

Brown County Christian Academy Culture



At the Brown County Christian Academy, we reject the fashionable notion of self-esteem as the objective of education. Genuine self-esteem arises only through self-respect—the result of hard work, academic accomplishment, right behavior and proper regard for others. We have cultivated a learning environment that encourages full development in all these areas even as we remain dedicated to teaching young children as effectively as caring adults can.

THE STRUCTURED LEARNING DAY

Our teaching effectiveness emanates from a well-structured learning day that sets and maintains an appropriate educational tone from beginning to end. When students come to school, they are coming to work. Indeed, the school uniform is a symbol of the role that the student assumes at school during the work day. Student conduct at school must demonstrate a seriousness of purpose and a sense of appropriate play that stress the importance of learning both individual and group skills.

START OF THE DAY

At BCCA, every school day begins with a sequence of activities carefully designed to convey a clear sense of expectation and to demonstrate our personal concern for each individual child.

1. Welcome. As parents drop off their children in the morning, the teachers and headmaster greet their students outside the building. This simple act of civility lets children know they are wanted at school, and it also visually suggests a handing over of the child to the teacher's authority.

2. Opening Ceremony. After the students have arrived, a formal ceremony is conducted every morning. The students assemble by class, and the headmaster leads them in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, while designated, properly trained students raise the flag. Next, a patriotic or traditional American song is sung, followed by a student's recitation from memory of a poem or Bible verse. The headmaster then makes any announcements, and each teacher briefly shares recent noteworthy accomplishments

made by students or classes. These reports focus on academics or projects of interest, rather than on personal news.

3. Weekly Prayer. Once a week, a local Christian pastor/preacher/Elder attends the opening ceremony and offers a non-denominational prayer, followed by a short reading from the Bible. Either he or the Headmaster then offers a sermon or leads a brief discussion that elicits a significant point from the shared passage. These sessions promote the spiritual development of the students within the faith traditions of our Christian heritage. At the end of the opening ceremony, the Headmaster dismisses students by grade to their classrooms, with a word of encouragement for their forthcoming academic endeavors. While this entire sequence typically takes no more than ten to 15 minutes, its importance cannot be overemphasized. Parents are encouraged to attend as often as desired.

START OF CLASS

The tone of the opening ceremonies carries into the classroom as teachers begin their morning routines. While students hang their hats and coats neatly in the closet, teachers interact with each child personally, answering questions, listening to the occasional story and taking attendance. Within the first few minutes, teachers make announcements for the morning, check school uniforms and inform students of the structure of the day's opening lesson. This morning routine stresses personal attention, helps students focus on the work ahead and eases the class into its lessons and projects.

RECESSES

A recess is held outside mid-morning and mid-afternoon each day. We believe children need regular breaks in their school day, and we insist they go outside except in the most inclement conditions.

LUNCH TIME

At lunch, we assemble as a school in the Commons.

A head student or the Headmaster leads the school in a prayer, and we sit for a meal in mixed groups at assigned tables, each headed by a teacher.

SPECIAL ACTIVITY PERIODS

Class time is set aside throughout the week for special enrichment activities.

1. Music. At regular music lessons, BCCA students participate in choral singing; learn and practice vocal technique; and study musical history, notation, harmony, terminology and history. At various times throughout the year, all the students come together to sing at BCCA events and community functions.

2. Art. Twice a week, students are encouraged to explore visual forms of expression and cultivate an aesthetic sense. Grades 1 through 4 concentrate on age-appropriate crafts, learning to manipulate materials and to work with simple forms. Grades 5

through 8 study basic art principles and become acquainted with different artistic styles and periods. They view slides of well-known works, attend exhibits at local galleries and experiment with drawing, watercolor and pottery techniques.

3. Physical Education. Younger students participate in activities designed to develop gross and fine motor skills, while older students learn sports and games that can help them maintain fitness throughout their adult lives. Children receive instruction in the rules and techniques of team sports and cultivate athletic appreciation through attendance at sporting events.

4. Library. Students visit the BCCA library for a half hour or more each week. BCCA will also be visiting our local public libraries frequently in the early years of our school. Parent volunteers supervise library sessions, and teachers are on hand to help with book selections, advising students on the appropriateness and reading difficulty of various titles. Books are checked out for one week. (NOTE: To help our

students develop a sense of personal involvement with the library, we encourage donations of books. In fact, many of our students have adopted the practice of the birthday book, a volume given to commemorate the student's birthday and inscribed with the donor's name and the date of the gift.)

END OF THE DAY

The class day comes to an end in an organized manner. Teachers review homework assignments for that evening, check to make sure students understand the instructions, and then initial the students' assignment books. The children collect their possessions and lineup. Classes walk outside in line and meet their parents. Pre-selected students lower the flag and then fold and store it.

EVENING WORK TIME

Meaningful homework assignments are an important part of BCCA's curriculum. Teachers may assign quality homework within the following guidelines:

Young 5's:	≤10 minutes
Kindergarten:	5 to 15 minutes
Grades 1-2:	10 to 20 minutes
Grades 3-4:	20 to 35 minutes
Grades 5-6:	35 to 50 minutes

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

At BCCA, we not only seek to provide a solid academic foundation, but also a firm grounding in moral and ethical principles. This begins with clear standards of personal conduct, basic expectations for appearance, behavior and attitude that both enhance the learning atmosphere of the school and prepare children for life in a world of other individuals with their own needs, opinions and expectations. The virtues we teach are rooted in our classical and Biblical foundations. Our watchwords are self-discipline and respect, and we express those concerns in virtually all aspects of BCCA life. While we make no attempt to stifle the

active imagination, we make every attempt to channel that imagination in positive and productive directions.

