

## STUDENT DISCIPLINE

### Bible-based: Habits of the Heart

The temptation of even Christian schools is to create elaborate systems of rules and consequences. This makes students happy because they know precisely how to win praise and to avoid punishment. This makes teachers happy because it is relatively simple to administer. This makes parents happy because it apparently provides a safe, secure school environment for their children. The Paideia School will resist this temptation in our disciplinary program as described in this handbook and as implemented on our campus.

The problem with school discipline systems that merely focus on rules and consequences is that they deal only with actions and never get to their underlying attitudes. This is the Biblical equivalent of living under Law instead of Grace. This may bring about shallow, short-term changes in behavior, but it will not bring about the deep, long-term changes in character we desire. We cannot ask of the Law what only Grace can do: “For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering” (Romans 8:3).

In student discipline, the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23). Teachers, parents, and students must all come to recognize that the world’s biggest battle is fought on the world’s smallest battlefield: a child’s heart. There are many spiritual and psychological realities that factor into a child’s decisions, character, and destiny. These include the image of God in his soul, his fallen human nature, the deceitfulness of sin, the frustration of mere law-keeping, the saving power of the Gospel of Christ, his upbringing at home, his previous experiences in school with friends and teachers, his natural tastes and talents, and his developmental maturity. We must account for all of these realities in a Bible-based, Trivium-friendly discipline program that guides behavior and shapes character.

While an effective discipline program is necessarily institutional, even more is it intensely individual; while it necessarily makes rules, even more does it make relationships; while it necessarily speaks of obedience as a duty, even more does it speak of obedience as a delight.

Rules and consequences there must be, of course. The Lord Jesus came to fulfill the Law, not to destroy it (Matthew 5:17). However, all of our disciplinary actions are means to another end. They should never be merely punitive, but clearly redemptive in nature, just as the Law was our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). To paraphrase one teaching of Jesus, the discipline program is made for the sake of students, and not students for the sake of the discipline program. Our ultimate goal is to bring every young person into proper relationship with his Creator and Redeemer, so that he may glorify God and enjoy Him forever.