

Report about Escola Crista Joao Calvino – November/December 2009

Dear brothers and sisters,

This is the last report with regards to 2009. In this report we will concentrate ourselves in only two mainly activities: the participation in a course about Organizing and Developing a Christian School, held in November on Sao Paulo city and about our school year end, which held in December 18th.

Participation in a course about Organizing and Developing a Christian school

From the beginning of our school Project, we craved to be a real Christian school and not only because the name. Since when we heard that the Mission had an interest in help us in opening of a Christian school, we try to work so that that could become reality.

At first, it sounds a little bit strange that the interest arose from a Mission and not from the church's families itself. This can be justified by the context of that time: a church with few members, consequently with few children, and above all, we should taking into consideration the simplicity of the members, who don't have a any vision about the importance and impact of a Christian school in our church. Even thus, the project gave its first step. We strive to hire only professionals from Reformed churches, this is that our administrator came from Recife and our first coordinator came from Curitiba. We started our project with great care and reasonably organized. Some researches were made with regards to the organizational area; we created our Politic Pedagogic Plan (PPP), our Regiment, establishing how would be the discipline rules, meetings, parents participation, etc. All this was done with great effort, but we can say that, in spite of this, we didn't think properly about what would be the proportion of starting such project, still more a school which has a so heavy adjective: Christian!

During the years, we were seen by our community, and even by some members of the Secretariat of Education as a very well organized school. We were seen as a serious school that worries itself with education, but each time more, we heard words like: "worldview", "Christian perspective", "aroma of Christ", etc. Each time more, those words were present in our lives. We received excellent courses by teacher Apko Nap and also we could participate in a conference about "Including the Bible on the school curriculum".

We continued strong on the proposal of progress, because we admitted the concept that a school is not Christian only because the staff are members from the church, or because devotional moments with the students, singing and praying. It is something bigger than that.

In order to seek support for this task, in search of this knowledge to be developed and solidified, we join the International Association of Christian School. It is an interdenominational association, with the goal of supporting Christian schools, offering workshops and conferences, and also pedagogic material with Christian perspective. The current executive board is chaired by a Presbyterian minister of recognized doctrinal firmness, the Dr. Mauro Meister. Taking into consideration that the courses are organized in distant states, we had never participate in a course. But

we received a folder of a course about Organizing and Developing a Christian school. We were quite curious, because although we already had started our project, we felt as crawling in our task. We find support to send one person to participate in that course.

The course gave us a basic knowledge, but at the same time, it was able to provide a wide vision about what is a Christian school. In only two days of conference we could have enough material to reflect about what we should look for in our practice.

The first feeling was: why didn't we have such course before starting our project?! As the theme of the course itself says, the goal was to teach what is needed to *start* and to *develop* a Christian school:

Organizing a school:

Documentation

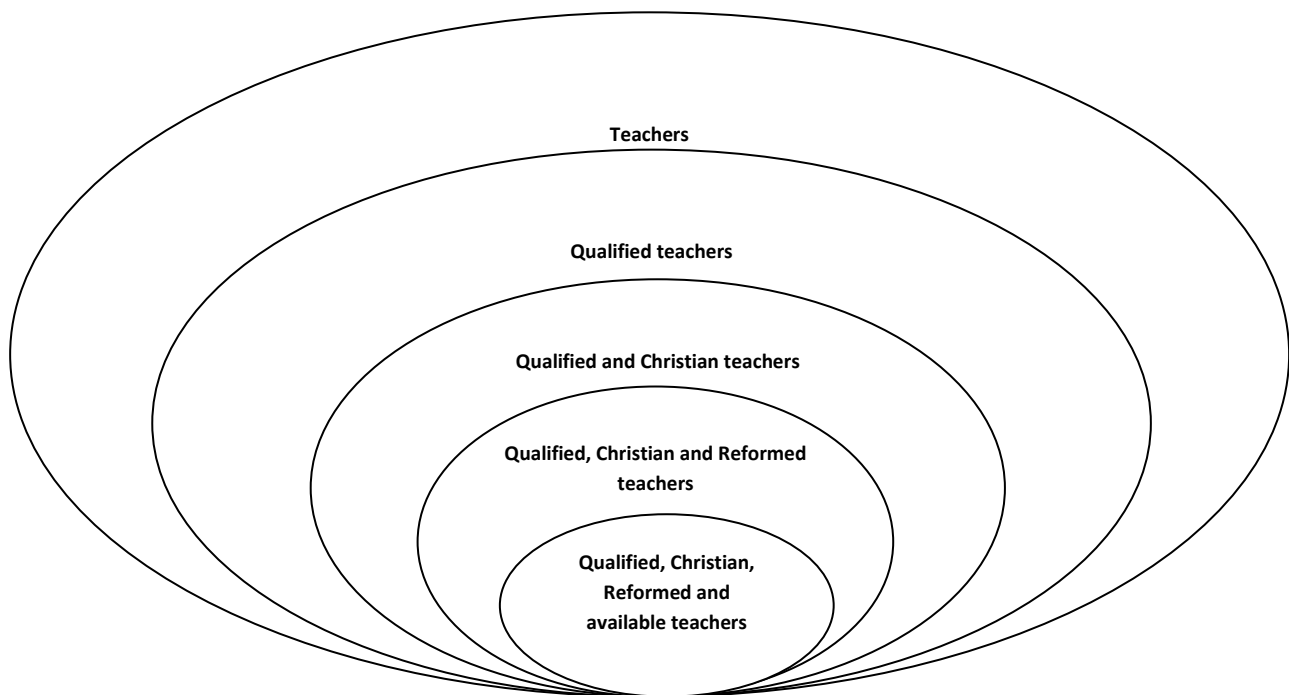
It is necessary to develop the school documentation with a clear and concise writing about the mission and vision of the school. This mission and vision will determine: **What is the school? What does it do? Why does it do? To whom does it do?** It is fundamental to have a clear document about this, because it will serve as a north to all the educative practice in the school. Parents, students and workers should submit to the school purpose, otherwise, they simply will find themselves in the wrong place.

