

Mrs. Vaught's Thoughts

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2nd grade student Anna Kish and Mom

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Sheltered or Nurtured?

When my children were students here at Williamsburg Christian Academy, I often received comments from non-Christian parents similar to the following: "Your kids are so *sheltered* in that Christian school. How will they be able to handle the "real world"? Aren't you worried that they won't be ready?" That type of comment increased in frequency as my children approached the end of their high school years and were facing departure for college. All of my children successfully attended and graduated from Virginia Tech, which is a university with over 25,000 students. Each of them faced the "real world" and flourished. Why?

People unfamiliar with Christian education rarely see our school clearly. Instead of "sheltering" our children from the realities of life, I have seen Christian students and educators face those realities while leaning on the Lord.

If we were gardeners, we would plant our young seedlings in the best soil that we could. We would allow them exposure to the "real world" of sun, wind and storms. But, we would nurture them by providing plant food, loosening the soil around them, watering them regularly and keeping track of their progress. We would trim or prune them as they grew, and we would be confident that their roots were growing strong and deep. If a violent storm flattened them, we would be there to pick them up and tie them to something strong until they could recover. As good gardeners, we would call this process "*nurturing*."

It is in that same sense that we "nurture" our students, rather than "shelter" them. We don't take them out of the "real world". Our students are planted in the same soil as everyone else in the world. However, we add spiritual food and water to their lives by introducing them to the Bread of Life and His Word. We loosen the soil around them when they get too attached to the world by providing Godly counsel and activities. We promote Godly friendships between our students. Finally, when a storm knocks them over, we are called to be parents and educators that gently pick them up, wrap our arms around them and hold on tight until they can stand again.

The dedicated nurturing of a solid Christian family, church and school provides an incredible young "plant" that will thrive wherever it is transplanted. Sheltering? No. Nurturing? Yes, because of the beautiful harvest that results!