



**FLATIRONS**  
**ACADEMY**  
*Comprehensively Christian*

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SEPTEMBER 10, 2026

**EDUCATING FOR FREEDOM**

**STRATEGY #3**

**Thriving Faculty and Staff: *Labor Ipse Voluptas***



Greetings Flatirons Academy Families,

Thanks again for taking the time to read through this series of [Strategic Vision](#) communications. If this is the first letter you've read, I encourage you to go back to previous Bison Posts and read more about our [Christian Liberal Arts educational model](#) and the ways we [seek to know God](#) in every thought, every action, and our vision for life at school.

This week's letter is the easiest to write because the implications are so obvious, the research is so clear, and the stakes are so high. The character and quality of the adults teaching our kids is the most important variable to our collective success.

I could talk about our programs and written curriculum for days, but the effective instruction, modeling, discipline, encouragement, and guidance provided by our instructional staff is what changes hearts and minds.

This has always been true, and it will continue to be true even when digital technology attempts to replace this element of education. This is a topic for a different letter, but do not be surprised when K12 schools based entirely on AI instruction begin to pop up and then fail to deliver the outcomes they promised.

Again, I realize that saying that teachers are important is not a controversial statement for most. But, I want to be clear that we do not view it as a sentimental platitude but as an essential strategy to achieving the ends of our institution.

Therefore, we must attract the best people, keep the best people, and grow the best people. The first step to actually doing this is defining "the best people."

We hire educational professionals that love Jesus, have a growth mindset, and are intelligent problem solvers. Our teachers are public representatives of Christ who must master content knowledge, demonstrate capacity to think theologically about our work, and live a life that points to Jesus. Our teachers are professionals that require significant training, technical skill, creativity, and discernment. And, our teachers are lifelong learners who adapt and grow as we seek continuous improvement in serving our kids.

Our teachers have many different paths to our school. The characteristics listed above are more important to us than any particular resume or number of graduate credits.

We pray without ceasing that God will provide and deliver these people into each classroom in our school. We thank God when we see his provision, and we work diligently to attract, keep, and grow those who God delivers.

**Attract**

No one gets into education to get rich. Many people get out of education because they can't make ends meet, especially private Christian education. Many schools like us rely on altruism to get effective teachers. We put our money where our mouth is and maximize compensation for instructional staff to be competitive in the marketplace.

Our goal is to meet or beat the starting salary of not only other private schools in our area but the starting salary of local area public schools. We also strive to keep up with raises for the first five years of scheduled raises in public schools. The data moves and changes on a yearly basis as the market fluctuates, but we have been successful in accomplishing this goal over the past five years. Practically speaking this requires extreme efficiency in other expense categories and streamlining administrative and support positions. It will take continued sacrifice and attention to maintain and improve our position in the marketplace for the very best instructors moving forward.

It is also important to note the positive impact that Flatirons Community Church has had on the quality of our applicants. The higher profile and name recognition has enabled us to connect with many amazing professionals that otherwise would not have considered working in Christian education.

**Keep**

As a longtime English teacher, I can admit that it took me about three years to really figure out what I was doing and become an effective teacher. Many of the teachers I respect the most have told me the same about their professional development.

Now couple that idea with the alarming array of studies concerning teacher retention. The numbers vary but the reality is that somewhere around fifty to seventy percent of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching. They don't just leave the schools they work at, they leave the profession entirely. The primary reasons cited for leaving are usually poor working conditions and/or inadequate support. In other words, they feel overwhelmed, and it just isn't worth the toll it takes on them.

We know that if our school is to reach its potential it needs to be filled with teachers who can run the race set before them over a long career. To accomplish this, teachers need a vision for engaging in a long-term committed relationship with the institution and the support to avoid burnout.

The definition I provided earlier of "the best people" also clearly applies to the non-instructional staff at our school. There are dozens of people at our school who work tirelessly so that teachers can focus all of their energy on teaching kids. We have a facility that needs maintenance, tables that need cleaned, packets that need stapled, a website to maintain, phones that need answered, and ice packs that need handed out. I could go on forever.

Everyone who works here as non-instructional staff knows that our job is to make sure teachers can be great at their job. This includes me. And, when teachers have the support they need to be great they stay in the game longer which creates a positive feedback loop of effective instruction and changed lives.

This reality is evidenced by our continued certification as a "Best Christian Workplace" through our yearly staff survey. This valuable feedback loop helps us all make sure that we are focused on the right things at work.

