



## A daycare right for your child

by **Stephanie Boothe**

As parents, daycare is one of the most important decisions we face – whether our children are infants or pre-schoolers. Who could possibly love our children enough while Mommy and Daddy are at work?

Daycare, rather pre-school, was something my husband and I knew was inevitable for our daughter (now 7). We hesitated in searching part time daycares because we loved having Grandma watch our daughter. It was something we never actively pursued or discussed. But then the unexpected happened, and we were



forced to find full-time care for a sweet little girl, immediately.

Our little four-year-old's whole world was completely rocked and we had to find a way to tell her she now had to spend her days with strangers. And what's worse, we had just mere days to find a center that 1) had an opening and 2) wouldn't break the bank completely.

We got incredibly lucky in that the center closest to my work was both affordable and had an opening in their 3 and 4 year old class. It was one of the best decisions we've made – one that we came into purely by chance.

Beyond teaching, and caring for our daughter, daycare also provided her some much-needed socialization, an element Rainbow Kingdom director Teresa Vaughan said is key.

"Children get the opportunity to socialize, learn how to get along with others, use manners, learn rules/expectations that maybe different than home and to make new friends," Vaughan said.

While we had great references for our daycare, we didn't have much time to make a more informed decision. We just happened to get really lucky (I also firmly believe it was evidence of the hand of God in our lives). So here are some factors for parents to consider when choosing a daycare.

**Availability** – many daycares have waiting lists. Generally speaking, a parent cannot call a daycare on a Wednesday and have their child start four days later. There

■ See **DAYCARE** page 8

## Back-to-school survival guide for moms

by **Sara Horn**

While most moms look forward to sending their kids back to school, we don't always enjoy the return of a full schedule and a full plate.

It's easy for stress levels to rise—getting the kids into new routines, helping with homework, driving to after-school lessons and practices, as well as keeping up with church activities.

But take heart! There are ways to make time for you during these busy back-to-school days.



### 1. Enjoy the quiet

Whether you're an early morning riser or you prefer a later bedtime, making time each day for yourself while the kids are in bed can give you the spiritual recharge you need. Keep the television or radio off and pull out your Bible or an inspiring devotional or book and spend a few minutes reconnecting with God. Ask yourself this question: How can I embrace today?

### 2. Mix fitness with friends

Drop off the kids at school or put them on the school bus and meet a friend for a quick 30-minute walk or an aerobics class at your local community center.

### 3. Use the car line effectively

If you pick up your child from school, consider arriving 45 minutes to an hour early to park and use that time to relax and refocus. I know many moms who will keep a book or favorite magazine to read during this time or catch up on phone calls with friends. You can also use these spare minutes to work on a Bible study.

### 4. Speaking of Bible studies

Many churches launch their new Bible study classes in the fall. If your church does not offer these types of classes, then look at other churches in your community that do and consider signing up for one. Quite often, classes

are offered on a wide range of topics as well as days and nights and times of the week that will fit your busy schedule. Not only will you receive spiritual encouragement, but you may also meet new friends!

### 5. Form a breakfast club

Invite four or five other moms to join you once a week for coffee or breakfast after the kids are at school. If some of you still have little ones at home, consider meeting at a fast-food chain with a playground. Make it a regular weekly appointment on your schedule to reconnect and discover that you're not as alone (or crazy) as you thought you were.

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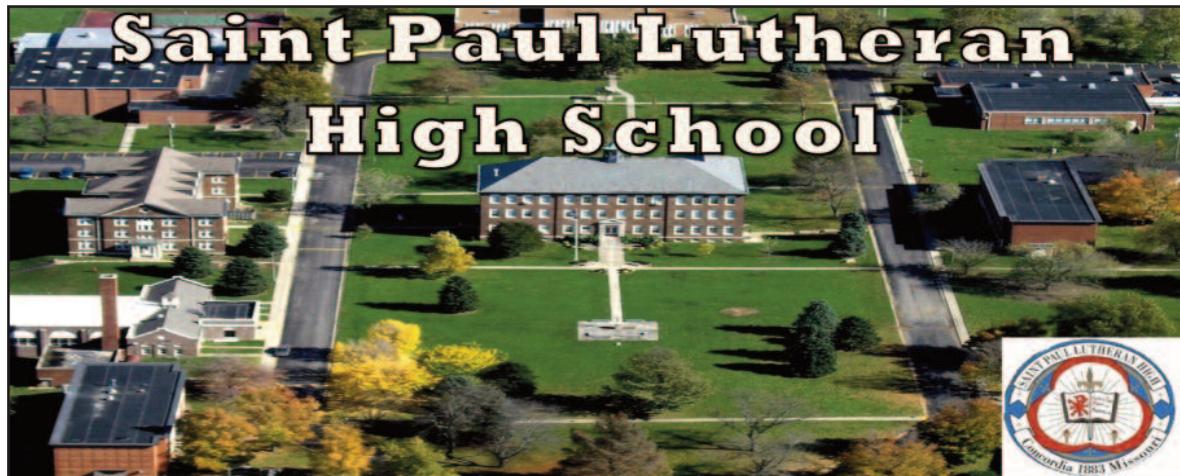


