but we got to challenge them a bit.

So some of that can be so deeply inset. It's very difficult to untangle a teacher's prior experiences. So again, I'm sure you've seen some of that.

Yeah, I think you're exactly right. The first education course I took was when I went back to work on my doctorate, which was kind of a surreal experience. I think I spent the first year just looking up acronyms, NCLB, like no child left behind, all these different things.

But I remember one of my professors talking about this idea that what gets measured gets done. And I saw all the people in my cohort just stand around and nod and go, oh man, that's so true. And I just sat there and thought, we're on the wrong path, right? Because what's getting measured is the standardized test or the local test or whatever.

And so then you have the whole problem of teaching to the test. I mean, Atlanta certainly had an issue where teachers were actually correcting the students before they were turned in. And so that tells you what's wrong.

And it also speaks straight to, you know, Jamie Smith's assertion that education is about formation, not information. Well, if you're teaching to the test of what gets measured gets done, then you really are reinforcing that it is just information, which is just bad Christian anthropology. Right.

So again, a lot of cover here, but we're going to get a break in just a moment. But when you think about in, again, broad brushstrokes, but kind of typical Christian or classical Christian schools, new teachers come in, what's sort of a, are there some just standard ways that we do provide training and certification? Like how does that even happen in a classical Christian school? Yeah. You know, maybe to pull back just one step, you know, the idea of great teachers made or born.

I think most of them are made. There's a few kind of, you know, people that come out of the womb with this incredible ability to pull kids along on this voyage. But I think for the most part of it, it's, it is, it's, it's what the schools do.

It's what the leaders do. It's mentoring, it's apprenticeship, it's discipleship, but it's also, at least in our space, kind of bringing them into the tradition. So, you know, there, there's a lot of organizations and schools that I think are trying to, to lean into this space.

My impression is, is that we're all kind of still figuring out as, as we go. Like we, we certainly have recognized the, the need for this. If we want great classical schools, we need great classical teachers.

That is, that is the magic of the school, right? The teaching and learning. But, you know, we also tend to take cues from, from public education too. And, and professional development is, to put it bluntly, and this was, was from my, my doctoral work.

We're doing it really poorly. We're, we're spending tremendous amounts of money and we're not getting anything for that money that we're spending because we don't really understand adult learning theory. And I think some people are trying to, to work through that.

But, but there's still some work to be done on, you know, one, what do, what do our teachers need or what do we want to see cultivated in our teachers? And then two, what's the best method for doing that? Is it, is it a graduate program? Is it a certification program? Is it instructional coaching? Is it, you know, a professional evaluation? Is it some combination of all those things? I think that's the answer. But, but there's, I think there's a lot of work to do. And the more the organizations can come together and kind of speak the same language and define the same kind of attributes of best practice in a classical Christian classroom, I think it will benefit everyone.

You are seeing a enhancement of options that are there. I mean, it seems like, you know, even a decade ago, you go to a summer conference or you maybe somebody would send you something to listen to. Schools are obviously doing a lot just week over week to do weekly meetings and weekly training and in services and so on.

But it does seem like there's a more intentionality right now than there's ever been. Yeah, absolutely. When I started in 2006, it was Wisdom and Eloquence in a Searcy conference, which was a tremendous launch.

And I mean, in terms of being inspired, don't underestimate. I mean, that lit a fire in me. It was, it changed me as a human being and as a teacher interacting deeply with the vision for what classical Christian education is.

But then you kind of get in there and I'm sure almost every teacher has had this moment. You're so excited. And then two weeks in, you go, I'm not sure I know what I'm doing.

Well, I think it is encouraging and there's a lot more intentionality. Like you said, it used to just be classical. Well, we use those books, you know, the great books, but we kind of teach the way everybody teaches.

And I think we're discovering back to that fancier pedagogy, but there's a method to this. There's a way to do it. Or to your point earlier, we really are in the business of shaping affections, not just head knowledge to get to a test.

