



Executive Institutional Summary

March 2011

Section 1: Introduction

Describe the community in which your school is located. What are the unique features and special challenges of your school community?

Briefly provide demographic information with regards to both students and staff and the community at large.

Christ Presbyterian Academy, founded in 1985, is a private school located on a 58-acre campus in south Nashville, Tennessee on the border of Davidson and Williamson counties. The Academy is a ministry of Christ Presbyterian Church and shares facilities and some administrative services with the Church. The total enrollment of CPA is 1,032 students, with 110 students in preschool, 337 students in elementary, 248 students in middle school, 337 students in high school. The male/female ratio is approximately 50/50. Attendance rates average approximately 97% across the three schools. The enrollment of the Academy has met capacity every year for the past five years.

The ratio of ethnic groups being overwhelmingly Caucasian is generally consistent with the population in the areas from which CPA draws the majority of its enrollees. Much of our ethnic diversity comes from the fact that many CPA families have a strong commitment to adoption, especially from African and Asian countries. The student body comes from more than 30 different zip code areas in a 30 to 50 mile radius. The latest Parent survey reveals that 85% of CPA parents have attained a Bachelor's degree or higher, and at least one, if not both, parents are employed as professionals. Although members of Christ Presbyterian Church receive higher priority in enrollment, the student body actually represents 22 different churches in the Davison/Williamson county

areas. Approximately 58% of CPA families are from a PCA background, predominately Christ Presbyterian Church.

On average, 97% of CPA students apply to colleges and universities, and 100% who apply are accepted. Over the past five years, about 3% of our students have chosen a “gap year” in which they have gone to the mission field, entered the military, or chosen to work before pursuing college. These statistics represent the 374 students who have graduated in the 2006-2010 classes. CPA currently has over 1,000 alumni.

The Academy employs 160 staff members, 108 of whom are teachers. Of the teachers, 86% are certified through ACSI. Every teacher has at minimum a Bachelor’s degree and 55 teachers hold advanced degrees. The teacher to student ratio is 1:9, with 13 students on average in each classroom.

Christ Presbyterian Academy emphasizes at every grade level the importance of and responsibility of service and missions. Approximately one-third of all high school students serve on mission trips throughout the year in a variety of locations, including local and international venues. Last year, \$23,500 was raised in Academy-wide, student-led efforts for local and international outreach.

Testing is administered to applicants more for the placement purposes than for admissions purposes. CPA admits and educates students with a wide variety of abilities. Our curriculum is decidedly college-preparatory, and we believe that all students can learn at high levels. That being said, we do not seek out only the top-scoring students. CPA has, from its inception, had a strong commitment to students of all ability levels. We have a diverse learning culture at CPA, and we are purposeful in that. We have a Learning Services department – six full time employees – in place to support students with diagnosed issues that interfere with their learning. We are able to maintain a rigorous curriculum because we have the mechanisms in place to help students keep pace and learn. In addition, we offer enrichment opportunities in the elementary grades and honors classes beginning in the 8th grade, and 15 AP courses at the high school level.

At Christ Presbyterian Academy, we are unique in that we exist to assist Christian families, and our approach to learning is based on a Christian worldview. We require one of the parents of each student to be a professing Christian. If at least one parent is a Christian, the likelihood is that the home and school will be able to support one another in the goals they have for the student. We see ourselves as a supplement to the spiritual training that a family is trying to accomplish in their home. In our approach to learning, we believe that God is involved in all of life, as all of life is spiritual. We intend for our school motto – Soli Deo Gloria – To God Alone Be the Glory – to permeate everything we do.

Section 2: Student Performance

Give a brief description of your school's vision about students and their performance. Provide a brief summary of student performance in your school. What are your goals and how will you know you have achieved them?

Describe the variety of your school's student performance assessments. How does your staff engage in meaningful analysis of student work in order to modify instruction?

Describe the school's student support programs and services. In what ways does your school ensure community/parent involvement in the life of the school?

Christ Presbyterian Academy's vision for learning is based in the belief that all faculty, students, and parents and the church are members of the vibrant, Christ-centered learning community and assume a collective responsibility to actively engage in learning. CPA's rigorous and relevant program of instruction is designed to teach students how to understand reality by seeing life through the lens of the gospel. The school is engaged in an on-going process – through the use of academic standards and Atlas curriculum mapping – to clarify exactly what each student is to learn in each grade level, in each course and in each unit of instruction and to align the curriculum in such a way that learning is fluid across grade levels and within each grade level.