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# CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS: ARE THEY RIGHT FOR YOU?

Consider these reasons

## The academic needs of your child.

Teachers in Christian schools are Christians who care, are knowledgeable, creative and who are professionally certified. The respectful and focused academic climate of Christian schools provides for a high-quality education. Christian school graduates are very well prepared as they move on to next levels in education. Many schools provide programming for students with special needs with modified or enriched programs.

## What opportunities are there for your child?

Christian schools take advantage of their smaller size to create excellent opportunities for students to participate in extra curricular activities. Whether in sports, music, drama or through class and school activities, Christian schools offer wholesome, creative and challenging opportunities outside of the classroom. In athletics, most schools compete against other Christian schools, along with the schools in their local community.

## Will your child be encouraged to grow spiritually?

The Christian school effectively supports Christian homes and churches as children and teens travel the road of their spiritual journey. Most Christian

schools start and end the day in prayer, have devotional time for students and staff, and have assemblies or chapels. The integration of Christian and Biblical principles in each class provides a faith-based environment where students, parents, staff, and volunteers work as a team to ensure the growth and success of each student. In our culture, students are continually bombarded with messages that relegate the Christian faith to the margins of personal life. These messages come both subtly and overtly. Christian schools provide students with a foundation for understanding contemporary culture and give them the tools and support they need to live their Christian lives more fully.

## What is the long-term goal for your child?

When you're a parent, you are in it for the long haul – you only get to do it once. You want the best – not just what's "good enough" – for your children. Parents want to give their children the best of opportunities and support so that their children are prepared as well as possible to face the challenges of life. Numerous studies show that a high percentage of students wander away from their Christian faith after their high school years. Along with Christian homes and churches, a Christian education helps solidify a strong foundation for life.

—From [whychristianschools.ca](http://whychristianschools.ca)

## Students don't have to leave their rights at home

Alliance Defending Freedom has issued these guidelines for students enrolled in public schools. What you can and cannot do has been determined by the Supreme Court and lower courts.

### Religious Clothing

Students have the right to express their faith through what they wear, such as a pro-life T-shirt or a cross. Schools can place some restrictions on what students can wear, but they can't single out religious clothing.



#### Students can:

■ Wear shirts, pants, necklaces, bracelets, and other articles of clothing that display a religious symbol (i.e., cross) or religious message (including a Bible verse) as long as they meet the school's dress code.

#### Schools can:

■ Ban any clothing with a message that (1) materially and substantially interferes with the operation of the school, (2) is lewd, vulgar, or objectively obscene (i.e., contains profanity or sexual content), or (3) promotes violence or drug

use.

#### Schools can't:

■ Ban clothing or accessories because their messages are religious or contain a religious symbol or picture, or others may find their religious message, symbol, or picture offensive.

#### Watch out for:

■ Policies that ban clothing that is "religious" or "proselytizing" or that prohibits so-called "promoting the superiority" of a set of beliefs over any other set of beliefs.

■ Policies that prohibit clothing that is offensive, disrespectful, or use other subjective criteria to restrict the message on clothing.

#### True Stories:

■ A school counselor crossed out the message on a student's T-shirt with a message expressing her opposition to homosexual behavior because school officials said it might provoke "incidents of harassment." The next year, they responded the same way when her classmate wore a similar shirt. Alliance Defending Freedom represented the students in challenging the school district's policies and won.

## Religious Expression

Given the central role that religion plays in many students' lives, it is natural

■ See RIGHTS page 8



# Just for students

THE 411: How will this year be different for you?

New friends, old friends, nice teachers, scary teachers, a packed lunch, compulsory uniform and a fresh timetable. Going back to school is a day that inevitably comes each year. Some love it, others hate it or perhaps you just go through the motions indifferently. Regardless of how it makes you feel you have to go, so how will you make the most of it? How will you make this year at school worthwhile? It's time for you to step up!

