

WHY LUTHERAN HIGH?

***An examination of the most common concerns
regarding Christian secondary education.***



“Neutral Ground?”

Concern #1

*Isn't a public high school a neutral environment?
Isn't the public school experience good enough?*

First, a disclaimer is needed. Any thoughts shared in this booklet are not intended to disparage the public school system. It is widely acknowledged that many outstanding Christian students, parents, and teachers exist within the public school system doing their utmost to be the 'salt and the light.' Many parents are emotionally attached to their own public education background or their local public high school. These thoughts are not meant to discourage those feelings. The intent is to encourage people to consider, on a more equal footing, the benefits of a Christian secondary education.

Scripturally speaking, the message or worldview espoused by any school CANNOT be neutral. A worldview is either Christian or non-Christian. Christ put it this way, “*He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.*” (Matthew 12:30) Is it realistic to believe that when Christianity is removed from a school that it leaves ‘nothing?’ If the worldview of a school isn't centered in Christ, then something else must assume that role. That something is most definitely a religion of sorts – secular humanism. In today's public high schools, teenagers are often told in some fashion that Biblical principles are irrelevant, that absolute right and wrong do not exist, and/or human existence is due to evolution. Secular education, officially and deliberately, excludes God from the classroom. By doing so, public high schools will inevitably promote, intentionally or not, a non-Christian worldview.

What does this mean? At best, a Christian student in this environment will fight the constant battle of discernment – dissecting what is being presented and avoiding the influence of the humanistic worldview. At worst, a Christian student will entertain non-Christian ideals; mixing them with his or her Christianity resulting in potential strain on their relationship with God.

Granted, much of the life of a Christian is spent in environments that are non-Christian in nature. Discernment of right and wrong while in the world is indeed an important spiritual discipline. However, many teens are not ready for 35-50 hours a week of a message that says, “Your worldview is wrong, intolerant, and/or old-fashioned.” Christian parents have the opportunity to help shape the worldview of their children for Christ.

The average teenager attends school for 8 hours a day, including athletics and other activities. That's 1440 hours per school year and approximately 40% of his or her weekly awake time. That's a big number! The question is where might that time be best spent? Current scientific research tells us that a teenager's brain is not fully developed. An underdeveloped frontal lobe explains certain teenage behaviors like recklessness, emotional outbursts, and poor decision making. Simply put, high school plays a pivotal role in the development of the brain and there is no doubt that it can have an effect on how the brain of a teenager is hard-wired.

The truth is that Christian high schools have the one thing that public schools can never have – the intentional presence of Jesus through His living Word, the Bible, which forms the basis for our Christian worldview. In our high school, we use the Holy Scriptures for:

- **Salvation** – Our students do, with the help of the Holy Spirit, develop a close personal relationship with their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
- **Training** – Our students not only learn daily about God's grace, but also gain the academic skills necessary for success, how to defend their Christian faith, and discover what it takes to thrive as a Christian in today's world.
- **Giving Praise** – Our students learn more deeply of God's goodness for us in life and faith, and are moved to reflect a sense of joy and thanksgiving in all that they do.

At Wolf River Lutheran High School, God's Word is incorporated in the following areas:

- ✓ Daily theology classes
- ✓ Weekly chapel services
- ✓ Academic courses
- ✓ Athletic & extra-curricular activities
- ✓ In the care & concern shown by teachers, staff, & students
- ✓ In all aspects of the school's operation!

“Welcome to the REAL World!”

Concern #2

***Doesn't a Christian high school shelter students from the real world?
Shouldn't teens experience the real world found in public high schools?***

The “sheltering concern” regarding Christian education makes two erroneous assumptions about the spiritual nature of the world in which we live:

1. Teenagers need to experience (or be around) sin to know how to avoid it.
2. A Christian high school is somehow without sin (or does not have as much sin) as a public high school.

Let's start with the first assumption. Scripturally speaking, the Bible does not teach that you should surround yourself with sin 35-50 hours a week and then you'll know how to avoid it. In fact, the Bible makes a clear case for avoiding temptation and evil influences. One need not experience or observe sin to know that it is wrong. As Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 15, *“Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’”* In Proverbs 15, King Solomon states, *“He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.”*

What are proponents of the “real world experience” hoping to accomplish? At best, it could mean subjecting teenagers to unnecessary peer pressure. At worst, teenagers may ultimately be in an environment that will not respect (and possibly denigrate) their Christian faith. The overriding humanistic philosophies of mainstream academia – Darwinism, moral relativism, secular humanism, etc. – WILL have an effect on the development of a teenager's outlook. It is hard to see the logic in subjecting adolescents to unnecessary pressure to abandon the Christian truths that have been instilled in them from Baptism. At a time when teens are most vulnerable to influence, is it really wise to surround them with an increase in non-Christian influences?