In interpreting the data of students, it is important to note that CPA composite scores include students who receive Learning Services support. This population of students comprises roughly 15% of our student body. Also important to remember is CPA intentionally serves students with a broader range of ability than most comparable independent schools.

The SESAC data reveals Elementary students are well above the median grade equivalent for national norms and have maintained or improved for three of the last five years in all core subject areas. Additionally, the elementary school administered the OLSAT (grades 3 and 5) for years 2006-2010, and the ERB for 5th grade. The OLSAT scores typically fall between the 79th and 85th percentile, which is commensurate with the SESAC scores. Middle School administers the ERB for grades 6 through 8; ERB data is gathered on 5th grade students primarily

for placement in 6th grade.

CPA Elementary School administered the Stanford 10 Early School Achievement Test (SESAC) in 2010. This was the first year that the test was given. The Stanford 9 was administered for years 2006 through 2009. The Stanford 10 is a new norm, so the 2010 data does not follow a standard longitudinal trajectory, and should be viewed with that caveat.

Middle school students take the ERB (Comprehensive Testing Program 4) annually. This test ranks our students as compared to those enrolled at 1400 other private schools with selective admissions policies. Over the past three years of ERB data, our students have consistently scored at the seventh stanine nationally. Reading Comprehension and Mathematics increased from the sixth to the seventh stanine during the 2009 school year and maintained in the 2010 school year.

Eighth graders also take the Explore Test during the fall of each year. Based on the 8th Grade Explore Test scores over the past three years of data, our students' achievements have remained steady in English, Mathematics, and Science and have improved slightly in Reading over two of the last three years (2008-2010). However, scores in all test areas have remained well above the National Norms.

High school student performance data collected includes: the PLAN and the PSAT, each taken annually by freshman through junior years, the SAT, the ACT, the Advanced Placement Test, and the number of National Merit finalists from our school, all for the years 2006-2010. All CPA high school students take either the ACT or the SAT or both at least once and usually more than once.

With a composite average of 26.1 on the ACT, 6.5 points above the state average, we have seen an increase of 1.2 points over the past five years. Reading has seen an increase of 1.9 points, English an increase of 0.7 points, Math an increase of 0.8 points and Science an increase of 1.3 points. The SAT is taken by half as many students as the ACT. There is not a consistent trend among our students on the

SAT. Reading scores had been on a decline from 2005-2009, before jumping up with the class of 2010, while writing scores dropped in 2006-2007 and have been on a steady increase since. Math scores have been rising and falling in no particular pattern over the past five years. The students' composite scores, however, continue to be far above the national norms.

When examining the same group of students over three years, we found that each year all three of the groups' scores improved across all subject areas in both the Plan and the PSAT. When examining the same grade level each year, the results were mixed and scores fluctuated. There was not consistent improvement and in some cases there was decline.

We have increased the number of Advanced Placement tests taken by 74% from 118 in 2005-06 to 205 in 2009-10 while increasing our pass rate (3 or higher) from 65% to 68%. We have also added two new AP tests (Physics B and Physics C). The Academy currently offers 15 Advanced Placement options.

The Academy will know that it is meeting its goals through a variety of ongoing assessments including, but not limited to, standardized assessment data of student achievement. Also germane to the assessment of progress is the ongoing collaborative work of teachers, such as the use of common formative and summative assessments, the ongoing development of Atlas curriculum maps, and the classroom performance data from PowerSchool. The data itself is only effective in helping us to increase student learning if we use it wisely and in ways that better instruction so that learning does increase.

Every teacher, on a timely and consistent basis, uses specific criteria to assess levels of student learning and adjusts teaching based on the learning needs of the students. In every unit of instruction, each teacher is required to include a comprehensive set of both summative and formative assessment plans. When teachers teach the same class, they collaborate regularly not only regarding the planning aspects of the class but also regarding common assessments that yield comparable data that will be useful in planning instruction.

