

Committed to CHRIST ~ COMMUNITY ~ EXCELLENCE

A Message from Head of School Dr. Duda



There is a war on identity and our children are in the crosshairs.

This week was Mental Health Awareness Week at the Bell School campus, and I had the opportunity to speak to our middle and high school students regarding the connection in research between the healthy formation of identity and long-term mental health. Identity is discovered between the ages of 5 and 14 when children begin to see their unique qualities and strengths as they compare themselves to members of their family, then friends or peers, and eventually members of their larger community. When supported by a healthy home environment and loving community, children are able to see their value and worth that comes from being created in the image of God. Children who discover their identity are more likely to develop a sense of purpose which has been directly linked to fewer instances of mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, or substance abuse.

Fifteen years ago or so, the enemy sought to “steal, kill, and destroy” adolescent mental health and well-being by attacking the sense of purpose in adolescents. We began observing youth who were unclear about what they wanted to do after high school, bouncing from major to major, and some dropping out of college. The cultural norm shifted for the first time in history to children living with their parents until they were 30, getting married at later stages in life, and failing to commit to a career or purposeful living. When the enemy succeeded there, he moved on to our children and began to attack their God-given identity. Today we see school curriculum and cultural messages telling our elementary and middle school students they can decide who or what they are. Both attacks have been targeted and intentional, and both directly impact mental health and well-being.

During a discussion with panel experts in mental health, one of our high school students asked, “Does it ever get better? Does the pain ever go away?” My eyes instantly filled with tears and everything in me wanted to stand up and shout, “YES!! It can get better but only through Jesus Christ!” I was so grateful for panelists who gently shared the same message and proceeded to remind our students that life is hard. They are experiencing real pain. But we have a Lord and Savior who knows that pain all too well and is here to walk us through it.

When I picture Rockford Christian School, I see parents, grandparents, teachers, and leaders linking arms to create a protective wall around our children and young adults. We are linked through a common vision to cultivate biblically-minded students who serve God to their greatest potential and impact the world for Christ. We invest our time, talents, and resources to see students thrive spiritually, excel academically, and live boldly for Jesus Christ. Together, we are making a difference.

Our work matters in the larger context of Kingdom education and all that God has planned for the next generation. I am grateful for you, RC, and I am grateful to walk beside you in this battle.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jahna Duda

Head of School / Interim High School Principal



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Psalm 115:13-15



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Leadership Updates

We are in a season of refining at Rockford Christian and recent leadership announcements are evidence that God is moving, not only in those individual lives, but also within our organization. While such announcements are a source of concern for some, they can and should be viewed as a source of encouragement for all. When you dig into the individual stories, you hear how God has provided for each person and opened doors in areas of passion or purpose. I've observed time and time again, that when the Lord is stirring in one person's heart to leave, He is simultaneously stirring in another heart to come. We have listed and are actively recruiting for the three leadership positions for Head of Upper School (5-12), Head of Finance & Operations (CFO/COO), and Director of Spiritual Life. The Lord is moving, and we will have announcements and updates soon. If you know someone who would be a great mission fit for our organization, please reach out and let me connect with them to share our vision and mission for Kingdom education in Rockford and the surrounding area. Even if God doesn't bring them to RC, they are one more person who knows us and understands what we have been called to do in this region.

Safety & Security Updates

Our school's Crisis Team met this week as part of the quarterly process of reviewing procedures, discussing necessary updates, and planning future improvements to infrastructure and technology. We have completed most of our drills for the 2022-23 school year and, overall, have been pleased with how well those have gone. We have one remaining ALICE drill at the Bell School campus to practice the "E" portion of the acronym and evacuate the building and discuss our reunification location for students and parents to connect. A communication will be sent home prior to that drill so all parents in grades 5-12 are aware of the date and time. In addition to completing our annual drills, the Crisis Team discussed the safety and security updates that were completed since identifying areas of improvement last fall and also created a new list. I understand I am being a bit vague, but have done so intentionally so as to not share all the security features available and/or unintentionally highlight weaknesses. We do have a list of enhancements to be completed through facility funds and donors.

The Crisis Team will meet again over the summer and review a newly-created comprehensive crisis plan that formally documents and expands upon several procedures related to prevention, response, and recovery, including communication protocols that outline when we send intentional communication regarding a crisis, either at school, here in Rockford, or nationally.

If you would like to partner with Rockford Christian regarding strategic improvements, please contact Cheri Smith in the Advancement Office.

Handbook Updates

I will begin updating handbook policies this summer as I will have spent my first year assessing and have identified where adjustments need to be made. One of the areas that will be changing is our dress code policy. Watch for this information to come out in mid-July, and keep this in mind as you begin your back to school preparations.

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