The area of retention that we need to grow in moving forward is our ability to support teachers and staff throughout multiple phases of life. We have had success with staff who are single. We have had success with staff with families who are later in life and/or are second income earners. We have struggled to consistently maintain a relationship with staff when they have multiple young children or are responsible for providing a primary income.

Everyone has to make decisions that are best for our families. We just want to see if we can make it easier for staff to stay through multiple phases of life.

However, no matter what compensation and staffing we provide, the greatest retention strategy we have is for every employee of our school to experience continued professional and personal formation in Christian community.

## **Grow**

In [last week's letter](#) I shared what we mean by Comprehensively Christian with a focus on the student experience. But everything I said about the student experience should be more true about the staff experience. As I often tell our staff, we cannot give away what we don't possess. We cannot create a growth mindset in our students if we do not first have one about ourselves. We cannot inspire students toward the intrinsic joy of learning in liberal arts if we do not first experience the intrinsic joy of teaching. We cannot guide students to better know God through every thought, action, and vision for life unless we do so first through our work.

So how do we do this?

First, we take professional development seriously because getting better at teaching is enjoyable and valuable. This happens through our relationship with the Association of Christian Schools International credentialing system and through our own in-house programs. I have worked in many different school systems and I promise you that our professional development during fall inservice, winter break, during weekly K5 meetings, and every Bison Friday morning in the middle school and high school is second to none.

The longer students are at our school the higher they achieve. The longer that teachers are at our school the more effective they are. Maintaining this level of quality will require continued focus and resources.

Second, we take our role as public representatives of Christ seriously and acknowledge that we were not meant to live the Christian life alone. We are not the family. And, we are not the church. However, we are a community of Christians who are seeking to know God and live in His kingdom now. We are Christian educators who have the choice to engage with work like the school down the street, or we can engage with work like free people.

To this end, we are developing and implementing a teacher "Rule of Work" that seeks to create community norms around our professional lives. This idea is as old as the sixth-century when Saint Benedict attempted to organize the work at the monastery around a comprehensively Christian life. You've also probably heard about this idea at a church service or in [a book](#) by John Mark Comer.

The reason that people quit teaching is because it is incredibly hard, and it will ask for more than it can ever give back. But we serve a God who has a kingdom. And in this kingdom, our work is a source of joy and a place to express our God-given talents and creativity.

The first and most basic element of our “Rule” is to observe the Sabbath by resting from our work and worshipping at church. This is not a to-do. This is freedom from the tyranny of “there always being something more to do for work.”

As free people, we can choose to rest from our work on Sunday. We can spur each other on to good works. We can remind each other of the Gospel. We can have healthy boundaries and relationships at work because our identity is found in Christ and not our work performance. We can work incredibly hard because we believe that our work has eternal significance, and then we can rest because we know that God is the one who sustains us. We can apologize and forgive each other when we cause hurt. We can truly celebrate with those who are celebrating, and we can mourn with those who are mourning. We can create a professional work environment that properly relates to the family and the church. We can work in a place that makes it easier to follow Jesus. We can get out of bed in the morning and go to a place that is known by how we love one another.

We can create a different way of going about our work than the world around us. As Christians, we know that work came before the fall. So while there will be thorns and thistles in this life, we can say “*Labor Ipse Voluptas*,” or “the pleasure is in the work itself.”

And when we do this, His kingdom breaks through in every classroom and every staff meeting. And then our kids experience a school where His will is done.

Who wouldn’t want to work at a place like that? I know I do.

This rare combination of professional and character formation doesn’t just create highly-effective teachers. It is the perfect place to develop the next generation of highly-effective educational leaders who are uniquely equipped to lead in Christian liberal arts schools. I can’t wait to tell you more about it next week.

### **#3: Thriving Faculty and Staff: *Labor Ipse Voluptas***

The heartbeat of our school is our faculty and staff. We seek to attract and maintain long term professional relationships through competitive compensation, healthy and meaningful work environments, and continued professional learning and support.

**3.1** Continue to prioritize competitive compensation for instructional staff.

**3.2** Continue to maintain appropriate administrative/support staffing to ensure effective learning environments.

**3.3** Develop and implement a staff “Rule of Work” at Flatirons Academy that normalizes spiritual disciplines at work and properly orients our work to our families and church.

**3.4** Elevate and honor a professional work environment through school-based training and authoritative leadership structures with high accountability.

**3.5** Identify and equip future educational leaders with intensive professional development.

Go Bison,

**Jared Wallen**  
**Executive Director**  
**Flatirons Academy**