Thinking on this, we verified that we need to dedicate urgent time to our school documentation (internal rules and Politic Pedagogic Project), because if we really want to be a Christian school which exhale the fragrance of Christ, we should be clear also in our documentation. In the time when we wrote those documents, we made lots of researches, but we were not able to find a proper material. Anyway we adapted some of ours researches and we create our own documentation. Today, we think to be the time to evaluate and modify the material, so that it can reflect the essence of what drives us to work with Christian education, which is to prepare the citizen to God's glory.

Hiring workers

After done this documentation part, it is necessary that the school have Christian workers. How could the goals of a Christian school be reached if their staffs don't assume their purpose? In this point it was showed an example that shows how difficult is to find qualified, believers and Reformed workers. The next figure shows that:





Look how the circle decreases each time more according to the demands. The shortages of professionals of the education in our churches draw attention. Those ones who are qualified and experienced are already using their gifts in public or federal schools, where the wages and the stability are bigger. And is even more worrying when we talk with the youth where almost the majority of them want to concentrate their gifts in preparing themselves to make the test to work in the public are to have bigger salaries and stability. Although we can understand their thoughts, it is worrying about the future of Christian education (reformed), while the people don't want to work in this area. The government itself has difficult to find teachers who really are engaged with the education. This can be justified by the disparity of salaries between those ones who work in education and those ones who worked in other kind of public or federal work. Newly, the TV presented a very beautiful advertisement about the teacher occupation, showing that in all countries that has developed over the last ten years, invested heavily in education. At the end of the advertising they made a call: **"be a teacher"**. A very convincing advertising, if it was not the following advertising about **opening a public competition to work in the federal police; vacancies for various positions for graduated people; starting salary in R\$ 7.000,00 (seven thousand reais monthly) (about 4000 CAD)**. Even someone who loves teaching can be very seduced to do that test even going to a different area where he or she doesn't feel vocation. In the educational area happens that hardly ever someone can survive only work in education. Normally a teacher has to teach in different schools, sometimes working three periods a day, having to work with a set of ten school records (and even thus, earning 3 or 4 times less than in a federal job with 30 hours of seminal work), or you can work in a public job during the day, and teaching during evenings. This also happened in our middle and what can we do? Of course we don't have condition to pay big salaries to maintain our teachers. And also, we cannot accept teachers who

accept our salaries, but who don't feel vocation to love and teach the children who are entrusted to us. That is more one strong item to put in our pray! May God send us committed people with education not because the salary, but despite of it. And that we can have in high consideration those ones who can let go of tempting proposals to dedicate their gifts in this work, even if we don't have conditions to retribute them financially.