As for the second assumption, does enrolling a teenager in a Christian high school mean that they won't have to deal with temptations and other tests of their faith? Unfortunately, that is not the case. Put simply, Christian high schools, including Wolf River Lutheran High School, can have the same problems as any public high school. Anyone who has worked in or attended a Christian school can verify that fact. All of the same issues that arise in other high schools – bullying, drinking, sex, and drugs – can occur in a Christian high school too. So what, then, is the value of a Christian secondary education?

The best benefit lies in the approach to sin – a careful balance of Law and Gospel. Wolf River Lutheran High School students experience temptations like their public schools counterparts – but we use different weapons!

Because Jesus Christ conquered sin on the cross, our spiritual arsenal includes:

- ✓ Reliance upon Word and sacrament
- ✓ Clear delineation of Biblically defined right and wrong
- ✓ Teachers and staff who provide Scriptural Christian advice
- ✓ A supportive environment of fellow believers that promotes growth in Christ
- ✓ An atmosphere that exalts obedience to God's Word
- ✓ Forgiveness given freely
- ✓ Appropriate consequences assigned when actions call for it
- ✓ Recognition of each student as a dearly loved child of God

What is “real world” anyway?

At Wolf River Lutheran High School, our students face real challenges, real expectations, real accountability, and real problems. There is no doubt that our students are in the real world every single day. However, as we are reminded in John 15:19, *“If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but...you are not of the world...I chose you out of the world...”* Therefore, our Lutheran trained teachers, stress the importance of not succumbing to the world's expectations. In short, we encourage our students to be IN the world, but not OF it.

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Romans 12:2

“Go Tell It on the Cafeteria Table!”

Concern #3

Shouldn't Christian teens be witnesses in the public high school system? Aren't Christians called to be the 'salt and the light'?

Witnessing for Christ takes on three basic forms: intentional evangelism, sharing Christ through word and deed, and defending the faith. Ask yourself this, is the average Christian teenager equipped to actively engage in all three types? For example, are they ready to answer questions like these if posed to them by a classmate or a teacher?

- How do you know that God exists?
- Isn't the Bible just a book of legends and half-truths?
- How do you know that Jesus really rose from the dead?
- What right do you have to suggest that Christianity is the only way to heaven?
- Aren't all religions valid? Don't they all end in the same result?
- If your God is so great, why do bad things happen?

Better yet, direct these types of questions to a teenager you know. If his or her answers are slow to come, vague, or sound less than confident, then you might want to consider the possibility that many teens may not be an open witness for Jesus Christ or an active defender of the faith in a secular environment.

A FEW Christian teenagers may well have the gift of evangelism and actively speak of their faith in the public high school setting. For others, their actions and relationships may be an effective Christian model for their peers. Yet, the majority of adolescents will be uncomfortable speaking of their faith or openly resisting peer negative pressure largely because they are undertrained, untested, and discouraged from doing so.

The analogies are endless. We don't send untrained soldiers into combat, we don't call pastors to lead a congregation without first going to the seminary, and we don't let surgeons operate without proving their expertise. Doesn't it seem a little odd that we would send our Christian youth into a non-Christian environment with only the slightest hope of being effective witnesses?

The teachers of Wolf River Lutheran High School are committed and trained to teach their students to be witnesses to others and to better defend their Christian faith effectively in an open marketplace of ideas. The existence of God, the historical reliability of the Bible, Jesus' resurrection, and the validity of Christianity as a proper worldview are topics that are objectively studied within our walls and across all academic disciplines. God's Word is used to educate students as disciples. Our students can then, with the help of the Holy Spirit, be a bold witness and example to their peers and acquaintances both during and beyond their high school years. In fact, you could make the argument that the emphasis of evangelism and proper guidance while attending a Christian high school may increase the likelihood of a teen sharing his or her faith with a non-Christian peer.

Sharing Jesus Christ can be a daunting task even for mature adults. Development as a disciple for Christ is a life-long affair. Therefore, it is important for us as Christians to arm our youth with the tools that they need to adequately defend their faith and spread the Gospel. It is vital to live the words of St. Peter in 1 Peter 3:15, *“But in your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give a reason to anyone who asks for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”*

Wolf River Lutheran High School believes that a Christian education through 8th grade, the successful completion of Confirmation, and regular participation in personal Bible study are all valuable steps in the spiritual maturation process. However, we also firmly believe that a Christ-centered secondary education can prove invaluable to both student and family and is capable of strengthening the mind and soul of any teen – Christian or not.

