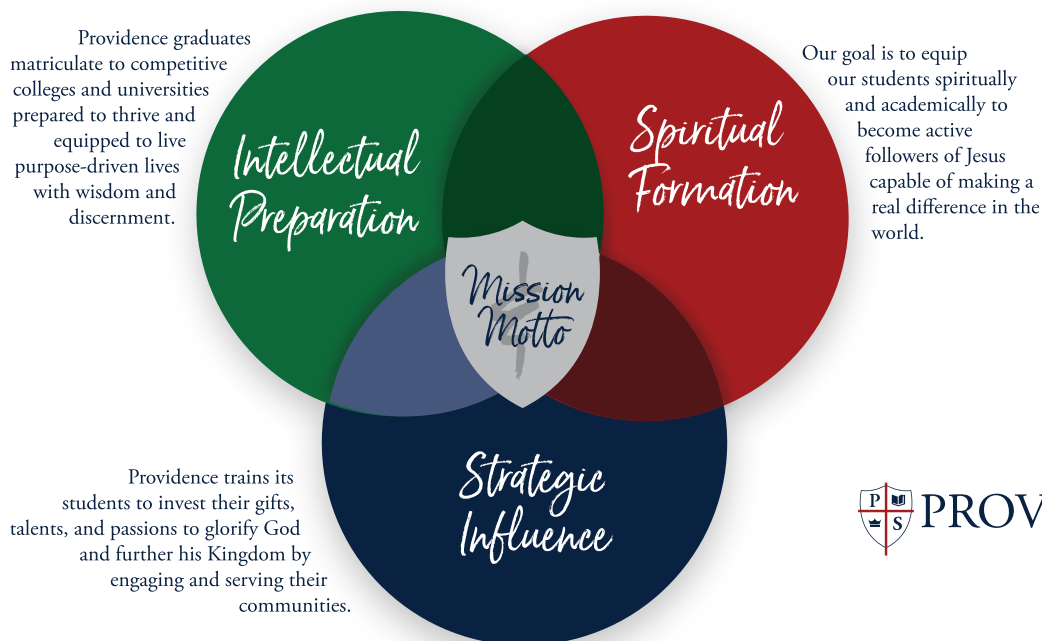


A Blueprint for a Distinctly Christian Education

by Soo Chang, Head of School



Our Mission: “Providence School prepares students for lives of purpose, equipped with the knowledge, wisdom, and character found in God’s unchanging truth.”

Our Motto: “Pursuing Truth, Beauty, and Excellence”

Providence School sees pursuing truth, beauty, and excellence as essential to living a Christ-centered life.

- Truth, as revealed by God through the Bible and his creation, provides the foundation on which knowledge and wisdom are built.
- As a part of God’s creation, we recognize the beauty in our world and the work of our maker; we strive to mirror that in our own endeavors.
- Excellence originates in God’s character; therefore, we choose to offer God our very best, using our individual God-given gifts to further his work on earth.

With our mission and motto as our foundation, Providence School endeavors to provide an education that is guided by understanding God's purpose and desire for human flourishing. We believe Christian education done right fosters dual passions: a lifelong love for learning and the desire to live a Christ-centered life. Our aim is to equip every student with the love and desire to serve God with all their mind, heart, soul, and strength.

Providence addresses both the mind and the heart. We are not a "safe haven" from this world; we are a training ground for Kingdom service. In short, Providence is about intellectual preparation, spiritual formation, and strategic influence.

Intellectual Preparation

We believe in equipping students to actively engage their world and influence their culture through academic excellence. The work at Providence is challenging—for a purpose. Providence seeks to develop students who have resilience, sharp minds, and a clear calling and purpose for serving God and his Kingdom all the days of their lives. Providence graduates matriculate to competitive colleges and universities prepared to thrive and equipped to live purpose-driven lives with wisdom and discernment.

Spiritual Formation

Providence is not just a college-preparatory school. We seek to be a life-preparatory school, raising the bar on both academic excellence and spiritual passion so as to graduate students who will positively influence the world. We begin with the end in mind. We measure success by what students become, not only by what they know. We think excellent grades and test scores are important because they reflect our students' effort and work ethic, not just their innate aptitude. But we also seek to foster academic and life skills—what we call the "habits of the mind"—that will help them live purposeful and productive lives that glorify God and contribute to the good of their community. Our goal is to equip our students spiritually and academically to become active followers of Jesus, capable of making a real difference in the world.

Strategic Influence

The education of many godly leaders and great Christian apologists of the past was based on a curriculum grounded in a commitment to understanding the world and reality from a biblical perspective. Many schools today have deviated from these standards and too few students are being challenged to press toward a vision and goal that is larger than themselves. Our desire is to challenge and encourage our students to answer God's call upon their unique gifts, talents, and opportunities to make a difference. Providence trains its students to invest their gifts, talents, and passions to glorify God and further his Kingdom by engaging and serving their communities.