Developing of a school

Worldview and Education

A school who named itself as Christian can have the better physical and equipments structure; it can have a very qualified staff, being member of the church and even paying big salaries; it can have its documentation very well organized, etc., but if the school doesn't have the real sense of its purpose and in its practice doesn't show consistency with what it preaches, this school will not be more than a common school, where parents bring their children, where lessons are taught and where people come in and come out. What defines a Christian school is not what she says to be, but mainly what she does. In this aspect we have been confronted constantly and even more after studying a little bit more about worldview. In truth, since the Congress for Christian teachers, held in Aldeia-PE, last year, we had opened our eyes about the spirit which has to rule in our practice. In that time, the classroom was analyzed as a holy place, where the name of God must be glorified in our educative practice, such it is in the church. We quite agreed with that. We don't consider that the students who come to us are here at random, but we believe that God Himself send them to us. They are talents that the Lord gives to His servants and later will come to ask for returns.

The study about worldview and education is very urgent to our educative practice, because it is our way of seeing the world that will determine what we do, why we do and to whom we do, and here we are not talking only about establishing our mission and vision, but we are talking about essence. Our worldview is defined by our presupposition: basic ideas, motivations, values and beliefs. As it was taught in the speech, "these things work as a basis or foundation which sustains our building of information and knowledge." Dr. Meister taught us that our presuppositions are made primarily by two sources: **1) the fundamental religious source**, which is independent of social contact. They are the religious disposal of our hearts. For example: everybody is conceived in sin and naturally predispose to rebel against God and His word; this quite affect its worldview; **2) the psycho-social source**, which is acquired over the time, through the first experiments and social contacts. It is based in these two basic sources that a person will try to answer the great questions from the humanity: from where we come?; to where we are going?; what is right and wrong?; etc. (SPEECH)

Every human being is endowed by its presuppositions: teachers, but also parents and students. Between that tangles of presuppositions, it is very important that the school will be very well strong about its essence, that is, the reason of its existence. If that was not clear, it will be normal that parents, students and even the teachers and staff will want transform the school according to their thoughts. So who we are? What do we do? Why do we do it? To whom do we do it?

Before answer these questions, there are some fundamental teachings that help us to establish the Christians personal presuppositions and that may base the existence of a Christian school:

According we learned in our studies, the mankind was created to the glory of God. God put him as a crown of the creation and from the beginning called them to explore, discover and develop the potentials of the creation. (Gn 1.27-28; 2.15-20). The Theology name that as **Cultural Mandate**. Culture, then, is something which comes from God, but we shouldn't forget that, because the fall, the culture started to suffer distortions and disorder raised by the mankind himself. Taking this that into consideration, when we are talking about culture, it is need to establish a differentiation between the potential ordained by God and the mankind participation. To the potential ordained by God we named as **Structure** and to the cultural aspect which involves the human participation we named as **Direction**. **Structure** are the laws created by God in its various manifestations (natural, social, moral and cultural). – Isaiah 28.23-29; Romans 13.1-2; Geneses 1.21-24; Ephesians 5.22-33 and 6.1-4. **Direction** is the calling gave by God to the mankind to develop the culture to His glory. The fall of the mankind didn't destroy the **structure** established by God, the proof is the fact that Cain and his descendent continued developing the culture, although, because de fall and its consequence to the mankind, such direction was quite affected and then directed with disorder and apostasy (Gn 4.1-2; 19-22). (SPEECH)

Another knowledge that we cannot despise is that according to the Bible, the task of educating belongs to the parents. It is their responsibility to take care of the education of their children. Thus, the school enters in that process, but as a helper to the parents in this task. Indeed, the correct would be that the school can teach, but under the parents supervision. This model, however, is not followed, because the great majority of the parents think the school simply as a service provider, whose main interest is to raise money for knowledge or information that are passed on to their children. Although we defend that the correct functional model of teaching in a school is under the parent's supervision, in our situation, there is an aspect that should be taking into consideration, because we are a "mixed" school, that receive unbelievers, thus, we cannot allow that parents who don't understand and don't defend the philosophy that justify (found) our school, will be supervisors in it. This way, it is indispensable that the school establish in a clear manner what it offers and how works the relationship between parents, students, teachers and anyone involved in the school. Indeed, the school provides a kind of educational service, but with what purpose?

Other fundamental truth is that we find ourselves, naturally in rebellion against God, until the moment that He, by His grace and mercy takes us from the mire of sin and grants us a new life. This new life, however, although free from the slavery of sin, shows yet remnants of our sinful nature and that is why we are constantly fighting against our old nature. While we were prisoners of our sinful nature, actually, we were diverted of our cultural mandate, so, we were giving a disordered and distorted direction with regards to the divine purpose to the culture. Once freed, God enables us to redirect the culture according to the structure created by Himself, which we can find described in His Holy Word.