So the beautiful thing is that so many people come to our schools to teach because they want to really be in an environment where they can form affections and teach deep, deep thoughts and do more than just jam and cram. This is so often the case in modern education. So why don't we take a quick break? We'll come back and we're going to talk a little bit, not only continue our conversation about just the training certifying of teachers, but actually schools, like how do entire schools get certified and accredited? And what does that process look like? We'll be right back with Brian Polk.

We're all here because we love classical Christian education, and we chose it for well thought out reasons. But have you ever thought much about where you bank? Wouldn't

it be awesome to work with a bank that shares your love of goodness and truth and beauty? The folks over at America's Christian Credit Union are proud supporters of classical Christian education and this podcast, and they have been serving the financial needs of Christian ministries and schools and families for over 65 years. Find out more about America's Christian Credit Union and how they can help your family or school with funding and banking needs by visiting americaschristiancu.com, or you can find out more in the show notes for this episode.

So Brian, we think about our local private Christian schools, it really begs the question not only who's educating the teacher, but really the school itself as an entity has to be under some level of state accreditation. Again, it's a lot of variety by state right now, but you can't just go and, you know, get five families and jump in the garage and hang a shingle out there and say I've got a school. I mean, you can, you can actually, it's kind of homeschooling and that's great too, but you know, when you sort of get to the point, I guess what at some point you cross over and you really are quote a school and somebody outside, I know the fire marshal has to come by and check the sprinklers out, but somebody else has to come by and kind of say, hey, you guys are actually educating here within some range of standards.

How does that even work? Yeah, that's a good question. Again, the answer really is state by state and it depends. There are lots of schools, to be honest with you, that operate without accreditation and they're probably in states where it's not necessarily needed or the benefits from accreditation just don't really factor in.

So my full-time job is working with Society for Classical Learning and I am also Director of Christian Classical Education at the College of the Ozarks. So I have the privilege of getting to have a home base that I kind of reach out from. But in our research on accreditation, it really was, it was fascinating.

It was, it's very much a wild west out there and each state, each school kind of has its own little take on it. But I think most people agree that there is a benefit for a school having the opportunity to undergo an accreditation process where the peers that are in their area of specialty come in and evaluate the school through whatever lens that that particular accreditor uses. I think the biggest aha for me was to recognize that there's an external aspect of accreditation and an internal aspect of accreditation.

And most organizations will speak about this. You get this external stamp, this plaque to put in your window, kind of like the food services permit that you mentioned earlier. But there's also this idea that most accrediting agencies recognize that we want schools to grow and improve through this process.

And I think for us as an organization, when we were building our accreditation program, we realized pretty quickly that the external aspect really wasn't what we were interested in. We wanted to provide that as a service to schools, right? But 90% of what we were

really interested in was having the opportunity to get into a school and have deep, rich conversations around principled standards that help them improve their practice, to help them move, to use kind of our internal language, move along the pathway to becoming a thriving Christian classical school. Right.

Well, I think that's an important point. You're looking at the externals and the internals. But let me just kind of back us up one step to just say, again, every school that's, again, leaving aside the smaller startup in the garage schools.

But if you drive around your town, you're going to find large prep schools and not just parochial or Christian schools, but all of them have sort of entities that have formed around them. So like your non-Christian big prep schools, they would absolutely insist that they have accreditation and they would probably have gotten that through an organization like Cognia, I guess. You know, these are just looking at schools from operational, you know, are your business books in order? Do you actually have stated curriculum that you deliver? I mean, so these are important milestones, but they obviously can't touch anything related to faith formation or character, you know, of any substance.

And that's part of the challenge I think classical Christian schools face as you look at, well, who do we go to? And I know, you know, a lot of times you just, can anybody come in and accredit me just so I've got, put that little back to putting acronyms, you know, three and four letter words. If you go to most Christian school, most, any school's webpage at the bottom, you're going to see a bunch of little accrediting bodies, which is important to say, we're trying to hold ourselves accountable. But that is a dilemma when you go from being like a prep school, then you kind of come into the land of Christian education.