Providence School is ultimately about changing lives to make a strategic difference. It is more than a school. It seeks to be the training ground for young disciples of Jesus who have dedicated themselves to making a difference in their generation, for the sake of the gospel, and in gratitude for the cross of Christ.

Step One: Ask the Right Questions

"What if education wasn't first and foremost about what we know, but about what we love?" asks philosopher James K. A. Smith in his book, *Desiring the Kingdom*. Smith's proposition on the fundamental purpose of a Christian education is a question that everyone—parents, students, teachers, and administrative leaders—should carefully consider.

Unfortunately, it is easy to assume a distinctly Christian education—one that results in transforming a student's mind and heart—is the outcome of simply depositing Christian ideas or doctrinal knowledge into eager and willing mental receptacles. As important as biblical and doctrinal knowledge is, the formation of our hearts, which ultimately molds us into becoming a certain kind of people whose desires are aimed at desiring the Kingdom of God, is actually what we need to focus on, according to Smith.

Through Smith's provocative question, we are invited to re-vision Christian education as primarily a formative endeavor rather than just an informative one. Christian education must necessarily be tied to thinking about human persons, created as God's image bearers (Genesis 1:26-27).

The philosophical framework presented here begins with the end in mind, setting a clear expectation for every step of the Providence Journey.

Step Two: Define Essential Concepts

THE FAMILY AS PRIMARY EDUCATORS

The Bible makes it very clear that a child's education is to begin in the home (Deuteronomy 6:4-7). It is also clear in Scripture that God holds parents primarily responsible for their children and charges them with the educational task. Through Scripture, we know that a child's education does not begin when that child starts attending school; it begins on the first day of life outside the mother's womb! Furthermore, education does not end when a person "graduates" from school. In a sense, we could say that one's education continues until the very end of one's life. From a broad perspective, an "education" is the full and total directed process of maturing toward God's purpose for one's life—from the cradle to the grave.

The particular role of a Christian school is to partner with the parent(s) for a limited season in a child's lifelong educational journey, by directing, guiding, and nurturing the process of the child's development and flourishing with a view toward fulfilling God's purpose for the child's life.

STUDENTS AS ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS, NOT PASSIVE RECIPIENTS

We are stating the obvious, but the primary recipients of Providence School's educational program are the students. Though the students are on the receiving end, they must actively participate in their own educational journey in order to achieve and experience the fullness of God's intended purpose for their Christian education. Open hearts and open minds are prerequisites for this type of education. Students, not just their

parents and teachers, must desire this type of transformative and distinctly Christ-centered educational experience for themselves.

BIBLICAL INTEGRATION IN LEARNING

Christian educational philosophy rests on the simple recognition that all truth is God's truth and all wisdom has God as its ultimate source. God is the God of truth (Psalm 31:5), his Son is the Lord of truth (John 14:6), and his Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 14:16–17). All truth and wisdom, whether we credit them to God or not, springs from one single source: God. Consequently, God's Word must be the foundation for our intellectual and spiritual inquiry and guide our academic endeavor.

While the Word of God is the primary source for knowing God, the works of God are also an important part of the Christian school curriculum. The creation reveals the Creator. Therefore, that which reveals God ought to be included in our study. The Bible invites us to consider God's created order and holds us responsible for recognizing God's wisdom and handiwork in his creation (Romans 1:18–20). Consequently, as a distinctly Christian school, we place a strong emphasis on the humanities, which includes language and literature, art, music, history, and the logic and truth behind mathematical reasoning.

And while we emphasize the humanities, we place great value and worth on studying the natural sciences, for the psalmists and the apostle Paul himself declare that God's glory, power, and beauty are revealed in nature (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20). Thus, whether we study a cell under a microscope or visit a marine sanctuary, what makes us distinctly "Christian" is the fact that in our study of the wonders and beauty of nature, Providence faculty direct their students to reflect on the truth and beauty and excellence of God revealed in the natural world.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TEACHER

As a distinctly Christian school, a reverence for the God of truth compels us to seek truth in not only what we teach, but also in who teaches it and how it is taught. Establishing the appropriate academic scope and sequence and selecting high-quality textbooks and teaching resources aligned with our biblical worldview are critical to our overall success. But our highest priority is hiring, training, and retaining dedicated, mature, Christian teachers who have mastery over their subject and possess the pedagogical skills to engage their students with great effectiveness. Through these means, we seek to continuously improve in instructional excellence with our eyes fixed on not only what students know but, ultimately, on what they love.

FOSTERING "HABITS OF THE MIND"

Paul describes his hope and prayer for all believers in his letter to the Colossians. He describes our spiritual growth and flourishing

by comparing our life in Christ to the maturing process of a tree (being "rooted") and the structural strength and integrity of a building (being "built up"):

"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." (Colossians 2:6-7)

The description of believers being like maturing trees begs the following questions in relation to our students: If our students are like trees (with roots), how are we intending to grow them? What characteristics are we looking for in our saplings (Preschool and Lower School students)? What characteristics are we looking for in our maturing young trees (Middle School and Upper School students)?