“...[R]eprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

2 Timothy 4:2-5

“I Can’t Afford It”

Concern #4

Isn’t a Christian high school too expensive?

It is true that Christian education comes with a price tag. Lutheran high schools across the country range in tuition from \$2,500 to \$15,000 per school year. Spread out over ten school months, it can mean a commitment of \$250 to \$1,500 a month for a single student. Consequently, a family that otherwise sees the potential value of a Christian secondary education is reluctant to pursue the opportunity assuming that the cost is prohibitive. Fortunately, this obstacle isn’t always as daunting as it first seems.

Wolf River Lutheran High School, like most Christian schools, doesn’t rely solely upon tuition to pay the bills. To do so would make enrollment too expensive for virtually any family. In fact, the average cost to educate one of our students exceeds \$13,000 and yet our current tuition rates are only \$3,900 for students of association churches and only \$4,900 for non-association students. The remainder of the income is generated through church association dues, donations, adopt-a-student sponsors, fundraisers, etc. To be blunt, you get far more than you pay for even if you pay full price.

The best news is that MOST families don’t pay full price! We want Christian education to be available to anyone who wants it, so we aggressively work to provide financial assistance to any family that is willing to formally apply and qualify for a reduction in tuition. We also offer interest free payment plans, paid-in-full discounts, work service credits, and multiple child discounts to help ease the burden.

Even with assistance, the tuition amount may still seem discouraging, especially when public schools *seem* to be free. How does a family get past this? A positive attitude can be the key. When something becomes a priority, it is easier to find a plan to make it work. If you believe that a Christian high school education is important in the academic and spiritual development of a child then sacrifices in other areas become more acceptable and realistic. It isn’t always easy, but tens of thousands of families across America find a way to make it work year after year. A little thought and creativity can go a long way. There are countless ways to adjust spending habits like adjusting cell phone or cable television packages or eating out less...just to name a few. Former Lutheran high school parents confirm this fact:

“Sure we had to make some sacrifices, but the struggle was well worth it. My kids worked summer jobs and set aside a portion of it for their tuition. We found little ways to cut cost and I can confidently say that I felt they were ready academically AND spiritually for life after high school. It was hard to write that check every month, but as I look at my kids now...I wouldn’t do it any differently.”

– Mother of three Lutheran high school graduates

“I came up with every excuse under the sun to justify not sending my kids to a Christian school. However, when I really was honest with myself, I had to admit that I didn’t want to sacrifice my way of living and some of the things that I wanted in life for the good of my children. I eventually began to view the decision as a potential investment for the academic and spiritual welfare of my boys. This change of attitude made it much easier to make it work.”

- Father of two Lutheran high school graduates

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Matthew 6: 25-33

“Bigger is Better, Right?”

Concern #5

Isn't a bigger school better?

The nation is full of large and impressive looking high schools, both public and private. A quick tour through some of the area high schools will reveal beautiful gyms, weight rooms, auditoriums, cafeterias, and labs. It seems only natural that parents would take one look around at the facilities, programs, classes, and activities that a larger public school has to offer and think, “That’s what we want for our son or daughter.”

For smaller parochial schools, like Wolf River Lutheran High School, it is nearly impossible to compete with the endless stream of resources (tax dollars) that a public high school can pour into its programs and facilities. So in the face of that kind of competition, why would anyone choose a smaller, Christian school? Ask yourself this, “What’s more important...an impressive laundry list of facility features and activities or a spiritually nurturing atmosphere?”

The truth of the matter is that, in time, it is possible to have both! Many Lutheran high schools have started with nothing more than a handful of students and a borrowed building. With God’s help, Wolf River Lutheran High School will increase in enrollment and add programs and facilities that rival the best public schools. Countless Lutheran high schools have experienced similar growing pains only to grow and become regionally and nationally recognized for academic excellence, win state championships in sports, offer valuable services to their communities, and produce well prepared students year in and year out, all while maintaining a focus on Jesus Christ. In fact, the only real obstacle to achieving many of these goals is having a larger student body. To that end, we take steps every day to make WRLHS more attractive to area families. We need your support too!

Even at our current size, WRLHS provides advantages that a larger public high school simply cannot:

✓ **Students are less likely to get lost in the shuffle**

Our teachers and administrators know all of the students in the building. That kind of intimacy can be a key to the academic and spiritual development of a student. WRLHS is dedicated to making connections with all students. Relationships, not facilities, are what make a school excellent.

