

# TEACHING FOR TRANSFORMATION



## SEE THE STORY ↔ LIVE THE STORY

The hand of the 4th grade student shot up in response to the question. “No bells,” he declared, “No bells!” The teacher was talking with her students about how the Teaching for Transformation (Tft) program had affected them.

“No bells,” the student repeated. The teacher was confused, so she asked the student to share what he meant. He explained that there used to be a need for bells because there were classes for math, social studies, science, and other subjects, but now all of their subjects were about learning God’s story and their place in it. “We don’t need bells anymore because it’s all about God’s story!” he concluded.

This student is developing a way of seeing and living in the world that is consistent with Abraham Kuyper’s declaration that “there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, ‘Mine!’” All things thinking!

What is this “all things” thinking? God created all things. Even after the fall, which indeed affects and infects all things, creation remains good. Christ’s redemptive act touches all things, redirecting them to their God-designated purposes. Someday, all things will be fully restored, but the work of renewal begins now, and we are privileged to be coworkers with God in this process. That’s where Teaching for Transformation (Tft) comes in!

The Tft program, as developed by Prairie Centre for Christian Education and partner schools, provides a frame-work for the development of authentic and integral Christian learning experiences that are grounded in a transformational worldview with a focus on seeing and living out God’s story. The Tft program’s design practices and tools are being used by over 50 schools worldwide (Canada, United States, Africa, and Central America) to develop powerful Christian school learning experiences.

*“God is sovereign, and Jesus Christ is Lord over all things! That is the biblical truth that must gently whisper and boldly resound in every part, every thread of a Christian school’s curriculum. It must serve as the core curriculum in every Christian school classroom.”*

If you would like further information about the Tft program, please contact **Gayle Monsma**, [gmonsma@pce.ca](mailto:gmonsma@pce.ca)  
**Tft Website:** <https://sites.google.com/a/tftshare.ca/tft-4u/home>  
**PCCE Website:** [www.pce.ca](http://www.pce.ca)



*"The primary goal of Christian education is the formation of a peculiar people, a people who desire the Kingdom of God and thus undertake their life's expression of that desire." James K. A. Smith*

### **Peculiar Teacher Promise**

*I can design formational learning experiences that*

**INVITE** every student to explore their role in the Kingdom story.

**NURTURE** every student to desire to be a peculiar person.

**EMPOWER** every student to practice their life's expression.

### **Peculiar Teacher Practice**

*I can use the 3 W's to sharpen my teaching focus*

**WONDER:** Invite students to see God's world with wonder and awe, evoking thankfulness and gratitude.

**WISDOM:** Invite students to discover wisdom and a deeper understanding of God's plan and call.

**WORK:** Invite students to respond to God's call to work in the world, with action in love to God and our neighbor.

## **CORE PRACTICE 01: STORYLINE**

**"And once you live a good story, you get a taste for that kind of meaning in life, and you can't go back to being normal; you can't go back to meaningless scenes stitched together by the forgettable thread of wasted time. The more practiced stories I lived, the more I wanted an epic to climb inside of and see to its end."**

*Donald Miller*

**Every Christian school classroom must have a powerful and compelling vision of the Kingdom that creates a longing and a desire within every student to play their part in God's unfolding story of creation - fall - redemption - restoration.**

TfT believes that every unit and every learning experience tells a story. The TfT program tries, using the story discovered in each unit of study, to create a powerful and compelling image of God's story. The TfT program

invites students to imagine his or her place in God's story now. The TfT program does this by connecting the story of each unit with opportunities to tangibly practice living in the grand narrative. Each student and teacher will begin to create a personal "storyline" and articulate how they see themselves living in God's epic drama. What a compelling story to be invited into!

*TfT has impacted our school by helping the entire community see the big picture of what learning was meant to be - seeing the creation and the Creator simultaneously.*

*The thing that most excites me about TfT is what it can do for new teachers. Over my time in Christian education, I worked hard to bring my Christian faith into my curriculum. TfT provides the resources that would have made my efforts more efficient and effective. I'm so excited that my teachers can spend more time implementing!*

**Jeremy Van Nieuwenhuyzen, MS/HS Principal  
Sioux Falls Christian School  
Sioux Falls, SD**



# CORE PRACTICE 02: BIBLICAL THROUGHLINES

**“To be a Christ person is to be a Kingdom person. Working in the Kingdom is our way of life.”**

**Cornelius Plantinga**

**Every Christian school classroom must have an articulate and inspiring student profile that invites every student to imagine how to play their part in God’s story.**

What a complex challenge to imagine what it is to be a “peculiar” person in God’s story! Tft has identified 10 biblical throughlines to help us imagine who we are as peculiar people. When schools invite students to actively contribute to the formation of Christian culture, we need to challenge each student to develop Kingdom-building characteristics. These biblical characteristics help us all, teachers and students, to understand what our roles are, what our calling is. Throughlines shift the learning focus away from “what” the student need to know, to “who” the student is called to be.