School is an incredible place where you meet hundreds of young people and spend time with them five days a week for approximately 40 weeks a year. That presents an amazing opportunity to witness and share the gospel with so many people. In fact the best people to reach out to these students are students. The way you live and talk to your friends can be very powerful.

As a Christian, school ought to be looked at as one of the ultimate mission fields. Here are a few ways you can stand out and step up when you go back to school this year:

- MEET (Hebrews 10:25): Find out

if there is a Christian lunchtime group at your school, and then join it or start one. Then bring your friends.

- TALK (1 Peter 3:15): When your friends ask what you did on the weekend, tell them about youth group or church and then invite them along. Tell your friends about your faith.

- LIVE (Matthew 5:16): Live like Jesus. Don't get caught up in gossip, materialism, slander or any ways of this world. But be different and people will notice, then you can point them to Jesus.

- PRAY (Colossians 4:2): pray for your mates, that they might come to know Jesus because prayer is powerful.

So as another year starts and the weekly cycle begins again, make a difference! Be bold and stand out for Jesus. Don't waste the time you have now and the opportunities that come at school. Whether you are in year 7 or year 12, at a public school, private school, Christian school or secular school, Jesus died for all our sake and he has sent us out to make disciples of all people. So why don't you start now?

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## RIGHTS

continued from page 6

that they would desire to express their religious viewpoints in class discussions and assignments.

### Students can:

■ Express their religious beliefs in classroom discussions, homework, projects, artwork, and all other school assignments as long as it is relevant and meets the requirements of the assignment.

### Schools can't:

■ Prohibit, punish, or give a lower grade to a student who includes religious viewpoints in a class assignment.

### Watch out for:

■ Instructions for an assignment that restrict the discussion of religious beliefs, religious figures, or Bible passages.

■ School officials telling students that they can't reference religion in an assignment or include religious images in pictures or artwork.

### True Stories:

■ A line from a first-grader's poem for a Veterans Day celebration was deleted because it described how her grandfather prayed while serving on the frontlines during the Vietnam War. In response to a letter from Alliance Defending Freedom, the school allowed her to read her complete poem at a school board meeting, and the school district adopted a policy protecting the right of students to include religious viewpoints in their assignments.

■ A Wisconsin student was told to remove or cover up a reference to John 3:16 on a piece of artwork he created. The school cited a policy that banned depictions of "blood, violence, sexual connotations, [or] religious beliefs." After Alliance Defending Freedom filed a lawsuit on behalf of the student, the school district removed the ban on re-

ligious expression in class assignments.

## Clubs

Students can find strength and refuge when they join together to form religious clubs at school. The First Amendment and the Equal Access Act protect the right of students to form religious clubs at school and to receive the same benefits that are given to other non-curriculum clubs.

### Students can:

■ Form religious clubs and meet on campus if the school allows other non-curriculum clubs (such as a Key Club or Students Against Destructive Decisions).

■ Have equal access to all school facilities, resources, and equipment available to other non-curriculum clubs.

■ Promote their events and activities in the same manner that other non-curriculum clubs are permitted to do so.

■ Invite outside speakers to attend and present at their meetings to the same extent that other non-curriculum clubs are allowed to do so.

■ Condition membership and leadership positions on the basis of shared values to the same extent that other groups can do so.

### Schools can't:

■ Deny recognition to a club because it is religious or deny the club any of the benefits or privileges given to other non-curriculum clubs.

■ Force a religious club to include those who do not share the groups' values unless it requires that all groups are open under an "all-comers" policy.

### Watch out for:

■ Policies that deny recognition to religious clubs or deny them the benefits and privileges given to other non-curriculum clubs at the school.

■ Indirect efforts by schools to discourage students from forming a religious club, such as en-



couraging students to join with members of another religion to form an inter-faith club.

### True Stories:

■ A pro-life club in Minnesota was denied recognition because it allegedly "does not support the student body as a whole." But the school recognized several other clubs, including an Environmental Club and Anime Club. After Alliance Defending Freedom filed a lawsuit on behalf of the student group, the school reversed course and granted the club full recognition.

## Literature Distribution/Posting

The U.S. Supreme Court has long recognized that the First Amendment protects not only the spoken word but also the distribution of literature, pamphlets, and other written materials. These materials provide an effective and non-intrusive way for Christian students to share their faith or pro-life beliefs with their classmates.