✓ **Class sizes are smaller**

Instead of class sizes of 30 or more that can be found at larger schools, most Christian schools have class sizes that are in the 15-20 range on average with many advanced courses having even smaller class sizes.

✓ **Opportunities to participate in extra-curricular are greater at WRLHS**

Simple math dictates that a student’s odds of “making a team” or “getting a part” are better if they are competing against fewer people. Beyond that, smaller teams and greater opportunity to actively participate in other extra-curricular activities means that a higher percentage of students are actively involved. Put simply, at WRLHS, it is easier to get involved and have a quality experience outside of the classroom.

✓ **We are a family**

At a smaller school, students, parents, and teachers feel as if they are part of community in which they can take pride and have input. People know each other and relationships become the foundation for excellence. A caring, Christian environment that values each student as a special child of God is a wonderful thing. When that environment is small enough that kids do not get lost in the shuffle, it’s even better.

✓ **We have serious plans to grow - including construction of a new school**

We recognize that our current building isn’t quite what we need it be so we are in the readiness phase of a capital fundraising campaign to raise funds to build a new school on the south side of Shawano. The school will be built at the intersection of WI-22 and WI-29 on 25+ acres of land already owned by the school. This proposed structure will not only better meet the needs of our current student body, but provides plenty of potential regarding future growth and needs.

“A Little Perspective Can Go a Long Way”

Concern #6

Shouldn't a teenager be able to choose which high school to attend?

One of the toughest challenges faced by any parent is balancing the desire to make their child happy and doing what is in their child's best interest. Simply put, teenagers often have issues with decisions their parents make, including decisions related to choosing the right school. For instance, friends are extremely important to the average 13-14 year old. It is not surprising that they would want to do what their friends are doing and go where their friends are going. High school can be a scary proposition in the best of situations and going into a new environment with their best friend at their side can be very appealing and puts pressure on parents to give too much weight to that fact.

While there is nothing inherently wrong with seeking a child's thoughts on all manner of decisions, included school choice, it is ultimately up to the parents to determine the most appropriate course of action. When such a decision goes against the child's will, scripture reminds everyone that parents have the ultimate responsibility of doing what is best even if the decision isn't a popular one.

As for the potential loss of friends, the reality is that teenage social circles are constantly evolving...even attending the same school is no guarantee of a life-long friendship. Personalities change, priorities change, and needs change, all of which can drastically impact a teen's social outlook for better or for worse. Besides, they can and will stay in touch with their existing friends wherever they may go, by hanging out after school and on the weekends, texting, and talking on the phone, but they will make new friends as well. In some ways, in fact, closer, more meaningful friendships are easier to find in smaller, Christian schools like Wolf River Lutheran High School.

Concern #7

Aren't public schools better choices for the athletically talented?

This objection to Christian education is born out of a fear that athletes at a smaller Christian school won't receive the quality of coaching and skill refinement that a larger public school can provide and/or that their talent could go unnoticed or underdeveloped. Neither of these fears is justified.

If an athlete has Division I talent, it doesn't matter where he or she goes to high school. The scouting and recruitment programs at colleges today must search all high schools to find talent. The competition is fierce for the best players – no matter where they go to school. To think that a talented player would go “unnoticed” is to believe that major colleges and universities aren't exhausting every avenue to find talent. A recent example is Sam Dekker, graduate of Sheboygan Lutheran High School, who stars for the Wisconsin Badgers, and is projected to be drafted high into the NBA someday. However, rare is the true “blue-chip” prospect. Therefore, athletes **MUST** market themselves with the help of their high school and high school coaches. The web is full of college recruitment services that help players and parents market their son or daughter. Personal attention is where Christian high schools excel.

Smaller Christian high schools are often better connected to Division II, Division III, and NAIA colleges. Since those types of schools must recruit outside of the large public high schools to find talent and stay competitive, they look to smaller schools to fill their teams' rosters. Hundreds of Lutheran high school athletes each year are offered generous scholarships and opportunities to continue their athletic careers in college as a result.

Most Christian schools have quality athletic programs. They establish top-notch facilities as funds allow. They have talented coaches who are coaching at a smaller high school, not because they don't have the ability to coach elsewhere, but because they are dedicated to serving Christ. WRLHS is headed down that path as our student body grows.

Parents are often self-deceptive about the athletic abilities of their child. That statement may seem harsh, but according to NCAA statistics, on average less than 5% of all high school athletes fill a freshmen roster position at ANY level of NCAA athletics. This means that an athlete must be better than 95 out of every 100 seniors in the country to make an NCAA roster. Those athletes receiving scholarship money is even less. At WRLHS, we try hard to keep athletics in the proper perspective and urge our athletes, and their families, to do the same.