

Case Studies of Christian Schools



Johnson Ferry Christian Academy (JFCA)

Marietta, GA

CHURCH:

Johnson Ferry
Baptist Church
(JFBC)

YEAR STARTED:

2004

CURRENT SIZE:

470 K-12 Students

HISTORY:

JFBC considered starting a school about 25 years ago but decided the logistics were too complicated. Soon after, homeschool families in the church started sharing teaching duties and used the church building for classes, so the church formalized what was already taking place and opened a middle school with classes twice a week then added high school grades one year at a time. JFCA established an elementary school in 2015.

MODEL:

JFCA has students in person on Tuesdays and Fridays. Teachers give homework and offer virtual aid on satellite days when students work from home. The school has five full-time and eight part-time administrators as well as 50 part-time teachers. Being part-time, most teachers are exiting the professional sphere or looking to jump into teaching for the first time.

KEY FACTOR FOR THE CHURCH:

The church must desire to be active in fulfilling the Great Commission or the school won't appear as valuable to the congregation.

NOTABLE:

The middle school separates classes by gender, which is the reason some families enroll.



Calvary Christian School (CCS)

Columbus, GA

CHURCH:

Calvary Baptist
Church (CBC)

YEAR STARTED:

1975

CURRENT SIZE:

850 K3-12
Students

HISTORY:

CBC had an elderly congregation in 1975 when a new pastor recognized the need to bring in young families. What began as 13 students in K4 and K5 classes quickly grew to a full-fledged K3-12 school. The church closed the high school in the 1980s to protect sustainability, re-established it a few years later, graduated three students in 1992, and started growing again from there.

MODEL:

CCS is an evangelistic school, so they accept Christian and non-Christian students alike. They make the mission clear so that families can understand what the school is about. CCS is a ministry of CBC and uses the church campus. The headmaster is an ordained pastor and member of the church staff; however, CCS and CBC are separate 501(c)3 entities with their own records and staff.

KEY FACTOR FOR THE CHURCH:

If the school grows and draws in students from outside the church, it is important that the church is supportive of the school as its own entity. Ensuring there is a delineation of dollars, separate accounting, and checking accounts helps parents paying tuition know their money is for their child's education and not the church budget.

NOTABLE:

About 90 percent of the CCS student body is not from CBC, so they prioritize the school board having non-CBC members to give a sense of belonging and responsibility to families who are not a part of CBC.



Eagle's Landing Christian Academy (ELCA)

McDonough, GA

CHURCH:

Eagle's Landing
First Baptist
Church (ELFBC)

YEAR STARTED:

1970

CURRENT SIZE:

1,000 Students

HISTORY:

ELCA was established in 1970 but endured financial struggles. A different, established school tried to incorporate it as a new branch of its own, but the struggles remained. In 1994, ELFBC decided to absorb the school and make it a ministry of the church. The school grew within a few years from 170 students to 593 as the community grew around it. The school uses the same property as the church and now has an enrollment of 1,000 students.

MODEL:

ELCA is an evangelistic school. The school's philosophy is to make sure the ratio is predominately students from Christian families to not be outnumbered but still be evangelistically focused. Some students have come to know Christ through the school then led their families to come to church.

KEY FACTOR FOR THE CHURCH:

The church must see the school as a ministry opportunity and recognize growing pains will occur when managing the relationship between the church and school.

NOTABLE:

Minorities make up 58 percent of the ELCA student body, which has led to increased diversity at ELFBC.



Lancaster Christian Academy (LCA)

Lancaster, SC

CHURCH:

Second Baptist
Church Lancaster

YEAR STARTED:

2021

CURRENT SIZE:

80 K-6 Students

HISTORY:

With attendance numbers down in the aftermath of COVID, the church had unused space and was looking to draw in people from the community. They quickly created and approved a school proposal, and LCA opened in August 2021 with five kindergartners and one teacher. The church began advertising and added a K-4 in the second year with 44 students and three teachers. LCA expanded to K-6 in 2023, accommodating about 80 students and 10 faculty members.

MODEL:

Second Baptist Church considered starting a school in the early 2000s, but it never came together. COVID shifted the landscape, and students doing work from home helped their parents see more closely the public-school curriculum. Those parents began reaching out for a Christian option.

