

A Vision for After-School Education at Trinity

Revised April 28, 2006

At Trinity, we view a child's education to be broader than just that which happens during the school day. In addition to formal education in school, many Trinity School students participate in formal education outside of school—organized activities such as sports, music or dance lessons, church youth groups or Bible studies, and Scouting. Our students also experience informal education through such activities as informal play, reading and writing for pleasure, creative pursuits, and quiet thinking.

Trinity's shorter school day and school year represent one way that we as a school have sought to set boundaries on formal education, so that families can pursue the informal and formal-out-of-school education of their children in a way that is less hurried and that provides a balance between the realms of home and school.

In keeping with our commitment to a rich education, Trinity currently offers quite a range of opportunities for both formal out-of-school education and informal education. After (and at times before) school hours, Trinity has sponsored Band and Chorus ensembles and school clubs such as Drama, Yearbook, Art Club, Close-Knit Friends (knitting), Literary Arts Club, and Latin Club. A wide variety of school-sponsored interscholastic athletic teams practice and compete throughout the school year. Private music lessons are also held after-hours at Trinity, as well as a number of clubs under the auspices of national groups such as Girls on the Run, Scouting, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Trinity's campus and facilities also offer a venue for rich informal education. Our playground and basketball court, fields, gym, Hundred Acre Wood, and nature preserve are all places that often see students and families enjoying themselves at times when school is not in session.

Over the past few years a number of families have inquired about the possibility of a regular daily after-school program for Trinity students—a program that would provide care for students whose parents work outside the home. These include both families that are already at Trinity and prospective Trinity families. Some are looking primarily for the convenience of an after-school program that is held at the same location as their child's school, but others are seeking a program that will carry the rich, unhurried philosophy of our school-day curriculum into the after-school hours. One could view such a program as an extension of the many rich extracurricular opportunities Trinity already provides for students. To our knowledge, no program with such emphases is available in the Durham–Chapel Hill area.

Any after-school program sponsored by Trinity will need to support and advance the mission of the school. As is the case with our current extracurricular activities, our after-school program would not be an extension of the formal school day, but instead would involve formal out-of-school education (including music, art, clubs, athletics, tutoring, and time for homework) as well as significant time for informal education (unstructured free time). This latter education is a crucial component of any after-school program reflecting the educational philosophy of Charlotte Mason: Mason insisted that children have adequate time to play, and that their time for play not be crowded out by organized games and activities (*School Education*, 3:36–37). Our after-school program will therefore include time for quiet reflection, for unstructured play, for creativity, and for self-directed discovery. Students will be able to choose among different activities, and flexibility will be encouraged as much as possible.

As Charlotte Mason said, “Atmosphere educates.” Students in our after-school program will continue learning informally after school hours, under the watchful guidance of Christian leaders who will help students to navigate play choices and interpersonal interactions. Though not hovering, our after-school leaders will be available to students, asking good questions, listening well, and applying the Gospel to both everyday and unusual situations. Like our teachers, these leaders will place particular emphasis on the cultivation of the children’s identity in Christ and the communication of godly values. They will cultivate an atmosphere that teaches students how to live in community, with love for one another and for God. A program director who understands and is committed to Trinity’s educational vision and mission will oversee the program’s curriculum and staff.

In order to respect the family, and to encourage family time as much as possible, our program will have certain limitations. The after-school program will not serve Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten students; this reflects our school’s commitment to developmental appropriateness and the desire that our youngest children spend as much time as possible in a family setting. (For more details, see the policy document *Kindergarten at Trinity*.) The hours of operation will be limited so that the total day for students, including the school day, does not exceed 8.5 to 9 hours.

We will seek actively to foster a “neighborhood feel” for the program. Parents will be encouraged to come and participate in special events and activities held by the after-school, as much as their schedules will permit; and Trinity’s outdoor facilities (the playground, the Hundred Acre Wood, etc.) will remain open to all children and families, whether or not the students are enrolled in the after-school program, as long as they are accompanied by the adult responsible for them. This will encourage the development of an informal, neighborhood-like atmosphere within the outdoor play spaces.

It is our hope and our aim to offer to Trinity families an unhurried, developmentally appropriate after-school program that is in line with the philosophy and mission of our school and meets our families’ needs for after-school care. If the Board is in agreement, the Education Committee will continue the research and development of such a program, to be brought to the Board at a future date for approval with an eye to the implementation of a pilot program in Fall 2007.