DRESS CODE

The Brown County Christian Academy maintains an official standard of dress, complete with a school uniform, and all students are required to be in uniform whenever they are at school or at most school-related functions. We maintain this dress code for several reasons: (1) to underscore the Academy's seriousness of purpose by encouraging students to think of their attire as an aspect of their work; (2) to eliminate the self-consciousness and social competition that fashion tends to promote; and (3) to promote a sense of identity with the school and among the students as a group. The dress code has been especially well received by parents, who (while having to buy the uniform components) see the financial and social benefits of limiting their children's school clothing needs. All parents are grateful for the emphasis on learning, not

clothing. Elements of the uniform and other clothing requirements are specified in the Student/Parent Handbook.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Neatness, grooming and proper hair care receive the same special attention as student dress at BCCA. We restrict makeup and extreme hairstyles and encourage general cleanliness, especially hand washing before eating and after bathroom use. Teachers carefully monitor student behavior.

CLASSROOM DECORUM

Students must maintain a respectful attitude in class and respond to teachers with politeness and deference. They must also remain quiet and attentive during lessons and individual work. This includes the raising of hands and waiting quietly for permission to speak. Classes are structured to ensure that students interact with one another in appropriate ways. Whenever an adult(s) enters a classroom, at the direction of the teacher in charge, all students

rise and wait to be acknowledged by the visitor. At that point the students will formally greet the classroom adult(s).

STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Interaction between students, the friendships formed and the degree to which children feel accepted, comfortable and safe can encourage enthusiasm for going to school or sour a student's outlook. We want the experience of attending BCCA to be positive, so we pay close attention to the quality of student-to-student relationships. While our expectations of behavior and academic performance are quite high, we recognize that kids need to be kids.

Accordingly, teachers try to provide opportunities, both in and out of class, for students to work and play together as peers. Teachers are always available to talk with, or listen to, individual students. We make it clear to all students that we expect kindness and measure how they treat their schoolmates by the Golden Rule. We stress the importance of politeness, curb disparaging

comments and tattling (except in cases of actual danger or serious wrongdoing), and insist that students handle disagreements without resorting to name-calling or physical confrontation. We encourage everyone to welcome new class members, even as we make it clear to the newcomers that they must accept their fellow students and be willing to adopt the established modes of behavior. Teachers are expected to address any unkind acts or words that come to their attention.

The result is a happy atmosphere in which children experience the comfort of belonging and count on encouragement from both schoolmates and teachers. That translates into strong friendships and a sense of institutional identity that carries over into our students' lives outside of school.

DISCIPLINE

The chief advantage that our school enjoys in maintaining a proper learning climate is the personal commitment to individual growth and learning. When this personal approach becomes less than appropriately

effective, a clearly defined disciplinary procedure comes into play. At BCCA, our disciplinary system involves reprimands, demerits, detentions, parent consultations, and corporal punishment regarding the severity of behavior problems and the student's resistance to following the rules of the school. The Parent/Student Handbook provides complete details of the disciplinary system.

All our disciplinary efforts are guided by our understanding of child development and a child's need for structure and order, as well as by our commitment to fulfilling the responsibility that the parents of our students have granted us. We make every attempt to identify any academic or behavioral issues that may be impeding a child's progress or contentment and stay in close contact with parents to anticipate difficulties that might be developing and to remain aware of any special needs or home concerns. Educational theories and pedagogical techniques, while important, are but background to our real mission: the education of small children in the charge of caring adults.

Our acknowledged success demonstrates how much effort we are willing to invest in those children who have become part of the BCCA family. Remember, however, that our ultimate recourse for handling a student who simply will not adapt to BCCA standards is removing that child from our school, either temporarily or permanently, a basic condition upon which we insist. It is crucial both to our ability to provide the kind of quality educational experience we offer and to our institutional identity. We make that clear to all parents who consider placing their children into our care.

PARENT SUPPORT

Close ties between home and school are essential to BCCA's effectiveness. A strong Parents' Association, which helps raise funds for various projects and assists with school programs and special events, plays a vital role in the Academy's academic and social activities. The Parents' Association provides a crucial communication link between parents and the BCCA administration. The association also coordinates the Academy's

library volunteers. Association members meet monthly to plan field trips and other out-of-school activities for the children. They conduct "Measuring Day" for student uniforms, raise funds for library books and playground equipment, and serve an annual end-of-the-year breakfast. The Parents' Association reinforces our community presence and keeps Academy spirit high throughout the year.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The daily opening ceremony bears witness to our strong advocacy of ceremony and pageantry in transmitting principles, strengthening traditions and making children feel part of something greater than themselves. We hold special programs throughout the school year to bring the entire Academy family together in celebration of our institutional life and shared cultural heritage. The presence of parents is an important aspect of these gatherings, which gain strong spiritual overtones through the inclusion of prayers led by the local Christian leaders.

CHRISTMAS

Our yearly Christmas pageant is a highly traditional program involving carol singing and presentation of a classic holiday work. For example, students have performed Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. The Christmas program reinforces the religious messages our students receive in their individual churches and assists parents in cultivating their children's faith.

entrusted to us, realizing that we hold in our institutional hands those journeying through the most impressionable years of their lives. And we teach by action and example that we are indeed a community, that we share common allegiances to God and country, that we care about civility and decorum, and that we are interested in each other's accomplishments.

HONOR CEREMONIES

Three times a year, we recognize the academic achievements of our students with a formal honors ceremony. Certificates are presented to students who have qualified for the Honor Roll, an important note of encouragement to which the children respond enthusiastically.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

The school culture of BCCA keeps the focus on learning, and we cherish the principle of academic independence.

We remain committed to the personal care of the children