



The KNIGHTLY NEWS

Columbia Christian School • PreK-12th Grade

Back to
SCHOOL!

July & August 2020

Getting Back to Campus



"I don't know which school option is best for my child."

"You should check out Columbia Christian..."

Given the current local and global uncertainties, many families are exploring education opportunities. When you share about your experience and encourage other parents to check out Columbia, you help the school continue to grow and impact the lives of students.

Don't worry, you don't have to know detailed information to make a referral! Simply encourage your friends, neighbors, and co-workers to schedule an Educational Success Consultation with President Vensel to answer all their questions.

Columbia's Safety Committee comprises 12 faculty and staff members who met throughout the summer, making preparations for the anticipated campus reopening of Fall 2020. Collectively, the team spent over 200 hours developing a comprehensive Reentry Operations Blueprint to submit to the local health authorities and the Oregon Department of Education in mid-August.

Due to ever-changing guidelines from the state, the plan was adapted many times. Originally intending to have all students on campus for in-person learning, the team had to make adjustments when guidance was modified by the government in late-July to restrict classroom use – even for small, independent schools like Columbia, until county health metrics for COVID cases are improved.

Despite these unexpected announcements and setbacks, the committee always prioritized the best experience for Columbia students and families. Included in the plan:

- **Columbia will begin school on September 2nd** utilizing Comprehensive Distance Learning (CDL) with plans to implement limited in-person instruction.
- **The in-person option allows the school to bridge CDL with instruction time on campus** to provide better academic support, build educator-to-student relationships, support live peer-to-peer interaction, build school community and culture, increase engagement and attendance, and provide social, emotional, and mental health support. These elements are crucial to the learning process.
- **Columbia will provide families with choice.** When Multnomah County's population meets the health metrics (which would allow Columbia to bring all students back to the classroom for 5-day-a-week instruction), some families will want to continue with CDL. The school supports this choice and will provide synchronous learning for those students.
- **Kindergarten through 3rd grade** will likely be able to return to in-school instruction earlier under metric allowances. It is understood that younger students need access to in-person instruction to build literacy and numeracy skills critical to their continued learning.
- **Classroom accommodations were made** to meet the various needs of class size and quality instruction in support of the 35-square-feet per person requirement. Columbia is dedicated to providing a safe, quality learning environment for the students and families they serve.
- **Teacher professional development** was facilitated throughout the summer to best prepare Columbia faculty for CDL. Trainings were specifically targeted toward practical technology skills to effectively meet the critical needs of educators and students.

As President Ami Vensel shared in one of her encouraging messages to the school community, "It's been an unprecedented year. Yet – the family at Columbia Christian continues to be devoted to supporting our students to thrive and remain faithful as we navigate these challenging times together."

Teacher Technology Training



High school teacher Mr. Kopra participates in technology training in August

Shawn Daley, former Chief Innovation Officer and professor at Concordia University, provided comprehensive technology training for Columbia Christian's faculty in August. Starting with a survey to evaluate the teachers' experiences and abilities, Daley then facilitated multiple zoom sessions focused on digital methods and pedagogy. Segmented into elementary, middle, and high school levels, each teacher group received training in video conferencing components, preparing and presenting digital segments, and utilizing various platforms for distance learning.

Columbia students benefit from the expertise and abilities of their teachers as they connect from the classroom to the home during times of comprehensive digital learning. Parents can be assured that Columbia's faculty are equipped and prepared to effectively instruct through digital methods. The end result is students who are highly engaged and productive learners.

Service: At the ❤️ of Columbia

Though COVID concerns have changed many aspects of the local community, Columbia students still have a passion for helping others. Two examples of their service this summer include:

AGAPE VILLAGE

Several middle and high school students volunteered at a local transitional housing community. Through a couple weeks in July, these kids helped construct, paint, and prepare "tiny houses" for residents looking for a fresh start off the streets.

C3 FOOD PANTRY

Members of the high school volleyball team helped at the C3 Food Pantry in North Portland, which serves hundreds of families each week. The girls worked hard to package food boxes and load them into vehicles as they came through the line.



AP Student Success

Columbia Christian School offers a variety of AP (Advanced Placement), College Credit Dual Enrollment, and Honors courses for high school students. They are pleased to report the success of their AP English Literature students from the past school year – their participants had a pass rate of nearly 90%!

English instructor Mrs. Wetzler shared with the students: "Your hard work, perseverance, and dedication over the last quarter of the school year have paid off. Passing the AP Literature test is no small feat, and I am thrilled for your success. You have demonstrated beyond doubt that you are ready for the rigors of college academic writing and analysis. To put this into perspective, of the approximately 334,000 students who took the test globally, only 60% passed the test. I hope this achievement brings you confidence as you continue your academic pursuits."

COVID Financial Aid

Did you know that Columbia Christian School awards over \$300,000 in need-based financial aid each year? This important ministry enables the school to serve a population of students who come from families of diverse economic backgrounds. Now, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for tuition assistance is greater than ever!

