



## **I. ABOUT THIS POLICY**

The original guideline was developed in September 1987. Since that time home schooling has become a much more active option for families. Hence it was necessary to develop a school response.

The Board of Thunder Bay Christian School is sympathetic to the motives of parents who decide to home school their children. However, the legal, political and economic realities in Ontario are such that Christian schools are not in a position to endorse the home schooling option.

## **II. RATIONALE FOR ACTION BY MEMBER BOARDS**

1. Families are raising the following kinds of questions:
  - a. Should home schooling be encouraged as a possible alternative for Christian parents?
  - b. What official "message" should the Principal/Board give these parents?
  - c. Is home schooling a valid alternative to the Christian school?
  - d. Should Christian school teachers be disciplined/dismissed if they withdraw their own children from the Christian school?
  - e. Should the schools encourage/discourage home school student participation in regular school programs? If so, under what conditions?
  - f. Should Christian schools(s)/organizations develop programs to assist home school parents?
2. Families that have traditionally supported Alliance schools are also beginning to think "home school," especially for financial reasons.
3. The public schools are accommodating home school parents with a considerable variety of programs.
4. Other organizations are developing a special program for home schooling.
5. There are a lot of "teachers" out there volunteering to provide contract services for home schooling families, e.g., the Bunyan Tree Option.
6. Home schooling is being promoted as a responsible alternative in many Pentecostal/Evangelical churches and especially via Focus on the Family broadcasts.
7. The changes in attitude created by the preceding two points constitute a major challenge for Christian schools in terms of attitude, credibility, and enrolment. These attitude changes are universal in North America.
8. A number of the reasons which make home schooling attractive are valid criticisms of all schooling, and of Christian schools as well, e.g., academics, peer group pressure, finances. We need to use this challenge as a Window of Opportunity for improvement in Alliance schools. Many of the attitudes represented by home schooling are popular among many Christian parents.
9. In short, revising the policy solves practical problems and fits with our own Mission and with future education.



### III. THE BENEFITS OF SCHOOLING

#### THE FAMILY

1. Education: A Biblical Directive!
  - a. The Alliance recognizes that home schooling is a legitimate option for Christian parents. This derives from the Biblical mandates and the conviction that the family is the primary nurturer according to God's plan for humanity. This Scriptural norm we follow.
2. Are Parents Competent?
  - a. However, whether parents are in fact the best educators of their own children in a given culture, is a question of fact, not of norm. It cannot be settled with Scriptural references alone. The ability of the parents, the needs of the children, and the demands of society must also be considered in deciding how to educate a child most effectively.

#### THE SCHOOL

1. In modern North American Society, the school is an independent institution with its own ask. Its mission is to encourage informed learning for productive skills and healthy attitudes for responsible action by students on the basis of a specific world view. The Christian school provides a caring, value-based learning environment based on Christian principles in the context of a Christian community.

#### ADVANTAGES OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLING

There are major advantages flowing from effective Christian schooling. These are not likely to be available in the average home:

1. Disciplined learning environment designed for student progress.
2. A well-designed learning program that features,
  - a. academic rigour
  - b. balanced scope of interest areas
  - c. stimulating challenges in special activities
  - d. variety of resources
3. A friendly social environment of similar age children from a wider range of family backgrounds.
4. Encouragement of social skill development and friendships with "nonfamily" children.
5. Wide range of support services for special needs.
6. Access to broader Christian education organizations.
7. A wider range of facilities.
8. Experiences for the child beyond the secure confines of home and parents.
9. Being part of a large community in which the child has an opportunity to share and grow spiritually by helping to be of service in other contexts.
10. Learning for most students occurs best in a socially interactive environment.
11. The staff of the Christian school is professionally trained and qualified to guide children and young people.
12. A social setting, properly structured, gives each student an opportunity to share his/her gifts and talents with others.
13. The school provides additional adult role models to those found in home or church.
14. The school community provides the family with a broader opportunity to participate in larger community activities.



## **IV. POLICY**

### **1. DEFINITIONS**

- a. A home school is created by the decision of the parent(s) or guardian to educate their child(ren) at home. This required two actions by the parent(s).
  - i. notification of appropriate school authority,
  - ii. evidence of satisfactory program of instruction.
- b. Once an Alliance member school knows or has been informed that a child(ren) has been withdrawn by parents who have been associated with the school before, the principal should,
  - i. remove the names of the children from the enrolment register,
  - ii. send the OSRs to the proper public school board.

### **2. LEGAL OBLIGATIONS - WITHDRAWAL**

- a. The public school board's legal obligation continues under Regulation 532, whether or not the child is officially enrolled.
- b. The private school does not have any legal obligations if the child is not properly enrolled. Parents should be made aware of this.
- c. It is necessary for the school to take this action promptly and officially in order to prevent possible liability in the event that something goes wrong at home (e.g., accidents, poor program, abuse, etc.) with children who were previously enrolled in the school.
  - i. The appropriate method would be for the parents to notify the school in writing.
  - ii. A student withdrawal form could be developed.
  - iii. If nether of the above fit, then the principal should send a letter communicating his/her understanding of the new situation.

