



The City School

LIGHT TO THE CITY

Dear Friend,

I've had a hard year. Perhaps you can relate? After 8 years of leading with grit and determination, I've discovered the limits of my own strength to lead our school.

There is a joy in realizing my own limits. As The City School makes progress toward our vision to see more and more children flourish in the city in Jesus name, I am learning to trust the wonderful people that God has placed around me - families, staff, board, donors, volunteers - you.

The epic battle between the Israelites and Amalekites in Exodus 17 gives me comfort:

As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset.

There is strength in vulnerability. As a leader, I am vulnerable. As a school, we are vulnerable. I want to be open about this so that, as the Lord provides, you can rejoice with us and give him the glory. Here are three areas where we yearn for his provision:

High School Enrollment - We've dreamed, planned, and prayed for generations for a campus like Poplar. While elementary and middle school enrollment is strong and growing, our high school enrollment is slightly lower than last year. For our school to be sustainable, we need to see increased high school enrollment. Based on the strength of enrollment in our elementary and middle school grades, our total school enrollment is 385 compared to 370 at this time last year. Students continue to trickle in as the school year gets off to a start, and we've got 44 students who are currently processing their applications.

Fundraising - Our faithful community of support has been exceedingly generous, especially in recent years, and we could not be more grateful. We've seen more than \$5M given or committed in the last 2 years. We've never seen anything like it! However, we are still just barely keeping up with the financial demands of the God-sized vision that we are pursuing. We've got a few more years of planned expenses that will stretch our community and organization to new levels of reliance on God's provision through people like you.

Staff Retention - Between last school year and this school year, 15 of 70 staff made the decision to leave The City School. While we always have turnover, this is higher than normal. As we mature organizationally, clarify who we are, and open facilities that we could only dream about, this one really takes the wind out of my sails. It's never easy when people leave and I always wonder what we could have done better.

In the midst of these challenges, my focus turns to the Lord and to those he has placed around me. Through the gifted leaders on our staff, we are pursuing answers to each of these challenges. It's making us a better school. It's making us a better community.

BUSINESS OFFICE 910 NORTH 6TH STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123, 215.731.1930

FAIRMOUNT & SPRUCE HILL, ELEMENTARY CAMPUSES | POPLAR, UPPER SCHOOL CAMPUS

At the beginning of the school year, I want to write you an uplifting letter about how everything is going according to plan and how we've got it all figured out. I can't. It isn't. We don't. What I can do is reflect on the goodness of God, the beauty of the work he has called us to, and the abundance of his Kingdom.

God has been so, so good to The City School. He has brought phenomenally talented and faithful people to live out our vision to see more and more children flourish in the city in Jesus' name - families, staff, board, donors, and volunteers. If you want to know how God is at work, just ask someone how they got involved with The City School. This is a special community.

God has provided beyond our wildest expectations. Each year, we begin the school year with an all staff gathering. We've gathered our entire school staff at the Poplar campus three times now and each time we've gathered there, one song seems to express our collective awe at what God has done. The first time we came together as a staff at Poplar shortly after acquiring the building, we sang "How Great is Our God." This year, singing it again, the tears of gratitude continued to flow. When God provides in such miraculous ways, what else can we say?

God has called us to incredible work. Think about what we do. We welcome a bunch of young people and their families into daily disciplines that fine tune their God-given gifts to bring light to the city. We're asking young people to consider who Jesus is, who God has made them to be, and how he will use their lives to bring about his shalom. We get to do this for several hours a day and 10 months a year. Does that make a difference? You bet.

My pride wants to delete the words I've written above but I want you to know the truth. This work is hard. It is demanding. It can be all consuming. It has pushed me to the edge of my strength, but that's where I am finding hope. I am finding that God is good, that I am enough, and that I am not alone. This is his work. He's called us all together. The one who calls us is faithful and he will do it (1 Thess 5:24).

I am grateful for you. You give me strength. Thank you for uplifting me, our students, our staff, and our entire community. If you'd like to be more involved in the work that God is doing to see more and more children flourish in the city in Jesus' name, I'd love to talk with you.

Gratefully,



Jake Becker
Head of School