

# ***THE EMMANUEL DIFFERENCE***



***A Report on the State of Emmanuel Christian School  
January 2024***

**Dear ECS Family,**

I cannot believe one year has passed since the Lord brought me and my family to Dothan. It has been a true honor and joy getting to know all the ECS students and families. What an amazing first year serving you as Head of School! As I take time to reflect, **I am in awe of what the Lord has accomplished through our school community in just twelve months.** The privilege of loving your child with hugs, high-fives, fist-bumps, and encouragement gives me a sense of excitement, purpose, and vision for our school and where we are heading.

When I first came to Emmanuel, I immediately knew that the school's ministry and community impact was special. I also quickly **became aware that there were a significant number of foundational concerns** regarding the school's overall health in the areas of spiritual, academic, athletics and extracurricular activities. Responding to this need, this administration immediately started gathering information and facts through surveys of our families and staff focusing on the perceived needs of the school and improving academic performance. Your feedback revealed a genuine concern for the spirituality, academics, discipline, and safety of our students.

In my introduction at the meet and greet reception, **I vowed to God and promised the Board of Directors to lead the school back to the faith-based foundations** that Emmanuel was founded upon over 55 years ago. From the very beginning, my message has been the same, to Redeem, Restore, and Rebuild Emmanuel Christian School in all areas beginning with the spiritual, then academics, followed by electives, athletics, and school community.

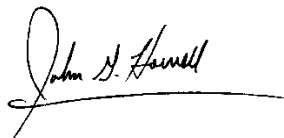
As you read this, my prayer is that you are inspired and encouraged by all that God has accomplished in just one short year. He has so much more in store for 2024 as we continue to Redeem, Restore, and Rebuild Emmanuel. As the scripture says in Matthew 6:33 "to seek **first** the Kingdom of God and **all** these things will be added to you," Emmanuel Christian School will continue to grow and evolve into what God wants for this school ministry.

I hope you and your family will continue to partner with us and see the value of a true Biblical Worldview Christian Education.

In Christ,



Michelle McDaniel, M.Ed.  
Head of School



John Howell, Ed.S.  
Assistant Head of School

## I. SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS

I am excited to share that the Lord is at work spiritually at Emmanuel. Our administration and Bible Department spent a great deal of time praying, preparing, and cultivating a plan of action this past summer on how we would Redeem, Restore, and Rebuild the heart of Emmanuel. What became clear after attending a Biblical Worldview Conference was that our primary need was to reestablish an overarching principle that **every decision, we make about Emmanuel would be established from a Biblical Worldview based on the Word of God as the guiding principle.**

Beginning with our teachers in service training, we shared and trained our faculty on this principle of a Biblical Worldview. We followed this by sharing this principle with our Board of Directors. Additionally, this Biblical Worldview principle is continually being implemented thoroughly in our chapel services and classes.

### *Adhering to this Biblical Worldview led to:*

- Morning School-wide time of pledges, devotion, and prayer to start the day of learning from a Biblical Worldview.
- Our faculty begins each day gathering to worship in singing, devotion, and prayer.
- Weekly age-appropriate chapels allowing students to worship through music and through lessons and messages from spiritual leaders on ECS staff and from the Christian community.
- Our quarterly spiritual emphasis focusing on not just learning biblical worldview principles but also implementing the principles in our lives by doing.
- Partnered with The Harbor to establish serve days.
- Beta Club led our very first Operational Christmas Child project for Global Missions.
- SGA partnered with The Salvation Army to conduct a food drive for local missions.
- Initial planning for future mission trips.
- Over **50 decisions** were **made for Christ** in the Fall semester!

The results that have come from all these things are just an absolute miracle! I have personally been in church ministry my entire life and I have never witnessed so many decisions in such a short period of time. This reveals that our students, your child(ren), desire God's truth. **Praise God for His redeeming grace** and truth that He alone offers.

