



**January 20, 2005**  
**State of School Message, Part Two**

*Steve Allen, Head of School*

Dear fellow Hillcrest Saints, when sharing a state of the school message, I must consider the health of the school. Health relates to growth – one sign of health. When the human body gets older, it comes to a natural state that brings death. Unlike the human body, organizations can continue to grow. We can examine the health of our school in a number of ways.

It is always difficult to put an evaluation on the health of a school spiritually. However, I can only assure you that prayer, focus on the Word of God, and reliance upon Him should be immutable HCS characteristics. We consider honoring and pleasing our Lord and Savior as our primary activity. This happens because we attempt to keep focused on Him resonating His spirit in all that we do. He becomes the number one aspect of our school – not in a segmented way, but in a permeated way. Give Him all of the honor and glory! Adding the service of assisting another non-profit organization (Support for the Kids, assisting the foster children and needy children of Ventura County) helps to keep our school healthy. A new, improved perspective on life and others can bring about improved health. Focusing on helping others in the neighborhood is a good way to make our students aware of how they can practically make our Christianity authentic. Opening our annual carnival (Saturday, February 5) to the community is another way to help us to connect with others.

Academically our students at HCS do very well. Our graduates continue to receive admissions to many of the finest colleges and universities in the country. This year, our seniors have the highest SAT average, perhaps our students have ever achieved – 646 verbal and 602 math, for a combined average score of 1248. On the average, our students score approximately a year and a half above the national average on the SAT-10 test. We began focusing last fall on ways to improve these scores, which will result in updating our curriculum and teaching methods in a number of ways. On January 3, I requested teachers and administrators to begin to work more reflectively by journaling on ideas to work together on a specific area of learning and instruction for the 2005-2006 school year. We will determine an area throughout the spring and then begin to research it to determine how to improve in that area throughout the entire school.

We often refer to Hillcrest as a family. Strong families communicate honestly and regularly. Since last summer, attempts to communicate have taken the forms of a new website at [www.hillcrestcs.org](http://www.hillcrestcs.org). If you have not used it, you are missing an important method to find out more about what is going on at HCS. Within this website, we have begun to use what we call teacher web desks - teachers' websites within the larger HCS website. Since these are new, some staff are still getting used to keeping them up to date as much as we would like. We will continue to keep moving forward in this area to fully inform you of what is going on in your child's classroom(s). Further, we have created a newsletter that is professional, regular, and shares the important information that parents need to fully participate in the life of Hillcrest. Lastly, we have created a new corporate logo in our shield, which you see in a number of significant school publications and correspondence. Over time, you will gradually see the old visual representation disappear as the new one takes its place. In an effort to assist you in more communication, our teachers, administrators, and board members are open to hear your concerns and ideas. Watch the newsletter for upcoming information about a town hall meeting. Further, I have scheduled to meet parents informally on Wednesdays at the Starbucks at the southwest corner of Erbes

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Road and Arboles in Thousand Oaks at 8:30 AM on a trial-basis during the month of February.

Volunteerism is another aspect of school health to consider. Volunteerism is alive and well at HCS. It is a vital link to your hopes, thoughts, and prayers for what Hillcrest is and can become in the future. There are more committees in place to help now than perhaps at any other time. In the preceding paragraph you will note the “we” used in terms of how we have tried to improve in the areas of communication. There is intentionality in using that word, as significant volunteer efforts make each one of those improvements a possibility. Consider your role in becoming more involved, possibly even leading at HCS.

Volunteerism brings resources to our school that our budget otherwise could not afford. Donations do the same. This past fall we began the HCS annual fund – the Heritage Fund. Simply stated the Heritage fund and other forms of fund raising allow our program to improve beyond what tuition can pay. When parents do not contribute to these gift-giving programs, they are saying that they do not want the school programs to improve and/or that they want programs to improve through tuition increases. The Heritage Fund has nearly \$50,000, to date. I encourage each of you to give at some level to this fund. In the near and distant future, you will see this fund make a significant difference in what your children receive at Hillcrest.

Finances directly relate to enrollment. Our enrollment is holding steady for the year at 375 – about 30 less than this time last year. Our financial standing improves compared to last year. The budget is still tight, needing gifts of another \$150,000 to break even for the year. Thank you to those who give to the general fund, the Heritage Fund and for specific causes to bring improvements to the students. We committed to borrowing \$207,000 last summer to bring long over-due improvements to our campus, and they look great. Taking this step helps to address accreditation recommendations from our 1998 accreditation visiting team.

In terms of facility, in the near future, we are addressing some isolated leaks in our roof. Our technology systems continue to improve. Thanks to donors, we are in the process of adding more instructional technology in classrooms. Plans are shaping up to update our science laboratory. Look for information related to an up-coming volunteer workday on Saturday, February 19. For the future, we project updating the auditorium with new lighting, carpet, paint, and technology to catch up with what is occurring in the rest of the main building. I still see the need to one day build a gym and new classrooms on our vacant land along Erbes Road.

HCS is in what we call an accreditation year. That means we are updating our documents to prepare for a team that comes to visit our school, evaluating HCS based upon our own self-study and a set of standards. Keep in mind that this takes a great deal of effort on the part of staff. Also, know that less than 20% of ACSI (Association of Christian School, International) member schools receive accreditation by ACSI. HCS maintains a full accreditation by ACSI and WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges).

Finally, health comes through good relationships. This begins at the top with the school’s Board of Directors and the Head of School. Our relationship is honest, open, and committed to a cooperative working relationship, in the school’s best interest. Hillcrest has a wonderful corps of dedicated teachers. Teachers are the critical component in the machinery of education. I believe our school is healthiest when parents consistently pray for and support our teachers.

We take on all of these efforts and many others because we desire to provide the best possible school for your children. With the outstanding work of our excellent teaching staff, administration and Board of Directors, your support through volunteerism and donations, and continued reliance upon a generous God for wisdom in direction, we can make our school all that He desires it to be. We desire the goal of II Timothy 3:17, “That the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” May He richly bless you in your parenting!

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