Beyond the typical assistance requests, Columbia's committee is reviewing applications from families who have lost jobs, had significant pay cuts, their unemployment hasn't come through or is inconsistent, their businesses are going under, or a variety of other scenarios. More families are applying for tuition help, and the amounts required to support them are greater.

The school has already gifted over \$29,000 in extra aid specifically to families experiencing hardship because of the pandemic and the goal is to raise at least \$30,000 for this cause. Columbia's Board and administration want to help these families weather this storm so they can keep their kids at Columbia until their situation improves. They are seeking donor support to help bridge the gap to keep these kids at Columbia while their family navigates these challenging times.

Any donation will help. To participate, contact Development Director Jason Housley: jhousley@columbiachristian.com or 503-753-4158.

Sports in the Time of COVID



The school was pleased to announce that Mr. Jared Valentine joined the Columbia staff as new Athletic Director in July. Jared most recently served as the Head Men's Basketball Coach at Warner Pacific University. He holds a Master's degree in Education from Azusa Pacific, and has 12 years of experience as a college administrator. Jared was selected from a pool of 10 applicants for the AD position and he is excited to serve in this new role.

From Athletic Director Jared Valentine:

Hello Columbia Families! I don't know about you, but I'm finding that flexibility and adaptation are critical coping skills for a global pandemic. It seems like we receive changing guidance about how to respond to COVID-19 on a daily basis. In the world of high school sports, the OSAA recently announced a new schedule for competitive seasons. Winter sports will begin in late December and will run to February. March and April will be the new fall sports season, followed by a spring sports season in May and June. While it is a disappointment to not have fall sports beginning in September, I am hopeful that we will get to have a soccer and volleyball season this spring. Furthermore, our coaches are working hard to plan ways to get our student-athletes on the fields and in the gym soon. We will, of course, follow local, state, and national COVID-19 mandates and precautions for any athletic activities.

In Memory of Terry Fields



It was with great sadness that we learned of the recent passing of Terry Fields. Coach Fields served Columbia Christian Schools from 1970 to 1994 in various capacities. He worked as Athletic Director and coached basketball, soccer, and track. He also taught bible, PE, and math classes. He taught a backpacking class one year too!

Coach Fields was a Christian example for many students and athletes. His influence in their lives was palpable and lives on today.

We send our condolences to his wife Chris and his daughters Andrea, Erin, and Alissa.

-Robert T. Gentry, Board Chairman

Vensel's Voice



President Ami Vensel

It's a big deal! As we approach a new school year with the restrictions of COVID-19, parents are desperately looking to find ways to support their child to be successful with online learning. However, let's consider success and what it means to be successful with – or without - distance learning. Might I suggest that the foundation of success is built with attention toward character and stability?

Our students are experiencing the world around them and are filtering emotions and feelings that may include fear, anxiety, and worry. Having support in place (both at home and at school) to help process these feelings is important, and presents an opportunity to help our students cultivate empathy and compassion, resilience and strength – character development. At the very heart of character development is the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Equipping our students to be successful

is with intentional focus on character development – preparing students to be responsible and accountable, passionate and persistent, goal-setters, effective communicators, and people of integrity. It's a big deal!

Columbia's Core Values begin with attention toward fostering a community of relationships; these relationships are essential to ensure positive learning outcomes for every student. Being committed to Columbia Christian provides our students and families with consistency and continuity. With new realities of working from home, temporary unemployment, distance learning, and lack of physical contact with friends and family, Columbia plays a critical role in supporting the whole child – beyond just academic achievement. We understand the importance of the structure for learning and creating a secure environment for developing social skills and peer relationships – even through distance learning. Stability and continuity allow our teachers to know each student on a personal level, to support the needs of the individual learner, and to integrate curriculum through grade levels to avoid redundancy or gaps.

Two years from now, COVID-19 will be a bad memory. Then, the present reality will be how your child is prepared for life – in character, skills, and academics. It's a big deal!



SCHOOL BEGINS WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2nd!



Alumni Spotlight: Robert Gentry, Board Chairman

Robert Gentry joined Columbia's Board in 2019 and currently works as a Certified Public Accountant for Meyers Gentry LLC in Portland. Robert was recently appointed to a leadership position within the group and shares some thoughts about the school and his new assignment:

It was an honor to be elected Chairman of the Board. It was unexpected and humbling after just a short time being a member of Columbia's Board of Trustees.

I first attended Columbia in 8th grade graduating from the high school in 1997. Since that time, I have attended most graduations and auctions and have had a great time watching our basketball team attempt, and sometimes win, the state championship!

As I begin this journey, I am reminded of Columbia's stalwarts who have recently passed: Morgan Outlaw and Chuck Lawrence. This is a significant time for the Board because their legacy is in our hands. We are standing on their shoulders. And by doing so, we stand the tallest.

I've watched the school grow and expand, but at the same time remain true to the simple message that "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so." And as Jesus loves us, we are to love one another. A message that rings true today more than ever. For this reason, choosing a Christian education better prepares our children and young adults to be a guiding light, spreading the message of love, hope, and joy.

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