And then you've got entities like the ACSI, Association of Christian Schools International or CESA. Those are probably the biggest and they're under the umbrella of Christian, right? That would be in that space. Yeah.

Yeah. That are accrediting. And then you take one more step into now we're, now we're Christian and we're classical.

So we have even more distinctive. So obviously, as we're trying to explain this to somebody to get the big picture on this, that obviously bring the state certifier and they have no interest in anything to do with the Christian formation, much less classical education. So that's really the deficiency you run into.

Yeah, that's it. And, you know, maybe that would be my advice to parents when, when you see that a school is, is accredited, I think that's, that's great. That's a good indication.

But I would jot that down in my phone and then, you know, spend some time on Google later and look up the organization, look at the standards indicators. What, what was this school held to? What standards was it held to, to earn this accreditation? Because, you know, we mentioned earlier with, with kind of the public school education system where what gets measured gets done. There is a way to do accreditation by checking the low bar boxes, right? There are hurdles to clear.

That wasn't our vision for accreditation by any stretch. But for the very large organizations, very large accrediting bodies, that is quite common because to apply to a broad swath of schools, you have to have pretty, you know, reduced standards so that the majority of the schools that you're accrediting will actually meet those standards. But you're right, there's a funnel, right? So there's accrediting agencies that apply to the majority of independent schools and then you move down to Christian schools and then you move down to Christian classical schools.

And so by the time you get to accrediting Christian classical schools, there's really only two organizations that are doing that currently. And it's, you know, it's, it's a little more involved. It's all the other stuff.

And, right, are you cultivating wisdom and virtue in your students? And then, I mean, how do you do that? You just walk around and ask students, excuse me, are you wise and virtuous? Cool. You guys are smart. Congratulations.

It's far more complicated. And that's exactly right. And I know what I observed even 20 some years ago when I was in Atlanta, back then, of course, like everything that they're like buyouts and, you know, these, these accrediting, they're businesses.

So you have, it used to be the SACS, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. They get absorbed eventually nationally by Cognia. But I also watch, I mean, I remember getting accredited under SACS and then it went to Cognia and the requirements dropped off significantly because A, we don't want to judge anybody and B, we don't want to run off anybody that might be willing to pay us to have, you know, Crassley.

It's just, it's a business. And so you've got, you've got sort of that, that, that's a challenge in and of itself. So it's just sort of very, it gets very vague and mushy.

And, you know, it used to be 10 criterias down to six. And, you know, it's just that, that's part of the reason I know that there's been a push, certainly with what SCL has done. I mean, ACCS has been around now, gosh, it's probably getting close to 40 years.

I mean, they were first out of the gates doing accreditation and lots of schools found themselves in the dilemma you talked about, which is like, we're committed to being a Christian school. We're also committed to having excellence in the classroom as a classical Christian school. Who can help us with that? And again, it's more than just, yay,

we checked the box and we had some inspectors on property for a couple of days, but no, it's really setting up best practices, which is the main goal for that accreditation.

I think ACCS, they did some really great pioneering work in this space where, you know, so for so long, we kept asking the question, what is Christian classical education? What is Christian classical education? I remember sitting through, you know, back to school trainings and we had to develop our elevator speeches, our elevator speeches, right? If you're stuck on an elevator with a parent, they said, what is Christian classical education? What do you say? And I think, you know, the ACCS's work in the accreditation space did tremendous benefit to those type things where schools were really trying to develop a Christian classical identity. Well, and that's one of my favorite questions. And by the way, for most of us still today, it would be like a very long elevator ride to get that answered well, because it's still a challenging question.

And you're right. Then it's back to, now that we know how to at least define classical Christian, and we know which books to use and in what order, then it really goes back to, again, that fancy pedagogy question. But how do you actually do this? How do you not just end up being the sage on the stage, you know, going 45 minutes lecture on some great book and call yourselves a classical school? Because that would be a big miss as well.