### Students can:

■ Distribute religious literature before and after school, in between classes, and during lunch and recess unless the distribution substantially interferes with the activity of the school.

■ Post religious flyers on the walls or in other designated locations if students have the right to post other, non-religious content in those locations.

### Schools can:

■ Impose reasonable limits on literature distribution, such as the time, place, and manner of distribution, but those limits cannot be so restrictive that they would effectively ban literature distribution by students.

### Schools can't:

■ Completely ban literature distribution by students.

■ Prohibit written materials because they are religious or proselytizing.

■ Enact policies that give school officials the ability to prohibit materials that they subjectively find to be "offensive" or "inconsistent with the school's educational mission."

### Watch out for:

■ Policies that ban religious literature.

■ Policies that place unreasonable limits on the times and locations in which students can hand out flyers and other written materials at school.

■ Schools that routinely allow the distribution of other party invitations or flyers but deny invitations to a church-sponsored event because it might "offend" another student.

### True Stories:

■ Pennsylvania schools' administrators did not allow Katie Ayers, an elementary student, to hand out invitations to a church Christmas party. Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys sued the school district, resulting in an important court ruling that affirmed the rights of students of all ages to distribute literature.

■ A middle school student in Minnesota was called into the principal's office after she and her friends handed out pro-life flyers to friends during lunch. Alliance Defending Freedom filed a lawsuit, resulting in a new school policy that respected the rights of students to share their religious and pro-life beliefs.

## DAYCARE

continued from page 5

are state laws that mandate the student to teacher ratio at any daycare. It's best to get on the waiting list as soon as it seems daycare may be an option.

**Curriculum** – Does the daycare follow a particular curriculum? I had no idea that my child would need to use scissors before she started kindergarten. But the daycare we found followed our school district's curriculum and knew everything she'd have to learn in order to be prepared for school.

**Staff** – Sure this may seem obvious, but try to meet the people who will actually be taking care of your children. Meeting the director of a daycare during orientation is nice, but chances are that director won't be part of your child's day-by-day care. When we first toured our daughter's daycare, we went around and met the teacher who would be there for morning drop offs as well as the young woman who would be her actual teacher.

But more than just meeting the staff. Find out what their hiring practices are. What type of people do they look to hire. Our daycare will only hand out applications after the director has had a chance to meet with potential staff members.

For Vaughan, the hiring process for new staff members was very detailed, often with more than one interview. She understands she is hiring people to shape and mold

the lives of small children – a task she doesn't take lightly.

"We do what I think is a very in depth interview asking questions not only about the person but how they would handle different classroom situations (biting, hitting, upset parent etc.)," Vaughan said. "If the candidate seems like a good fit, we do a second interview with my supervisor (church pastor) or someone else from our board. Then we call references before making a final decision."

**Activities** – Find out what the students will do both inside and outside of the classroom. How is a typical day broken down? What about nap time? How does the daycare handle students who won't sleep? Our daycare had a swimming pool, and our daughter was able to learn the very basics of swimming during her time there. They had spirit weeks where she got to dress in a different theme on certain days. They had Easter egg hunts, book drives, food drives and even adopted a family on Christmas.

Vaughan also advises visiting the daycare to see it in action.

"They should visit the daycare, notice how the staff interact with the kids in the classroom as well as how they are greeted by the staff," Vaughan said. "They should notice cleanliness of the area/building, cost/hours/days, etc. Check out the daycare website or facebook page, ask other parents about their experience."

**Cost** – Make no mistake. Daycare is an investment. It's much

more than just finding a babysitter. You are investing in your child's future because these people whom you're paying to love your baby (and they really do love them) and are helping you prepare them for school. They're helping them be nice, polite boys and girls. They're teaching them manners and how to use scissors (that was a big one for me). But running a daycare takes resources. The teachers have to be paid, the food has to be purchased. The lights, the water, the taxes all have to be paid.

Vaughan agreed that it's not all about price.

"(There are) Misconceptions that daycare is just an expensive babysitter. That may be true in some cases but many provide opportunities for the children to learn through play and hands on activities and they gain social skills with others outside of family," Vaughan said.

For us that hefty price tag was worth it when our daughter had her kindergarten screening and the counselor said she was "more than ready" to start kindergarten. And every day I see her reading a book or drawing a picture, I think it's all thanks to these amazing teachers who came into our life when we weren't ready for such a big change but managed to take a scared little girl and turn her into brilliant little girl who loves learning. And her scissor skills have gotten quite good.

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