### **3. RECORDS**

- a. When a student is withdrawn from the school, the Principal should ascertain whether this is (a) a temporary withdrawal or (b) a permanent de-enrollment.
  - i. If (a) then the parent/guardian must indicate the time limit for this arrangement (see point 3.3 below).
  - ii. If (b) then 3.2 (below) follows.
- b. The principal notifies the Board of Education, of which the pupils is a legal resident under the Education Act, that the pupil is no longer attending the "X" independent school.
- c. It is then the public school board's duty to see whether the child is receiving satisfactory instruction in the event that he/she is not enrolled in a school in Ontario.
- d. The OSR remains at the last school where the child was a pupil, as per Student Record Guideline, 1989.



- e. Thus, if that was a "private" school, then the "private" school retains the record:
  - i. as per Guideline,
  - ii. unless requested to transfer to the Public Board for its own use to determine whether the home schooling is conducive to the improvement of instruction,
  - iii. or unless the parent/guardian notifies the school that the pupil has been enrolled at another independent school and that school issues a proper request for the records.

#### **4. TEACHERS**

- a. School personnel should be discouraged from acting as consultants to such home schooling parents since,
  - i. this violates their professional obligations to the board,
  - ii. this could be interpreted as support from the school itself,
  - iii. this could implicate the school in the event that questions arise about adequacy of the home instruction from the public school inspectors.
- b. This final responsibility rests with the Province through the public school system.

#### **5. EXCEPTIONS**

- a. In those instances where a child is at home for extended periods due to special circumstances, but who is otherwise still enrolled, this is not considered to be home school, hence the school retains instructional responsibility provided that the arrangement is clearly spelled out (see below).
- b. Where the special circumstance is illness, it is wise to have medical evidence on record, especially if the illness extends beyond two weeks.
- c. It may also be necessary to have a child withdraw from school for valid reasons. If this is done as part of a defined program originating in the school and agreed to by the parents than this should be called "Supervised Learning at Home" (S.L.H.).
- d. In the event that home school parents want to purchase curriculum materials from the Christian school, this can be done. It should be made clear that this is a commercial transaction for money, thus not incurring any other obligations.

#### **6. ASSISTING HOME SCHOOLING WITH THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

- a. If the principal received nonmember requests for information then the persons can be referred to home school organizations or to the Alliance/CSI.
- b. Curriculum materials can be purchased through the normal channels.
- c. If parents in the Christian school are contemplating becoming home schoolers then the principal is free to counsel them on the magnitude of this decision.
- d. Once parents (members) have taken the step, then point 2 (above) applies in its entirety.



## **7. SCHOOLING AT HOME**

The goal of these options assumes:

- a. That the Christian Education community wants to help Christian families in a time of stress, and so maintain good relationships despite possible disagreements about the most effective education methods or environments;
- b. that any of these arrangements are made only with persons who are school society members in good standing;
- c. that the reason for home schooling is primarily financial;
- d. that the child remains enrolled as a student; that the parents are serious about re-enrolling the child as a full-time student within a fixed period from the starting date of the program.

## **8. EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

- a. that the child must be enrolled as a student in order to participate in extra-curricular activities.

## **V. COOPERATIVE OPTIONS**

### **b. SUPERVISED HOME INSTRUCTION PROGRAM**

- i. School may implement a S.H.I.P. contract in the following manner:
  - ii. Contract is of one year duration, or less, depending on the school year features.
  - iii. Each contract not to deal with more than four children.
  - iv. Board of the school to let the contract to a suitable person who is not employed by the Board as classroom teacher, who shall be called a Supervisor.
  - v. The content of SHIP is to be negotiated between the family and the supervisor.
  - vi. The contract may include a separate administration fee if the principal is involved in designing or implementing curriculum or as consultant.
  - vii. The fee shall be no less than \$500 and shall be paid up front.
  - viii. All other financial arrangements shall be between family and SHIP supervisor.
- c. If the school were to make it an official school contract then the principal would in effect be hiring more staff.

## **9. CONTRACT IMPLICATIONS - STAFF**

- a. The Christian school teacher is obligated to model support for Christian schooling for three reasons:
  - i. professional integrity,
  - ii. duty to the employer's interest
  - iii. special role model impact of actions.
- b. As a parent, the Christian school teacher may decide to home school. If this is done for legitimate reasons, then the situation is permissible.
  - i. A legitimate reason would be the school's liability to provide for the special needs of one of the teacher's children. It is hard to imagine that all of the teachers' children fit a unique hard-to-serve category.
  - ii. It is expected that all Boards have a procedure in place in the event that teachers make this decision.



- c. In the event that the teacher's action does not fit the special needs category, the Board has the following disciplinary options:
  - i. For a probationary contract teacher, continue the probation period.
  - ii. For a regular contract teacher, deny promotion.
  - iii. For an administrator, insist on a resolution of the situation or consider a demotion plan. It is impossible for the administrators to provide educational leadership to the staff if the person's own choices indicate no confidence in his/her colleagues' competence.
  - iv. Dismissal must be considered, but would need to follow the normal process.

## 10. (RE)ENROLLMENT

- a. The placement of a new student is determined by the principal.
  - i. In making the decision, the principal will:
    - 1. review the student's school record to date,
    - 2. consult the teacher in whose care the child will be placed to determine suitability of program and maturity of child,
    - 3. follow the wishes of the parent unless there are clear pedagogical reasons for not doing so,
    - 4. order tests for the child.
  - ii. The principal may:
    - 1. require documentation of home schooling curriculum,
    - 2. request parents to follow regular admission procedures,
    - 3. determine a trial period of a semester if there is disagreement between teacher and parents over placement.