So, then, we are already able to answer consistently the questions made at the beginning (Who we are?; What do we do?; Why do we do it? And To whom do we do

it?), though, it not means that new knowledge will not be allowed to be added to this answer:

(Who we are?) We are a Christian school, composed by educators, biblically trained, **(What do we do?)** who aims to assist the parents in their task of educating, trying to redirect their children through training based on a Biblical worldview, developing them in their moral, intellectual and spiritual aspects, **(Why do we do it?)** so that they will be full citizens **(To whom do we do it?)** to the glory of God.

We consider that this line of thought should move us from now on. We know that we still need to progress in this area and we accept help. But we are convinced that the Christian education must be faced as a mission, as a ministry, and not only as a structure that receives people and provide educational services.

Few days after arriving from Sao Paulo, we accomplished a lecture with all our staff with approaches about the seriously of our project and our commitment with God through this project.

Our pray is that the same God who started this good work in us, may improve it, so that His name will be glorified.

Closing of the school year 2009

In December we concentrated ourselves in preparing the closing of the school year: tests with the students, printing their notes, organization of the closing party. Although we are used with that kind of activities, we used to stay a little bit anxious. Not because the activity itself, but because we were wanting the school year end, so that we could rest after lots of challenges. But this moment is a very special moment, mainly because more one time is time to say goodbye to the children from grade 5. More one time is a moment to have lots of questions about them: Have we reached our goals? Have we given a good base to those children? What will happen with them? Where are they going to study? Will they adapt easily in other schools? Questions, questions, and more questions!

How hard is this moment! Even when I am writing, I can feel something strange. God has given us those children so that we can care them. Those children saw us every day; they were in our prays; they talked with us daily, and now... it is time to give the next step. We remembered Joao Victor, who arrived in our school being a very small boy. He was the more weeping student that Escola Crista Joao Calvino had. He cried so much that his mother had to stay in the school with him during some days. Five years before, there is Joao Victor, smiling, saying that he is ready to face with a new school.

We can see Jessyca Dayanne, who although being the most smiling and cheerful of her class, was able to cry and ask her teacher to reprove her, so that she would not go to other school. Each student has their story, but each of them is part of ours.



Our closing part was accomplished in the same form as the last years. Together, we celebrate Christmas with the children. Each grade made a presentation. The Grade 4 played about the true Christmas. The children are very nimble in their presentation. We had also a special moment with Grade 5. They sang a hymn, but also honor all the staff of Escola Crista Joao Calvino. They by themselves composed a letter and give presents to everyone. (Finally I received a gift, because normally, only teachers, Celia and Everaldo received presents).



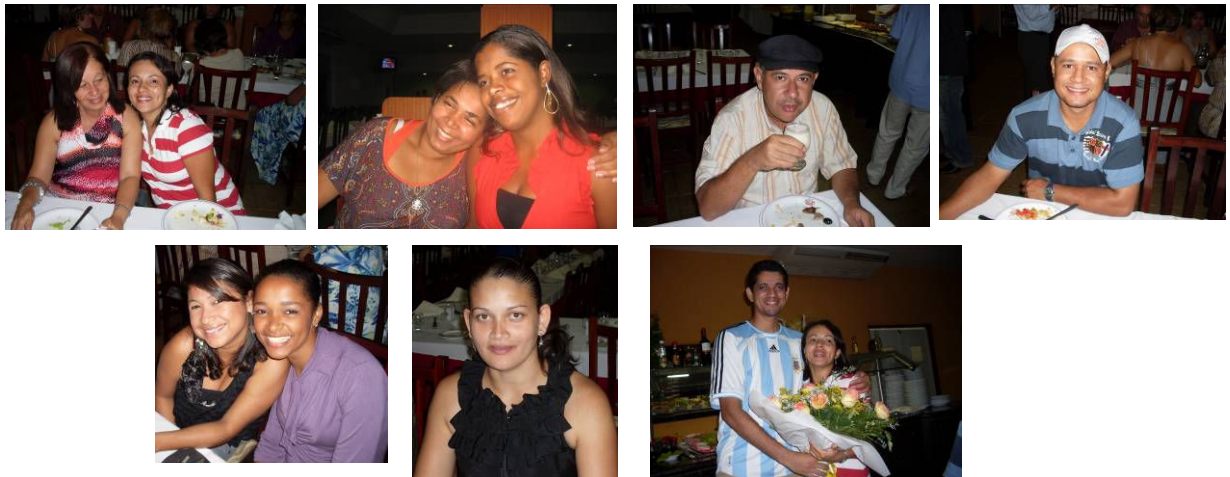
Well, as usual, we used to give Bible to the children from Grade 5, because our desire is that they will not step their walk and that they will remember that the Word of God is light to our pass. Beyond, we prepared a surprise to them: a slide presentation with pictures of them when they started studying with us. It was very moving.