***THIS IS THE EMMANUEL DIFFERENCE!***

## II. ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENT

Another area that the Lord is steadily at work is in academics. We believe in developing a well-rounded disciple of Christ while educating the whole student. While we will continue to raise the bar each year, I am thrilled to give our academic report based on the data from the 2022-2023 IOWA Assessment for grades 1st - 8th, PACT for 9-11th grade, and the ACT for 12th grade.

### *Standardized Testing*

#### **IOWA Standardized Testing Assessment**

- Tests in the Areas of Math, Reading, English, Science and History
  - Grades 1, 2, 4, 5, and 8 **tested at grade level for an overall composite score** as compared to other students who tested in this grade level on National Level
  - Grades 3, 6, and 7 all **tested one grade level to 1.5 grade levels ahead** of where the students should achieve.
  
- **Comparing Standardized Test Results from Alabama to ECS students 2022-2023**
  - Grades 3-8: Mathematics - Public School Students averaged 27.83% proficient, and ECS students scored 46.33%, nearly double the score.
  - Grades 3-8 English Language Arts - Alabama Public School Students scored at 50% proficiency whereas ECS students still outperformed at 52.17%
  
- **ACT Results**
  - PACT 8/9 2022-2023 - Spring 2023 testing 9th-grade students (rising sophomores)
    - According to ACT.org, the national average is a composite score of 17.
    - 50% of ECS 9th graders scored 17 or higher. Of those 50%, 55% scored 19 or higher.
  
  - PACT 10/11 2022-2023 - Spring 2023 testing 10th-grade students (rising juniors)
    - According to ACT.org, the national average is a composite score of 18.
    - 49% of ECS 10th graders scored 18 or higher. Of those 49%, 75% scored a 20 or higher.
  
  - ACT 12th grade Fall 2023
    - According to ACT.org, the National average is a composite score of 19.5 and Alabama average is a composite score of 18
    - 52% of ECS 12th graders scored 18 or higher. Of those 52%, 88% scored 20 or higher.

The data demonstrates that our students are either at grade level or slightly higher than grade level. Overall, our students are scoring at the 50th percentile, and many are scoring even higher. While we have room for continued growth, this baseline gives us a firm foundation to continue to build upon and utilizing the data helps us make accurate and measurable decisions. This not

only helps our students grow academically, but also helps the teachers create a measurable action plan for continuous improvement.

### ***Continuous Improvement***

Over the course of the year, we have spent several days of teacher training to develop a plan for the school wide areas of growth that we identified using the data. The following is a brief overview of what we developed and have begun to strategically implement into the classroom.

### ***School-Wide Growth Areas***

- S.M.A.R.T Goal Implementation
  - Specific
  - Measurable
  - Achievable
  - Relevant
  - Timely
  
- Reading Comprehension
  - More intentional reading with asking “why” questions
  - Retelling story in student’s own words
  - Increase vocabulary recognition
  
- Math Computation
  - Rote Memorization for Math Facts
  - Practicing using Math Fact Drills
  - Know and understand math vocabulary
  
- Written Expression
  - Use complete sentences, grammar, mechanics, and spelling in every subject
  - Peer Reviews
  - Writing a five-paragraph essay in more subjects
  - Critical Thinking
  - Asking H.O.T. (Higher Order Thinking) Questions
  - Allowing more think time
  - Encourage students to ask questions
  - Accountable Talk

## ***THIS IS THE EMMANUEL DIFFERENCE!***

### ***Quality Faculty***

Another fact that reflects the vigor of our academics is the quality and character of our faculty. Teachers are qualified and certified by fulfilling the requirements of our accrediting bodies:

- ACSI (Association of Christian Schools International) a Primer accrediting agency for Christian schools, along with Cognia, a part of SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) who verifies and ensures our faculty members are properly prepared for teaching including.
  - Having a required accredited bachelor's degree
  - Having completed required relevant courses in education and core subjects
  - Having accomplished required classroom practicums
  - Having satisfactorily passed required certifying exams
- 100% of our teachers are degreed and certifiable by ACSI
- 30% of our teachers hold a master's degree from accredited institutions
- 97% of our teachers have four or more years of classroom teaching experience
- 100% of our faculty and staff have an active and thriving relationship with Christ, and hold to the ECS Statement of Faith and a Biblical Worldview