## 10 THROUGHLINES

**GOD WORSHIPER** Students will understand that worshipping God is about celebrating who God is, what God has done and is doing, and what God has created.

**IDOLATRY DISCERNER** Students need to learn to “read” a worldview by asking questions about what is being portrayed in regard to culture, values, and belief systems.

**EARTH KEEPER** Students will respond to God’s call to be stewards of all of creation.

**BEAUTY CREATOR** Students will create beauty that praises God and enriches our world.

**JUSTICE SEEKER** Students will act as agents of restoration.

**CREATION ENJOYER** Students will celebrate God’s beautiful handiwork and give testimony to the presence of God in creation.

**SERVANT WORKER** Students will work actively to heal brokenness and bring joy to individuals and to culture.

**COMMUNITY BUILDER** Students will be active pursuers and builders of community in their classrooms, in their neighborhoods, and in the global village.

**IMAGE REFLECTOR** Students bear the image of God in their daily lives. Being an image bearer isn’t something we DO. Image bearer is who we ARE.

**ORDER DISCOVERER** Students see God’s masterful planning and His fingerprints all over creation.

*I am excited with how classroom-friendly and usable Tft is today. I feel by using Tft I do a much better job of giving my students the “eyes” to see God in everything! It is such a delight to hear my 3rd grade students relate what we have been discussing in class to a throughline without being prompted.*

*Tft excites me because of its ability to intentionally seek connections and focus on the foundation of what I teach and why I teach it.*

**Covenant Christian School Teachers**  
Leduc, Alberta, Canada



*It has changed the story for me because now I am a part of the story.*

*For the time I spend on earth, I want to fulfill my duty as a peace-keeper and leave a legacy of love and kindness.”*

*“I always hear adults talk about wanting to do things, but they just talk about it and never do it. We talked about it and the next day started to do it!”*

**Student Comments about Tft**

# CORE PRACTICE 03: FLEX (FORMATIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES)

**“It is nothing but a pious wish and a grossly unwarranted hope that students trained to be passive and non-creative in school will suddenly, upon graduation, actively contribute to the formation of Christian culture.”**

**Nicholas Wolterstorff**

**Every Christian school classroom must provide authentic (real work, real problem, real people) opportunities for students to practice living the Kingdom story. This practice becomes a habit, shaping who we are.**

Wolterstorff suggests, strongly, that students must be given the opportunity to do God’s work NOW – to be active and creative in God’s story. Meaningful work creates a sense of purpose in their lives, and draws students more powerfully to God’s story. As the name suggests, Formational Learning Experiences are designed to form the students’ hearts and actions as well as their minds, equipping students to become people who live and breathe God’s story. Research and experience suggest that formational learning best emerges from experiences that get at our gut and touch our heart.

James K. Smith writes in *Desiring the Kingdom* that “Education is not primarily . . . concerned with providing information; rather, education most fundamentally is a matter of formation, a task of shaping and creating a certain kind of people. These people are distinct because of what they love and desire – the kingdom of God.”

*Teaching for Transformation has been a game-changer at our school, changing how we think, teach, learn, reflect, and serve. Teachers have become much more intentional about both applying a Christian perspective and inviting, nurturing, and empowering students to do the same. Students have ownership of their learning, know they are making a difference – right now as disciples of Christ. Teachers and students are working together on important work – real work with real people who have real needs – real Kingdom work done for a real and alive God. Getting our students involved in Kingdom work now, serving alongside teachers, developing their gifts, and helping them see the big purpose and how they play a part in God’s story – what else is more important than that?*

**Josh Bowar, Assistant Principal  
Sioux Center Christian School  
Sioux Center, IA**



*Someone once challenged a church to predict if the community would even realize it if the church closed its doors. I've wondered the same about our school, and with the emphasis we've had on FLEX in the last couple of years, I think that the community would now notice if Covenant Christian School shut its doors. The Kingdom-building work that our students are doing would be missed!*

*I would recommend Tft because in my almost 30 years of teaching and leading Christian schools, there is nothing else that comes close to giving us the tools to accomplish the core purpose of our school in a deep, authentic, and integral way.*

**Gayle Monsma, Principal  
Covenant Christian School  
Leduc, Alberta, Canada**



**The Prairie Centre  
for Christian Education**

If you would like further information about the Tft program, please contact **Gayle Monsma**, [gmonsma@pcce.ca](mailto:gmonsma@pcce.ca)

**Tft Website:** <https://sites.google.com/a/tftshare.ca/tft-4u/home>

**PCCE Website:** [www.pcce.ca](http://www.pcce.ca)