All faculty collaborate to build shared knowledge of best teaching practices and innovation as part of the process of shared-decision making on specific issues that directly impact student learning. A need for more thorough analysis of student data – standardized data and classroom data – is clear, and steps are already being taken to ensure a more regular review of student achievement for the purposes of improving instruction, and thereby learning.

The CPA learning community, under our covenantal design, is responsible to recognize students' unique gifts and abilities and to foster a learning environment that allows them to fully develop. The Learning Services Program was begun at the inception of the school to assist students with diagnosed learning and behavior needs that interfere on some level with their learning. Uniqueness among children demands a unique approach to teaching each child. Variation in educational approaches may entail changes in teaching strategies, curriculum and materials, pace of instruction or class placement. Some interventions in the early grades are done on a pull-out, individual or small group basis. Many of the interventions in the middle and high schools are done during study halls and other free periods.

Each student in the Learning Services Program is provided with an Individual Learning Plan, or ILP. This plan provides a description of the certifying disability, suggestions for teachers that detail ways to improve the student's classroom experience, and a list of accommodations and/or modifications that will be allowed for the student based on his or her disability. A copy of this plan is distributed to parents, administration, and the student's current teachers. In affirming uniqueness, and in acknowledging its responsibility to provide a strong education for all its students, Christ Presbyterian Academy commits itself to the nurturance – academically, emotionally, spiritually, and physically – of all students, including those with differences in their learning needs.

In January of 2010 and February of 2011 the Academy repeated a series of surveys that were also done during the accreditation process of 2006. In 2010,

surveys were offered to the following groups: parents, middle and high school students, elementary students, CPC community members, teachers, and non-teaching staff. In 2011, the same surveys were done with the addition of preschool parents and preschool teachers. Results from each survey were thoroughly reviewed by the leadership of the school and by the board and then were discussed in public community meetings. Annually for three of the past five years, a community input meeting has been held to discuss the results of the surveys and to communicate to stakeholders the school's plans for improvement. Results from the surveys were also used to form the 2011 Continuous Improvement Plan. Future plans include surveys done every other year and annually held meetings with stakeholders to discuss progress in the school's improvement plan.

Section 3: Challenges and Opportunities

What are the major challenges your school has faced in the last three years and how have you addressed those challenges?

Christ Presbyterian Academy has been challenged with growth and change on several fronts during the past three years. As growth in enrollment surpassed the optimal use of the facilities, a steering committee to study the campus facilities was formed, comprised of representatives from both church and school. Needs were studied; various committees were appointed. In April 2008 a congregational meeting was held at Christ Presbyterian Church. By a 96% vote of approval, the church membership empowered the academy to embark upon a capital campaign to raise the needed funds. Ground was broken on the new high school building on February 28, 2010. Construction began during the summer of 2010. The total cost of the construction project – including new construction, retrofitting, and renovations to existing building – is roughly \$13 million. To date, more than \$9 million has been raised. The capital campaign is an ongoing focus for the school as it seeks to acquire as little debt as possible. To date, everything is on schedule with the construction project. The plan is to be able to enter the building in July 2011 and to hold classes in the new high school building during the fall semester, beginning in August 2011.

The new building will allow enrollment to increase to 1,200 students K – 12 with the preschool enrollment staying roughly the same. Enrollment will increase in increments over the next five years. Three new positions were added to the Admissions Department to plan for enrollment growth and to adopt practices that would ensure future enrollment. With the growth of the student body, the faculty must also grow. Much work has been done this school year to streamline hiring practices, to ensure that new teacher and staff orientations are thorough, and to improve faculty and staff evaluation systems. A new director of Human Resources was hired and is working to improve the application and hiring processes. The Academic Team (comprised of the Elementary, Middle School, and High School principals and the Academic Dean) negotiated a new system of teacher orientation that includes a thorough look at our school's mission, vision,

and culture and ample training in the procedures and technology used by the teaching faculty. Lastly, the Academic Team continues to work to ensure thorough and fair evaluation of all teaching faculty so that standards and protocols for teaching are consistent across grade levels.

