

## **Annapolis Area Christian School Agency History**



### **Early History**

In 1970 a group of parents (primarily Evangelicals) met and decided that they wanted to create a school. The Annapolis Area Christian School (AACS) began at Severna Park Presbyterian Church (Presbyterian Church of America), an Evangelical Church. Many of these parents were professors at the U.S. Naval Academy. They wanted to form a Christian alternative to the non-Christian public school. Thus, AACS originally started as a ministry.

The Severna Park Campus was closed during the late 1970s and one group of parents moved to form AACS and the other group of parents formed Wyebridge Academy, which was founded on classical principles and the teaching of the classics. One of the major factors that contributed to the split was the downgrading of the ministry. AACS was originally founded as a ministry and an Evangelical outreach.

The parents that continued with AACS wanted to develop an academically sound school that was based on Evangelical principles. However, many of the parents that went with the Wyebridge School felt that AACS compromised Evangelical principles. Moreover, the parents that left to form Wyebridge School believed that the AACS group was too liberal.

The AACS that emerged formed a lower school on Bestgate Road in Annapolis, a middle school located at Annapolis Presbyterian Church (PCA) and a sister church to Severna Park Presbyterian Church and a high school located in Severn. The doors of Annapolis Area Christian School opened in 1971 with three teachers and thirty-two students (grades K-3). The school flourished and grew, reaching a milestone in 1985 when twelve students had the distinction of becoming the first graduating class from the high school.

Three decades after those initial meetings, the School feels that God's direction and blessing have resulted in AACS growing into a robust community of learning that is setting a standard for Christian education. A faculty of 110 runs a complete college preparatory program of rigorous academics, enhanced with electives and extracurricular activities for nearly 1000 students (Pre-

K through grade 12) on now three campuses. The third campus was made possible by a gift of land.

The pattern of instruction at AACCS centers upon the Bible as the highest authority of faith and life. Recognizing that its educational responsibility is conducted in the context of the broader Christian community, the School accepts several of the Church's general confessions of faith as standards of Christian doctrine, namely, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Philadelphia Baptist Confession. Standing on this foundation of biblical truth, the School concentrates on the unique task of developing both the art of teaching and an integral Christian curriculum.

### **Current Situation**

Each School has its own Principal and a Superintendent, David Castle oversees the overall operation. The School moved through 3 phases:

**Phase I:** AACCS was small and met in PCA churches –it had a more grassroots flavor – having been founded by Naval Academy Professors.

**Phase II:** AACCS became more professional; raised money and built its middle and upper schools.

**Phase III:** Hired David Castle – he is attempting to continue its professional footing and raise the academic standards of the school.

David Castle believes that he is helping to improve the quality of education at the School by paying teachers higher salaries, demanding more from teachers, and improving academics. AACCS remains a Christian School, but it is not primarily an Evangelical School. Instead, it is a private school that stresses academic excellence and is also Christian based. David Castle is very proud of the fact that AACCS serves people from many different Christian denominations and backgrounds.

A Board composed of parents and faculty oversee the school. The board acts as any other school board would operate. David Castle presents a report to the board regarding basic

matters of administration and the board accepts the report and/or requests that certain points be further addressed.

A faculty of 110 runs a complete college preparatory program. The School which includes Pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade has 1000 students in attendance. Currently, AACCS is developing a \$90,000 student athletic center located at the Upper School. Thus, AACCS wants to become competitive in academics, but also offer a comprehensive sports program. The continued expansion of AACCS is David Castle's primary mission.

AACCS is truly an independent school that receives financial support from tuition, parents and interested parties- the Van Lumina Foundation provides the School with gifts of close to \$2,000,000. The Van Luminal Foundation supports private schools that are educational leaders. David Castle is proud of this achievement.

Tuition at AACCS is \$11,900 per year. AACCS enrolls approximately 1,000 students per year, which means the school's operating budget is about \$119,000,000. This budget is augmented by occasional grants and donations. Teachers at the School start out at \$33,000 and move to \$45,000 for a 10 month contract. David Castle is attempting to make AACCS competitive with other private schools and some public school systems in terms of teacher pay.

### **Conclusion and Summary**

David Castle is moving the school towards greater professionalism and higher academic standards. AACCS is very popular in the local area among more conservative Christian families; although, AACCS is nondenominational and wants to maintain this stance. It is not connected to a church and takes no direction from a church. It appears that AACCS is poised to continue its emphasis on professionalism and high educational standards.



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