

HOW TO START A CHRISTIAN SCHOOL IN ONE YEAR

*“For no man can lay a foundation other than
the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”*

1 Cor 3:11

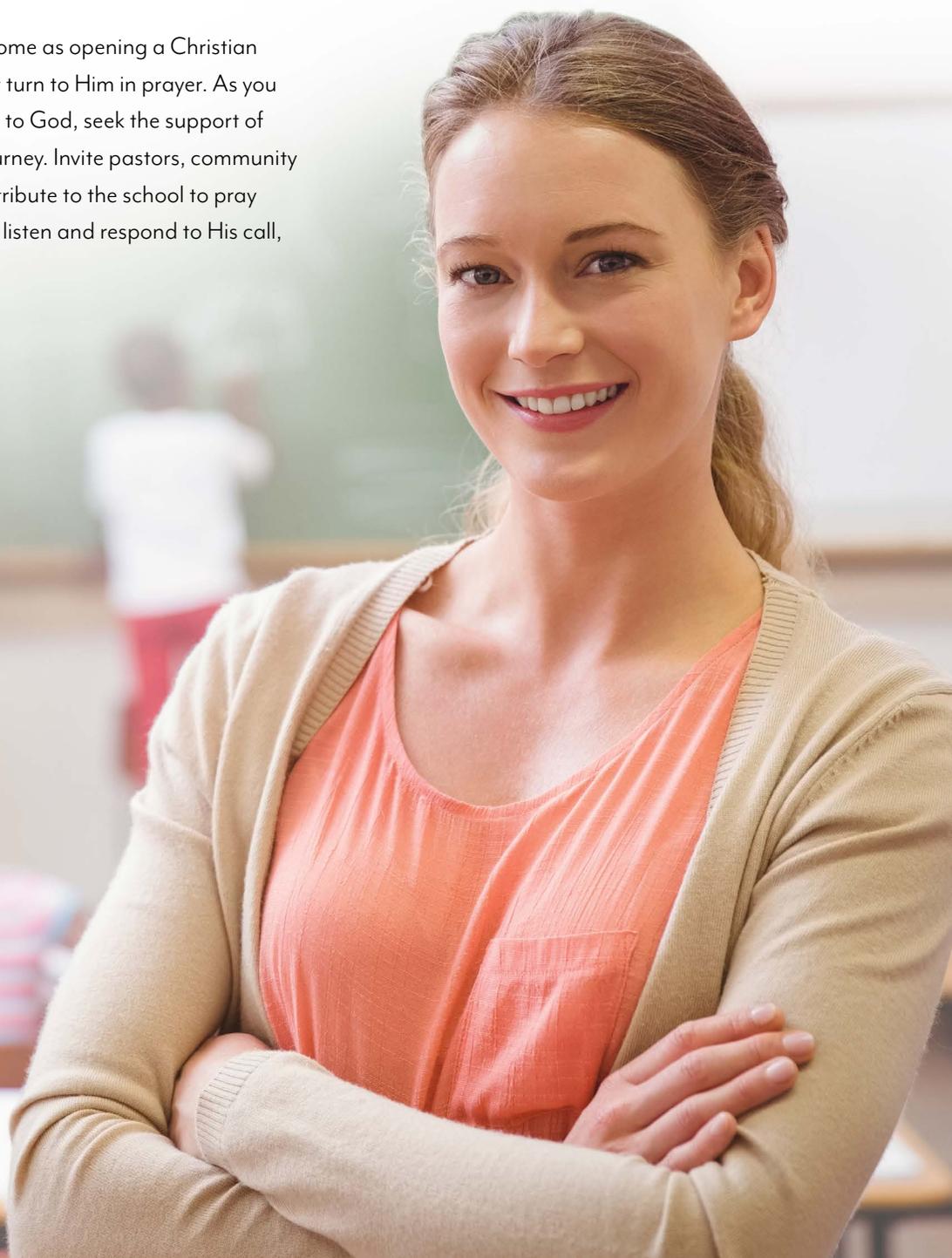


If you've heard the Lord's call to open a Christian school in your community, Alpha Omega Publications is here to help. We know that the key to starting a successful school is laying a firm foundation upon which to build. Within this year-long guide, you'll find everything you need to get your school up and running.

Filled with tips to conduct research, obtain accreditation, choose curriculum, and more, *How to Start a Christian in One Year* is your guide for bringing Christian education to your community. By this time next year, you'll be equipped to open your doors and provide students with a rich, Christ-centered education.

Before you plan, pray.