During all the year, lots of mothers asked us why we don't have the following grades, mainly the mothers from children from grade 5. But that kind of questions multiply in the end of the year. Not only children cry saying goodbye, but also the parents crying saying to us that we must continue accomplishing this fine work. Even during the year we had some difficult with the parents, they know that we really love their children and worried with them.

Fraternize with the staff

One day after the closing party, we accomplished our moment with the staff to celebrate the school end. All the staff went to a barbecue restaurant. In truth, we would have to work in the following week, because we still have to finish the teaching plans to 2010. But we preferred to gathering before this, because there are some teachers that are fast in finishing their job, and so we can free them earlier.



Changing the staff

Before starting our annual plan, we had to give some information that took the employees in surprise. The first information was about the resignation of Celia. Celia sent her resignation to the Board of Church. She will not more work with us. In truth, although that solicitation of Celia brought us some surprise, we were already waiting for that moment, because from beginning she was clear in saying that her goal was to help and not to stay as a worker during lots of years ahead. Even if we take into consideration that she is a wife of a missionary, it is clear that a day would come that she would have to go away. The chosen year was 2010.

We are very grateful to Celia for her dedication and entire involvement in this project. For her it was not important only work 20 hours a week. She donate herself to this project, to the children. She intervned in every conflict in our school and had strength to deal with the situations. Today she is apart of our school, but only about the entailment work, because she continue helping us if we need. She also was clear that she would continue serving the Lord through education and would start a project to teach how to write and read to children who are out of the school.

May God bless the projects of that beloved sister and may she be an instrument of blessings to proclaim God's word through education.

Taking into consideration Celia's resignation, the Board of church started to investigate how to continue the work in the school. Nowadays, the structure was shared between two leaders getting the responsibility by the project: one stayed with the financial part (also the part of school secretariat) and other stayed with the pedagogic part. After the consultant in September, the board of church is wanting to define the school structure with only one general director. It would be responsible by all the aspects of the work in the school, but being supported by the pedagogic coordinator and per a new worker who would be responsible only by the secretariat work. With this in mind, the board of church started work to have a new principal as soon as possible.

Another notice was about teacher Taglianne. Her contract with us finished at the end of this year 2009, and we preferred to not continue with her. We had a friendly talking with her, thanking by the help and stimulating her to continue strengthen herself in the church and to invest in the educational area, so that she will

acquired experience. We had already took that decision in November and we started researching the possibilities to hire a new teacher. In the next report, we will write a little bit more about our staff.

Annual plan week and holidays

It is time to start the annual plan. The grades were organized and we met intensely to finish our plans to 2010. The teachers were very dedicated to this task and started fast to write their notes. Although tired, every one finished its plans easily and so went on holidays to see their dear families in other states.

But one of our teachers went to a very unforgettable holidays. Teacher Eneilza, received a gift of a friend of hers, who lives in France: a round trip ticket to France. Taking into consideration that it is about a different and special kind of trip, Eneilza talked with us and we decide to free her until the end of March, so that she can seize this opportunity. Everything was organized while he will be absent. The lessons on her grades will be shared by Everaldo and Celia, who yet offered herself to help. Eneilza was very happy with that, because she will be enjoying her pompous holidays without worries, because their students will be in good hands.

Amount of students

The school year 2009 started with 88 students. Our capacity would be 96, but we couldn't fulfill the vacancies. Lots of parents came to confirm the interest in the vacancies, but they didn't come to register their children. During the year, some children transferred to other school. Some of them found a vacancy in the public schools; other ones moved to another area or city. We finished our school year with 78 students.

Next year (2010) we will act stronger to try to fulfill each place in our school. Mainly if we take into consideration that we received a donation to by special chairs, which will make possible to increase the total number of students from 96 to 120. This way, we will be able to increase our contribution to the budget 2010 from 25 to 30%.

Next year will be a year of discussing about how will continue the support model to Escola Crista Joao Calvino. While the donors are thinking about this, we also will try to contribute with solutions that aim at the good of this project.

May God bless all the people involved in this task.

This report is available in this website:

www.irbmaceio.com.br/ecjc/atividades.php

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