So what's encouraging is the efforts that are underway right now to come alongside schools. I think we're a lot more sophisticated, maybe put it that way. We have more resources.

We have more training venues and opportunities and there's regional training events. And I'm not just talking about teachers, but broadly where you've got schools, even though we're not franchises, I think working more collaboratively and sharing best practices. So, I mean, this is probably the best moment it's ever been as far as, you know, making sure our schools are aligned well and certified and trained.

Yeah. My impression is that we, I think we've reached a critical mass as a movement. That's what I seem to observe as I talk to schools around the nation and even internationally.

For so long, we didn't have quite enough to sustain a reaction, right? But now we've got enough, especially post-COVID and the number of new schools that are coming out that I think it's a tremendously exciting time to be in Christian classical education. But if we're going to continue to scale and grow, which some people are predicting possibly even exponentially, that's why the types of programs that we're trying to put in place become even more important so that we don't end up with a bunch of, you know, Gen 3 Christian classical schools that not only look nothing like the generation that came before them, but may have actually lost that anchor, that tether to what we were trying to reclaim initially. No, it's great.

I mean, I think we're, you know, we're certainly so far, as far as resources and supporting systems, I think we are moving into an opportunity to be more franchise-like in that sense. I mean, with so much of what we do similar around the nation, around the world, why are we not sharing those best practices, which makes a lot of sense. Why don't we take another break? I want to come back and just give some perspectives again to think about families listening or even school leaders, just on back to this idea of best practices around teacher training and support.

And there's certainly again, more organizations stepping up to be in that space. So it's a good day to be in the classical Christian school world, but we'll be right back after the break. You choose a traditional education for a reason.

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So Brian, if I'm listening to all of this as a parent, I'm hopefully encouraged to realize there are in fact, organizations that walk alongside our schools that care deeply to train and certify and accredit and equip. So it's a good day to be in a classical Christian world. A lot of folks listening are in startup schools and trying to figure out how do we find support that we need.

So there's a lot that's out there. What words of advice or encouragement would you give, first of all, just to parents that are listening? Yeah, I think to parents, I would say, you know, through the interview process, you know, one thing you might want to bring up is, is how does this school get better at getting better? That was one of my favorite classes in my educational program was on improvement science. And that was kind of the tagline, how do we get better at getting better? It's the same, it's kind of an organizational growth mindset.

So we use that with our students, especially in their math classes and whatnot. You know, do you believe that you can get better? Do you believe that you can do a better job? And some schools may still struggle with that. But all the schools that I've talked to, all the schools I work with, very much understand that, hey, no matter how good we're doing, there's room for growth.

And the standards and indicators that we put together for SEL are very much like a portrait of a graduate. They're very aspirational. They're very principled.

I don't think any school will ever check all those boxes, just like, you know, I don't think any school will ever have the portrait of a graduate. If they do, I'd like to meet the

person I'd like to hire. But, you know, again, it's aspirational because I think classical Christian education is aspirational.

If you pause for a second and think about what we're trying to do with young people who, you know, have all this cultural pull towards TikTok and Instagram and whatnot, we're fighting an uphill battle for sure, but, you know, for good reasons. And we believe that this model works for really good reasons. So again, back to the parents, just as you get to know a school, learn as much as you can, but not as a consumer, as a community member.

So I've heard before people talk about the difference between being a tourist and being a resident, right? So don't be a tourist of the school, like be a resident, be a member of the community and get in there. So learn about the way your school understands Christian classical education. Learn about the bodies that are accrediting your school.

How does the school do professional development? And I'm sure all the heads of school listening might be throwing darts at my picture right now in their office, but I really do believe that they want to get better at getting better as well. So when we're all kind of in the same mode, moving towards the same goal, I think there's tremendous benefits for our students, which is why we do this, right? Well, hopefully they're not throwing darts. Hopefully what I'm hearing, which is encouraging, is as a parent, we obviously all want to, you know, have room to get better.