When God lays something as awesome as opening a Christian school on our hearts, we should first turn to Him in prayer. As you lift your ideas, dreams, and fears up to God, seek the support of those who might help you on the journey. Invite pastors, community members, and others who may contribute to the school to pray with and for you. As you collectively listen and respond to His call, allow the planning to begin.



12 MONTHS BEFORE OPENING DAY

1. Form a Team

Start by recruiting a planning committee comprised of individuals who are interested in helping you start a school. Be sure to include individuals who will help you see the project through to the end.

2. Create a Statement of Faith

Without clear goals and direction, your planning committee won't get very far. Define your committee's collective beliefs in a statement of faith. This outline will serve as a guide to your planning committee as you build your Christian school. Down the road, it will also provide prospective families with a clear understanding of your school's philosophy.

Consider supplementing your statement of faith with mission and vision statements. Typically fairly short and sweet, mission and vision statements clearly define your Christian school's objective and can be easily incorporated into marketing materials. For example, read the philosophy of AOP's online school, [Alpha Omega Academy](#).

3. Research

Strive to learn everything you can from others who have been in your shoes. Peruse a few Christian school websites to see how their schools are structured. More importantly, carve out time to visit existing Christian schools for a firsthand look at how they operate. Be sure to ask lots of questions, note appealing facility features, and collect samples of important documents, such as student and faculty handbooks, procedural manuals, and applications to use as resources when you create your own documents.

To find Christian schools near you, contact an AOP representative at 877-688-2652.

4. Select a Structure

Use your statement of faith and research to determine who will take the lead in running your Christian school. Will it be board-run or church-run? Some Christian schools are even parent-run. Consult your committee to decide what works best for your community.

Once you've identified your leaders, connect with pastors and community members to gauge local interest in a Christian school and predict your potential enrollment. With that information, you can decide whether it's best to start small or dive right in with a K-12 program. Remember, it's fairly easy to expand your program once it's well established, so it's okay to start small.

9 MONTHS BEFORE OPENING DAY

1. Choose a Christian Curriculum

Once you know which grades you'll be serving, you can begin exploring curriculum options. Be sure to reference your statement of faith to ensure the curriculum aligns with it. Keep in mind that curriculum providers like Alpha Omega Publications offer customizable options that can be easily adapted to fit the needs of your Christian school.

In addition, think about what format suits your students and teachers best. Would your community benefit most from online, computer-based, or print curriculum? Alpha Omega Publications provides all three formats, as well as a dual enrollment option.

Learn [3 ways to partner with AOP](#) to find the best Christian curriculum for your school.

2. Consider Accreditation

Accreditation is a review process completed by an outside agency that verifies a school meets certain levels of expectations. Students who complete coursework through accredited institutions are more likely to have their credits recognized when applying for college admission, scholarships, and federal student aid. Though studying through an accredited program doesn't guarantee college acceptance, it does make the process easier.

Many AOP schools work with agencies like [AdvancED](#) to earn accreditation. For tips from an AOP school that has earned accreditation through AdvancED, watch our free webinar on how to "[Earn Accreditation for Your Christian School](#)."

3. Assess Technology Needs

Whether you plan to use an online curriculum like Ignitia or not, you'll need to pinpoint technological needs at your new school. Important details to consider include network operating systems, computer and software licenses, teacher training, and tech support needs. Each component plays a role in developing your school budget.

At AOP, we provide Christian schools with convenient technical support for our [Ignitia](#) and [Switched-On Schoolhouse](#) curriculum. We also offer [webinars](#) and [training packages](#) for Ignitia online curriculum.

4. Create a Budget

Designate a committee member who is good with numbers and willing to take on the role of bookkeeper at your Christian school to draft a tentative budget. As a basic guide to get started, follow these four steps:

- **Estimate your expected enrollment** based on your research and interaction with the community.
- **Use your expected enrollment to estimate personnel needs** and create competitive salary and benefit packages.
- **Determine how much to charge for tuition** based on the cost of salary and benefit packages. Be sure to factor in registration fees. This is also an excellent time to decide if and how you'd like to offer a discount to families with multiple students.
- **Budget for additional start-up costs**, including advertising, rent or construction costs, furnishings, technology, and anything else that needs to be covered before tuition is collected.

Keep in mind that items in your budget can be tweaked as you move through the planning process. However, the initial draft should be as accurate as possible to avoid complications down the road.

