

HSP's Hidden Curriculum: the Intangible Value of a Holy Spirit Prep Education, Part 1 of 5

by Tommy Curtin

Dear Parents,

The term “curriculum” is often used to describe the collection of academic courses a school offers students in the classroom. Some even consider this *classroom* curriculum to be the essence of what education is. But to equate classroom curriculum with education would be a mistake. Education, properly understood, is not simply the taking of course after course so as to earn grades that will eventually qualify students to either get jobs or take more courses at a higher level. It is not even the training of the intellect through rigorous study. Rather, education is the comprehensive formation of human persons, mind and heart, body and soul, so that they will be prepared to live the lives to which God uniquely calls them.

Question 6 of the venerable Baltimore Catechism asks each reader to consider the question, “Why did God make me?” and then supplies the answer: “God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next.” Holy Spirit Prep is committed to educating students who will graduate prepared both to answer this universal call and to do so in the unique way God has planned for each of them. To achieve this, HSP has adopted a person-centered, family-oriented educational model starkly different from what most schools provide. This model produces important educational outcomes that, while often intangible, are every bit as real as the grades students receive and the universities they will attend. These outcomes are achieved through HSP's *hidden* curriculum.

Every parent intuitively understands the idea of a hidden curriculum. It's those life lessons and habits that kids learn through osmosis rather than instruction. The hidden curriculum is the reason we worry so much about which movies our kids watch, what they're up to online, which friends they keep, and which boys or girls they date. We remember all too well how things were when we were kids. We recall that many of our teachers inspired us to ask questions during class, at least until the cute girl two desks down rolled her eyes and we stopped. That's the hidden curriculum at work. We thought it would be okay to play football and sing in the choir at the same time, but the hidden curriculum of the popular clique informed us otherwise. It is an unfortunate reality that all too often the hidden curriculum of a school competes with our academic and character goals rather than reinforcing them.

Fortunately, Holy Spirit Prep's educational model ensures that the classroom curriculum and the hidden curriculum work together to form students to become the young men and women God calls them to be. Interactions like those described above just don't seem to happen here at HSP. But there are reasons for that; it's not just good fortune. Understanding those reasons and the role of the hidden curriculum is crucial to appreciating the true value of a Holy Spirit Prep education.

I look forward to following this communication with a series of reflections on HSP's hidden curriculum and the positive influence it exerts on students and even parents. These reflections will focus particularly on the unquantifiable value of HSP's Catholic identity, peer groups, smaller size, and teaching faculty. I hope you will take a few extra minutes out of your busy day to read about our hidden curriculum and the wonderful investment you've made in your student's future.

Yours in Catholic education,
Tommy