And so getting better, unfortunately for so many of our schools, because we're small and we're private for the schools, we don't have just mounds of resources financially sitting around. And so I know that's one of the biggest blessings a donor could give to a school is just say, hey, we want to underwrite sending your teachers to these conferences or sending them into these programs, these resources, because that's part of the limiting factors. Just how do we find the resources we need to pull it off? Because everybody wants to get better.

And to your point earlier, which is of any form of education, in some ways, kind of your progressive, modern, secular education is the easiest as far as certifying a training, because all you got to do is just jam and cram through this body of information, leave faith on, you know, even bring that in there. Or then you've got Christian broadly, and then you go down into the narrower classical. So every step into those specificity brings in a whole nother layer of detail to think about on the training.

So how do you really train the pedagogy and the methodology, yet again, needing more training opportunities. So again, a lot, a lot out there, but often it's the resources that make that a barrier. So that's a good word.

Yeah, that's a good point. And there's there's organizations. I mean, the School of the Ozarks hosted a teacher training last summer, and about 100 people from around the

Midwest, even a couple of educators from Canada, and the Herzog Foundation under Rodolfs, we were able to provide a completely free teacher training on our campus.

Teachers stayed in our dorms, they ate in our cafeteria, which is better than most college cafeterias, and they received training. This was for new teachers. So we kind of started beginning, hey, this is what Christian classical education is.

And then by the very end, we said, you know, this is what your first day in the classroom could look like, and this is what your first semester, and it was, the feedback was tremendous. And I know Herzog sponsors other initiatives around the country. So, you know, I would encourage the heads of school listening to, like, hey, keep asking, like, there's, you know, there certainly there are academic programs, but even for those, there are scholarships and whatnot.

But there's, there's a lot of organizations that are interested in seeing classical education thrive. That's a great point. And that I was actually there the first year you guys did the training on campus, and you obviously have a beautiful facility.

And with the Herzog folks helping, I'm actually a coach with Herzog. And so that's an amazing story where, you know, they were gifted, you know, millions of dollars basically to come alongside school. So if you can get to their events, they're free.

And, you know, they've got one now in great books. So, you know, it's not explicitly classical, but so much of that business operational methodologies are things that they cover. So the point is, like, and then you see a lot of regional, what I love to traveling around the country, just school leaders saying, hey, let's, let's lock arms with four or five other classical school leaders here in our community, or within a couple hour driving distance, we're just going to get together and compare notes.

And so that is, there's just so much happening right now in terms of a spirit of collaboration and equipping of one another, which is awesome. Yeah, I think that's the two things that I'm most excited about. One is, you know, again, we're getting to critical mass.

So there are other classical educations, and it's not competition. It's not a scarcity of resources. This is God's abundance.

It's his kingdom that we're working in. So these are tremendous. The other thing that to me is really exciting is to our students reenter our schools as, as teachers.

I can't tell you what one, it makes me feel old. So that's not exciting, but, but the idea that these people have, you know, they've done in some cases, 13 years of classical Christian education and still love it enough to come back and give their, give their selves to professionally. It's, it's going to be a tremendous boost to the movement.

I'm seeing that all over the country when I, when I travel around. You're right. And a couple of these, I'm thinking about, thinking about students I've had that are now teaching.

I'm like, I am seriously getting older, but they, they come immediately in the door of the first day. They know what they're doing. They don't have to be kind of deprogrammed for several years and then hopefully turned around.

So it's, it's exciting that momentum is building. Well, Brian, we're running out of time, but thank you so much for kind of giving us just some words of understanding and encouragement that we are a part of a school growth moment in classical Christian education, all around the country, around the world. And there's a lot of supporting organizations that, that want us to be successful, which is fantastic.

Yeah. So yeah, growing up, it's maturing and it's an exciting time to be a part of this work. That's so great.

Well, thanks for all you're doing. I look forward to continuing conversations with you. Thanks so much.

Well, you've done it. You made it through another episode of Base Camp Live, and I sincerely hope that you've been encouraged along the way. Thank you for being such a faithful listener.

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