During the 2008-2009 school year, the need for an Academic Dean became evident and the position was filled. The Academic Team of principals and the Dean have worked over the past two years to unite the three school levels in educational policy and practice. Central to their efforts has been the work with the teachers on researching and adopting academic standards. This work was completed in the 2009-2010 school year. That same year, the curriculum mapping program Atlas was adopted and the teachers were trained in cycles to map their unit plans using this system. During the 2010-2011 school year all teachers, at every grade level, are finishing up their initial mapping of all their courses. Atlas has been and will continue to be used as a tool not only for documentation of the taught curriculum but also for collaboration among teachers of the same grade level and across grade levels. The mapping process naturally has led to better collective inquiry into the vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum, and this will be a primary focus of the 2011-2012 school year.

Beginning in the 2008-2009 school year, the administration began also to earnestly seek to establish and maintain a professional learning community (PLC) at CPA. During in-service week to begin the 2009-2010 school year the ideals of the PLC were taught to the faculty. Throughout that school year and into the next, the administration has focused all of its in-service training and in-house professional development on the PLC ideals as they relate to Christ Presbyterian Academy. School administration, including the principals and the Academic Dean, are continually committed to reading the latest research, discussing its ramifications on student learning at CPA and relaying that information to the teaching faculty. The focus of the school is clearly moving from teaching to learning. The faculty is constantly being asked – and is asking itself – how current practices and proposed practices will affect student learning.

In every classroom at every stage of planning and implementation of the curriculum the administration, together with the teachers, is challenging instruction to be sure it addresses essential skills, assesses those skills with integrity, and actively addresses students who are not learning or who have already learned the concepts. The ongoing challenge will be to have these ideals permeate the daily practices of our school and to encourage ongoing and robust collaboration about these and other research-based best practices.

Section 4: Conclusion

What is your school most proud of and why?

Is there any other information you would like to share with the public and the school community?

As the running of a school is a multi-faceted endeavor, there continue to be areas of opportunity for growth at CPA; however, the Academy leadership, teachers, students, and parents have responded with great enthusiasm to the challenge of self-study. Throughout the years of the Academy's existence, there has been ongoing analysis of progress toward improvement goals, annual updates of improvement plans, and leadership focus on educational initiatives. This year's particularly rigorous project of self-study was launched for accreditation purposes; however, the Academy took the opportunity to dig more deeply, as a school community, into the various aspects of our community to more accurately and honestly assess our current school climate and culture. There is a prevailing and obvious desire on the part of the stakeholders of CPA to do our self-study thoroughly, to make solid plans toward improvement, and to do the work necessary to grow the school.

Our best resource, and one aspect of our school about which we are quite proud, is our faculty. Throughout the years, the prevailing input from parent and alumni surveys has been that our faculty is stellar. They desire to have their faith impact the lives of students and families as they commit themselves to teaching in their subject areas. They pursue students, not only to ensure that students are learning well but also to encourage them in areas of personal growth. Fifty percent of our faculty members hold masters degrees or higher, but their impact is not limited to their knowledge of pedagogy; their impact is in their knowledge of the students as individuals, each made uniquely to fulfill the calling that God has on his or her life. Our teachers put in many more hours than the school requires. In these recent years of growth and change in our school, they have been willing to serve on curriculum teams and focus groups to study the needs of the school and to help make good decisions for the future of the school. They

have embraced the commitment our school has to collaboration, not only at the grade or subject level but as a whole community of learners and with regard to every aspect of our school. We are privileged to be able to partner together with such dedicated teachers, students, families, and church leadership in fulfillment of our mission – this is indeed a collaborative effort.

While there has indeed been much change and growth in our school community in the past twenty-five years – and particularly in the past ten – the Academy has never veered from its original purpose. The mission of the school at its inception is the mission of the school today: *To assist Christian families in helping students come to know God, evaluate all knowledge and all life by His truth, and live transformed by His truth for His glory.* This mission is well communicated to CPA stakeholders; it is evident in every newsletter, email, and correspondence. It is posted on banners in the school; it is printed in all handbooks, admissions materials, and promotional texts. It is clear. Our school's genuine desire to educate children in a manner that is rooted in the Word of God and focused on the person of Jesus Christ has been the hallmark of Christ Presbyterian Academy. Within this community we, as individuals, learn to recognize, accept, and prepare ourselves for the responsibilities that God has given to us. In this learning process, we experience times of success and times of failure. Throughout our efforts, we will be upheld and guided by the loving support and discipline of the community of Christ. This is the culture of CPA, and of this we are particularly proud.