Along these lines, Providence School's motto—"Pursuing Truth, Beauty, and Excellence"—is rooted and built around Paul's exhortation and call to action in his letter to the Philippians:

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." (Philippians 4:8)

What are the tangible qualities and characteristics we are seeking to develop in Providence students as they actively pursue truth, beauty, and excellence?



Step Three: Begin with the End in Mind

Asking the right questions, developing and following a sound biblical worldview, implementing effective pedagogical methodologies, engaging parents and motivating students to become active participants, hiring and retaining mission-aligned master teachers, and having a clear idea of our desired outcomes in our students—as described in *The Portrait of Our Ideal Graduate*—are the steps in our blueprint for fulfilling our mission to deliver a distinctly Christian education.

We have identified 16 "habits of the mind" we aim to develop in our students by the time they graduate from Providence. These "habits" are baked into our scope and sequence and in the planning for every class and course offered, from Preschool Room 1 through senior year. The 16 "habits of the mind" described in *The Portrait of Our Ideal Graduate* are skill sets that will equip our students to become strategic influencers well beyond their Providence Journey. By the time our students are ready to launch we expect they will embody many, if not all, of the 16 "habits of the mind" articulated on the next page.

The Portrait of Our Ideal Graduate

Critical Thinking | (Prov. 14:15; 1 Thess. 5:21)

1 The ability to skillfully conceptualize, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and apply information. Involves identifying validity of facts and sources presented and reading critically.

Creativity | (Ex. 35:31-32, 35; Rom. 12:2)

2 The ability to “think outside the box,” transcending traditional ideas, patterns, practices, or rules to formulate meaningful new ideas, patterns, practices, forms, methods, and interpretations. Involves looking at problems from fresh perspectives and developing innovative responses and/or solutions.

Problem Solving | (Prov. 3:5-6; Phil 4:13; James 1:5)

3 The ability to conceptualize the “big picture,” examine the various pieces of a challenge or a problem, and develop a process to utilize relevant and available resources to reach workable solutions within a given situation or context.

Collaboration | (Eccl. 4:9-12; Prov. 11:14; Rom. 15:1)

4 The ability to work together with others to achieve a common goal. Involves awareness of how to best use each individual’s talent within the group.

Curiosity | (Prov. 1:2-9; Acts 6:9-10; 1 Thess. 5:21)

5 Passion to go beyond what is already known and motivation to learn, or discover, additional facts or truths. Involves the ability and drive to ask critical and relevant questions and the skill to do research to gain new insights.

Literary Acumen | (Eccl. 12:9-11)

6 The ability to be discerning and selective when it comes to enjoying books or other written materials. Involves developing a rich vocabulary and critical-reading skills.

Eloquence | (Col. 4:6; Eph. 4:15, 25)

7 The ability to speak and write in an articulate manner on a wide range of topics, ideas, and emotions. The ability to organize and develop cogent and persuasive arguments. Involves identifying best communication methods and knowing the appropriate voice and platform to express one’s ideas or views.

Tech Savvy | (1 Cor. 10:31; Heb. 13:20-21)

8 The ability to learn and comfortably use academic technology strategically. Involves confidence with widely used programs, spreadsheets, presentation tools, and video conferencing technology.

Resilience | (Phil. 4:13; Rom. 5:1-5; James 1:12)

9 The ability to face academic difficulties and challenges and dig deep to overcome them. Involves committing to a work ethic when under pressure and developing strategies to push forward—and doing both with honor and integrity.

Friendship | (Prov. 27:17; Eccl. 4:9-12; Daniel 2:17-18)

10 The ability to get along and make friends with a wide variety of personalities and temperaments. Involves appreciating the value of living in community with others who represent a diverse group of people.

Emotional Intelligence | (Prov. 9:7-8; Matt. 7:12; Gal. 6:1)

11 The ability to understand and manage one’s own emotions and the emotions of others in a group setting in order to produce positive outcomes.

Spiritual Disciplines | (Ps. 119:1-16; 1 Tim. 4:7-8)

12 The motivation, desire, and ability to practice such disciplines as meditation, prayer, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, worship, and celebration.

Compassion | (John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:15; Eph. 4:32)

13 The ability to understand and empathize with other cultures and personal situations and to respond in love, kindness, and generosity. Involves a desire to alleviate others’ suffering through action.

Stewardship | (Matt. 25:14-30; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; James 1:17)

14 The ability to recognize that, as stewards, we are responsible to be faithful and will need to give an account for what we do with our resources.

Healthy Living | (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Eph. 2:10)

15 The recognition that, as believers, our bodies are not our own and that we are to take good care of them as if they are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Involves living a morally upright and ethical life through reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Wise Decision Making | (Prov. 3:5-6; Prov. 15:22; James 1:5)

16 The ability to make good choices and wise life decisions that glorify God and bless others.