5. Start Fundraising

Financial support from the community is vital to a school's financial success. Visit local churches to promote your school and meet interested families. You should also host annual fundraising events like a 5K run/1 mile walk, cookie fair, golf tournament, or an auction with donated items. Be sure to also take advantage of programs like Labels for Education and Box Tops for Education. For additional ideas, challenge your committee to research and hold a brainstorming session.

In addition, you can keep Christian education affordable for families with a [Tuition Reduction Incentive Program](#) (TRIP Program). Unlike fundraising programs that require participants to sell merchandise in exchange for a percentage of the profit, TRIP allows families to earn money for tuition by shopping with gift cards at their favorite stores.

6. Prepare Your Facility

With your planning committee and bookkeeper, decide whether to rent, buy, or construct a school building from scratch. If your Christian school is aligned with a specific church, perhaps that facility can double as your school building. For example, Sunday school classrooms can easily double as school classrooms. Once your facility is constructed, cleaned, and furnished, be sure it passes all building inspections required by your state.

7. Begin the Hiring Process

Salaries and benefit packages should be largely squared away after creating a tentative budget, so now it's time to create employee contracts, post jobs, and start hiring! Connecting with Christian colleges and local churches that support your school's philosophy is a great way to find qualified candidates who are seeking work. Remember to post openings for custodial, secretarial, and administration positions as well.

6 MONTHS BEFORE OPENING DAY

1. Establish a Tentative School Calendar

Be sure to include start and end dates, holidays, vacations, conferences, and any other important events you wish to incorporate into your school year. It's important to note that many states require 180 in-session school days per school year. Check with your state for specific requirements.

2. Market Your School

Once your plans are well underway, start spreading the word about your new school. AOP has many [online resources](#) to help you get started, including articles about creating a marketing plan, designing a school logo, making a brochure, and developing a website.

3. Pre-Enroll Students

Draft an application form and distribute it in print at local churches as well as online. Set up an interview with each family that applies to gain a better understanding of prospective student needs. Doing so also provides an opportunity for families to ask their own questions and tour the school.

The enrollment interview is also a good time to take care of paperwork and schedule [diagnostic testing](#). Be sure to review all important documents, such as the student and parent handbooks and take time to sign all required enrollment paperwork.

4. Finalize Curriculum and School Supply Orders

Have your bookkeeper make any necessary adjustments to the estimated enrollment number established in your tentative budget and use that figure to order your curriculum, as well as classroom, office, and custodial supplies.

For assistance when ordering [curriculum](#) and additional [school resources](#), contact an Alpha Omega Publications representative at 877-688-2652.

3 MONTHS BEFORE OPENING DAY

1. Create a Class Schedule

Now that you know which grades and approximately how many students your school will serve, you can construct a class schedule. The information should be ready for teachers when teacher in-service begins and distributed to students about three weeks before the school year starts.

2. Send a Press Release to the Local Media

As your opening day draws near, contact local newspapers, TV stations, and radio stations to announce your school's launch. You can also write and submit your own release to the publications. Be sure to include important dates, such as open houses or orientations, as well as your Christian school's contact information.

Visit AOP's resources page for more [marketing ideas](#).

3. Hold Teacher In-Service Meetings

Hosting engaging in-service training plays an important role in your school year's success. Consider using the [flipped meeting](#) approach to review professional topics, including the faculty handbook, school policies, and technology training. It's equally important to help your newly-formed staff get to know each other to instill a sense of community among colleagues.

Keep in mind that AOP provides a [variety of professional development and training](#) that can be used for teacher in-service..

For more information about training options available through AOP, call 877-688-2652.

4. Host an Open House and Orientation

Whether held in conjunction with one another or independently, these events are a great way to transition out of planning mode and kick off the school year. An open house provides prospective families an opportunity to experience it firsthand before the year begins.

Get tips from AOP to [host an open house in five easy steps](#).

Recommended every year but especially during an inaugural year, orientation sets students and staff up for success. Orientation helps ease the nerves of both students and parents on the first day of school by providing an opportunity for students to familiarize themselves with the building and meet teachers in person.

Visit AOP's website for [eight fun orientation ideas](#).

OPENING DAY

As you begin your first day of school, send a prayer of thanks to the Lord for his blessings and hard work throughout the past year. Continue to lift faculty, parents, students, and additional planning efforts up in prayer as you carry out your Christian school's mission and vision in the years to come.

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

1 Thess. 5:16-18

PARTNER WITH US!

Find the Christian curriculum that suits your new school's needs.

Discover 3 ways to partner with AOP.



www.aopschools.com/partner

877-688-2652