KEY FACTOR FOR THE CHURCH:

The church has close to 3,000 members, and the school is dependent on financial support from the church to offer lower tuition rates.

NOTABLE:

Because it is a newer school, a key for LCA is having a long-range plan for the school to show parents what they're signing their kids up for and to assure teachers that their job will last more than one year. LCA also recommends establishing a parent handbook, student handbook, and discipline policy from the beginning.



Arcadia First Baptist Christian School (AFBCS)

Santa Fe, TX

CHURCH:

Arcadia First Baptist Church (AFBC)

YEAR STARTED:

2012

CURRENT SIZE:

110 K-12 Students

HISTORY:

AFBC initially tried to partner with a church in a nearby town and branch off from their already-established school. That school helped advertise and send out flyers, but nobody came. AFBC later built a new building and tried again on its own. The school opened with 18 students and combined classes covering K-6, adding a grade each year until reaching K-12 status in 2019. After a few years, a nearby church and school closed, funneling those students to AFBCS and roughly doubling its size.

MODEL:

The school shares a space with the church, so classrooms are regularly used for Sunday School classes, church events, and more. Teachers set up and break down classroom items as needed.

KEY FACTOR FOR THE CHURCH:

People from the church who talk about the school regularly in Sunday School classes, small groups, and the community help build awareness for the school.

NOTABLE:

AFBCS is in a small, rural area where most parents work full-time, so investing in private education is a sacrifice for many families.



Foundation Academy

Winter Garden, FL

CHURCH:

First Baptist
Church of Winter
Garden (FBCWG)

YEAR STARTED:

2002

CURRENT SIZE:

1,200 Students

HISTORY:

Foundation Academy reached K-12 status in 2002 but began as a preschool in 1958. The school has grown from 565 students in 2014 to nearly 1,200 students.

MODEL:

Foundation Academy is comprised of three campuses, one of which is at a church that was planted out of FBCWG three decades ago. They have 156 full-time employees and a virtual learning component.

KEY FACTOR FOR THE CHURCH:

The church must act like a parent who takes a loving yet firm leadership role when conflict arises over resources, spaces, and priorities. A vision and passion for Christian education and communication are key to a strong church-school partnership.

NOTABLE:

The school has a spiritual formations director who is employed by the school but guided by the pastor to help extend the evangelical arm of the church deeper into the spiritual mission of the school.



Heritage Christian Academy

Montgomery, TX

CHURCH:

First Montgomery
Baptist Church
(FMBC)

YEAR STARTED:

2017

CURRENT SIZE:

185 Students

HISTORY:

FMBC started a two-day Mother's Day Out program for preschoolers in the 1980s, which expanded to four days in 2015. After that, many parents wanted their children to remain for kindergarten, so they extended each year, grade-by-grade, and started an elementary school. The church also started a homeschool ministry to offer à la carte classes to high school students then expanded to middle school as well.

MODEL:

The pastor also serves as the head of school. The school uses classrooms in the church building throughout the week.

KEY FACTOR FOR THE CHURCH:

Church members have a passion for education and support the school. Many of the teachers are also church members.

NOTABLE:

FMBC encourages all churches to start a Christian school and to co-labor with other area churches to do the same. While starting a Christian school is a gradual process with slow and steady progress, it should be considered by every church with facility space to so do.



Bethesda Christian Academy (BCA)

Durham, NC

CHURCH:

Bethesda Baptist Church (BBC)

YEAR STARTED:

1995

CURRENT SIZE:

210 K-11 Students

HISTORY:

BCA started a kindergarten class in 1995 with the pastor overseeing the school. First grade was added the next year. In 1997, the church added an education building with four classrooms. The plan was to expand through grade five, but families wanted more. Over time, BCA opened a middle school and added 9th, 10th, and 11th grades.

MODEL:

BCA requires students to come from Christian homes, have a pastoral reference, and sign the school's statement of faith to be admitted. This limits the scope of students who could be accepted, but it increases how much the school draws families who want to move away from public schools.

KEY FACTOR FOR THE CHURCH:

A pastor who sees the school as an important part of the church will help the relationship between the two, especially if the church and school share space. Written documentation about who is responsible for what helps manage the relationship between the church and the school.

NOTABLE:

BCA includes students from about 60 different churches.