As a parent, what a peace I have in knowing that my daughter is not only receiving a great education, but a true Biblical Worldview Christian Education. I do not worry about what she is going to be exposed to or if she is going to be mistreated. Rather, I am excited to hear about how her day has gone, and what she learned in her classes, and often she will describe what she learned in Bible class. I am so thankful to the Lord to be able to send her to Emmanuel where I know her teachers love Jesus and love her enough to show her how to live a Godly life.

### ***THIS IS THE EMMANUEL DIFFERENCE!***

#### ***Other Academic Enhancements***

- **Dual Enrollment** – Studies show that the more dual enrollment classes a student takes the higher their ACT scores will be, and higher the likelihood they will be successful at the collegiate level (graduate college with a bachelors). Recognizing this fact, ECS continues offering dual enrollment opportunities to high school students beginning in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. A recent dual enrollment workshop was held helping over 50 parents navigate with enrolling and applying for scholarships to pay for dual enrollment tuition cost on a first come first served basis. Our desire is to increase the number of students who participate in the dual enrollment program so they too will benefit from the success. **We believe offering Dual Enrollment rather than AP courses because of the guarantee that Dual Enrollment Course offer over AP courses.** While AP classes do offer rigor, there is no guarantee that a student will score high enough on the self-paid end of course test to count as a college credit, whereas **Dual Enrollment Courses are guaranteed to count as both a high school credit and college credit if the class is passed.**

**New Electives** – Beginning Fall 2023 our class rotation schedule included electives for students in K-12 designed to add overall rigor to the academic curriculum.

- ACT/SAT Prep Class
- STEM Classes
- High School Drama

- Visual Art
  - Global Studies
  - Math Support
  - English Language Arts Support
  - Keyboarding/Typing
  - Technology
  - Yearbook and Photography
- **Printed Textbook Enhancements** – Research indicates that students learn better when they use a physical textbook in and out of the classroom. Even though this raises the cost by 100%, we believe the results are worth the cost and have implemented this successful strategy in math and English in middle and high school.
- **Extracurricular Activities**
- Junior BETA – Inaugural Year and conducted our first induction ceremony
  - Drama Club – The Music and Drama department with students from the Elementary and Middle School planned, practiced and presented *Little Drummer Dude* on December 7
  - Big/Little Warrior Mentorship Program where the seniors adopted a Kindergarten buddy to mentor throughout the school year.
  - 4-H Club for grades 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> –12<sup>th</sup>

***THIS IS THE EMMANUEL DIFFERENCE!***

### **III. ATHLETIC GROWTH**

Our athletics program continues to grow with our athletic director and assistant athletic director, coaches, parents, and athletes. The move to AHSAA has had its fair share of challenges, but our athletes have grown so much in perseverance, sportsmanship, athleticism, and so much more. **No, we have not won championships yet, but we have increased our winnings significantly from last season.** Coach Golden, Coach Johnson-Clark, and all the coaches have worked diligently to establish not just sports but a true Emmanuel Christian Athletic Program.

***New Sports***

- **Emmanuel Youth Sports League** - One of the areas that we saw of an immediate need was for our school to have an intramural elementary sports club so that our students could develop fundamental skills before middle school. After much preparation from Coach Golden and Coach Johnson-Clark along with multitude of parent and student volunteers we were able to successfully launch our sports league in August featuring the following:
- Grades K5 – 6<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Flag football
  - Basketball
  - Cheer
  - Soccer

- **Junior High and Varsity Sports** – with the move to the AHSAA we have also been able to add more sports to our program giving more options for our students to showcase their athleticism earlier in other sports.
  - Junior High Boys Basketball
  - Junior Varsity Cheerleading
  - Cross Country
  - Golf
  - Track

They also have led many successful fundraisers and to help balance sports budget to be able to pay for itself by incorporating athletic fees, fundraisers, and sponsorships to ensure that the percentage of the general budget underwriting athletics becomes 0%.

