

“Why I Teach in an Episcopal School”



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As I arrived at Christ Episcopal School for my first day of teaching, I didn't know what to expect. I had just moved back to the U.S. after spending nine years in London, England, where I taught middle school at a large, private, American school that catered to competitive and wealthy expats. I had never taught at an Episcopal school and I was grateful to my new head, Dr. Caroline Chapin, for taking a chance on me based on a Skype interview from abroad and some strong references. Walking into the school for the first time, I was immediately surrounded by a chorus of welcomes, bright smiles, and kind words. I knew instantly that this was the right place for my family and me.

Three and a half years later, I have learned what it means to teach at an Episcopal school. The first word that springs to mind for me is 'community'. Never before have I been a part of such a warm, caring, and supportive community of teachers, parents, and students. I see the basic tenets of our character program woven throughout the school environment -- respect, patience, kindness, cooperation, and more. This character building program is one of the pillars of the Episcopal schools' mission, and day-to-day when I see these young students choosing the right path, I feel the pride of having helped shaped these minds and spirits as part of this wonderful mission. I know that as they face moral and ethical challenges in their later education and as adults, the solid foundation our Episcopal school has cemented in them will positively influence their choices in life. I am honored to have played a small part in that future adult's formation.

A second integral piece that forms the Episcopal school experience is the holistic education we offer the child. While academic rigors are always emphasized and recognized in the student, I have found that our school fosters additional traits such as a service to others, respect for and love of God, passion for the arts, and most especially the celebration of each

student's unique worth. In the classroom, I strive to reach each student individually, our curriculum allowing me the flexibility of teaching in the ways that I find best inspires my students. My professional abilities are respected and encouraged such that I can create a true learning environment in the classroom, one that provides varied interactive lessons including occasional digressions driven by the students' own intellectual curiosities. With a team of similar-minded professionals around me, we create a learning sphere that ignites passion in all of the disciplines -- service, music, art, history, math, English, athletics, and more. That is the true Episcopal educational formation.

Finally, as a contrast to our currently divisive and judgmental society, our school demonstrates the Episcopal educational mission of respecting the dignity of every human regardless of background or beliefs. We are truly inclusive, and we foster that love of justice, peace, and grace. Our middle school sports program invites every student to participate regardless of ability, which encourages true camaraderie on the teams and allows for each student to feel the thrill of sports competition without the fear of ridicule. Our middle school musical is also wholly inclusive of the students, so that each may feel the excitement of stage performance in a warmly accepting and supporting environment. Many times, a student may discover a new interest that otherwise may have never been found without this opportunity. We learn through these experiences that God is in each one of us, and we must respect the beauty he has created in every person.

As our students progress through each grade, we hope that the Episcopal foundation we have laid for them will provide the strength and guidance for them in their life's path. My aspiration is that they will lead positive change and show courage in the face of resistance because of what they learned while within our community. Again, I see this as a crucial antidote to our increasingly fractured and divisive national dialogue, or even as an important cultural nuance for an ever more digitally-connected planet. At Christ Episcopal School, we ultimately strive to blend traditional morals, intellectual curiosity, and modern sensibilities to create model citizens and change leaders for our society. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."