***THIS IS THE EMMANUEL DIFFERENCE!***

#### **IV. SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

Fostering a positive school community means that our students know that we care about building relationships with them, cultivating a positive learning environment so that we can carry out the vision of the school that reveals the heartbeat of the school. The vision to Redeem, Restore, and Rebuild the School culture has been the foundation for each decision that has been made.

##### ***Relationships***

- **Availability** – Our teachers, staff, and administration do our best to make ourselves available to our students so that they know we love them. Some of the areas that we focus on to better build relationship are through the following:
  - Prayer
  - Discipleship
  - Hugs, High Fives, Fist bumps
  - Genuinely Loved
  - To Listen

##### ***Positive Learning Environment***

- **Student Focused** – Cultivating a positive learning environment must be one where it is focused on the student growth and student success spiritually, academically, and physically. We wanted to give our students an opportunity to shine in and out of the classroom. Below are just a few of the highlights that we have incorporated.
  - Student of the Month
  - Godly Character Award
  - Warrior Bucks
  - Student Ambassadors
  - Consistent Discipline
  - Senior Wall of Fame



## *School Pride*

- **School Spirit** – Making attire more accessible has changed so much since I first began for the better. Students did not wear ECS attire at all due to it simply not being available to purchase. Also, with administration streamlining dress code to include Warrior Wear has resulted in a much more positive environment.
  - School Store all year round
  - Warrior Wear
  - Fall Spirit Week
  - Christmas Spirit Week
  - Pep Rallies
  - Spirit Dress Up Days
  - Senior Parade
  - Big/Little Warrior Mentor Program
  - Senior Painting Parking Spot
  - Senior Parade
  - Senior Locker Decorating
  - Senior Monthly Grab and Go Breakfast

***THIS IS THE EMMANUEL DIFFERENCE!***

## **V. FACILITY UPGRADES**

Finally, our facilities have also undergone several improvements this past year to enhance aesthetics, safety, and efficiency. While we certainly have much room for improvement in the years ahead, we are conscience of the genuine need for improving our campus.

- **Cafeteria Upgrades** – Our cafeteria received upgrades to improve the function and flow of all our food services in one place, making the process more efficient and easier for students to receive and enjoy their snack or meal.
- **New Teacher Lounge** – Thanks to ECSPO the teachers were able to have a true teacher lounge/workroom where they can pray, prepare, check mail, and of course get some coffee!
- **Middle School Lockers** – With the donation of lockers from Gerard Intermediate School and the help from twenty-plus parents, we safely removed and relocated the lockers to the middle school wing. Thanks to Mr. Ellison for installing them! Middle School students were each issued a locker.
- **Middle School HVAC** – Maintaining our campus systems is an ongoing effort. After over 20 years in service, the original HVAC units in our middle school wing were worn out and required to be completely replaced.

- **Safety Upgrades** – The safety of your child, faculty, and staff are always of the utmost importance to us. We continuously evaluate our physical facilities and protocols to maintain the most up to date data. We also introduced a plan to begin a Safety Campaign to raise funds for additional security upgrades. To date, these are upgrades that have been incorporated.
- Fire alarm direct mobile line to Fire Department
  - Added additional security cameras
  - Developed Safety Enhancement Plan
  - Security Software Update
  - Three Safety Training classes conducted by local police on campus lockdowns

***THIS IS THE EMMANUEL DIFFERENCE!***

While we are amazed and thankful for all that our God has accomplished in the past 12 months, we also recognize that this a journey that will require more effort to evaluate and improve. It is important that we trust the process and not allow ourselves to entertain the tactics of the enemy to steal, kill, and destroy the mission of Emmanuel Christian School.

I want to thank our Lord and Savior for the opportunity to serve you and your family in this capacity. May the Lord continue to bless you and your family.

Emmanuel Christian School... “It’s in the Name.”