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What is Internship Block?

TDChristian Senior Fellow Ren Siebenga is fond of asking people he meets, “How did you learn the last thing you learned?” Some learned by reading about it in a book or online. Others learned by talking to an expert. Still others learned by getting their hands dirty, or through trial and error. The realization that there isn’t just one universal right approach to teaching and learning is what has pushed TDChristian to constantly explore the latest proven ideas and approaches in education so as to ensure that each and every student is enfolded, engaged, and empowered.

Enter our newest program offering: Internship Block. Internship Block has been modelled on an educational movement in the U.S. known as “Big Picture Learning”, or “BPL” for short. Under the guidance of teachers Joel Sjaarda and Kevin Godber, eighteen Grade 11 students are spending their first semester in this new program that combines in-school learning with real-world experience.

Here’s how it works. Each student has been connected with a volunteer adult mentor in their career area of interest, and is spending two full days a week at the mentor’s workplace. The other days of the week are spent with two teacher advisers and with classmates. Students are then involved in doing course work, connecting their in-the-field learning experiences with those of their classmates, and creating presentations and projects based on their placements.

The structure of the program allows students to take greater control over their own learning and gain meaningful experience exploring a career or service area they are considering for the future. In these and other ways, Internship Block can help each student begin to discern God’s plan for his or her life.

(Left) Grade 11 student Calvin Bijl reaching the top of the climbing wall.

SCHOOLING:
Learning the Ropes of Internship Block

Grade 11 student Matthew Dejong hits the wall as part of his orientation to Internship Block.

What gets you excited about Internship Block?

“I love the Internship Block at TDChristian because it fully realizes what we want all of our learning to do: empower students with amazing opportunities to discover how their gifts can meet the world’s needs. The Internship Block breaks down the barrier that too often separates classroom learning from our larger cultural community.”

Justin Cook,
Director of Learning,
Ontario Alliance of
Christian Schools



Grade 11 students Brandon Scholten and Brooke Roorda navigate a high ropes course as part of their orientation to Internship Block.

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Big Picture Learning

Where did Big Picture Learning come from?

DID YOU Know?

Internship Block is one of five special “Block” programs offered at TDChristian. There are also Environmental Block, French & History Block, International Block, and Engineering Block.

BPL

Big Picture Learning (BPL) got its start at the Met School in Providence, Rhode Island. When its founders set up the school in 1995, the question before them was, “Why are so many high school students feeling disengaged and uninterested?”

The Met began with the idea that students would be more invested in their education if they were given more personal responsibility for their own learning, were doing more real-world, hands-on work, and were being assessed on their performance, achievements, habits, and behaviours.

The first Met class was made up primarily of ‘at-risk’ students who did not ‘fit’ in regular schools. Even so, the class graduated in 2000 with a 96% graduation rate, and 98% of graduates were admitted to postsecondary institutions. Results since then have been equally impressive, earning the financial support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the praise of President Obama. There are now dozens and dozens of BPL schools like the Met School around the world.

TDChristian has always striven to be on the cutting edge of education. Over the years we’ve made significant investments in technology, in supporting and establishing project-based learning and block programs, and in authentic assessment methods. We’ve also worked hard to find, develop, and retain highly qualified and enthusiastic Christian teachers.

While TDChristian has been researching BPL learning for more than a decade, last year the investigation intensified. On a snowy day in January, Mrs. Schuurman, Mr. Bentum, and Mr. Groot visited a BPL school in Buffalo. And last May, five TDChristian staff members travelled with Justin Cook, Director of Learning for the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, to the Met School in Rhode Island to have another look at BPL in action.

The staff came back from these trips convinced that this was a relevant, effective, and exciting model of schooling that would fit in extremely well with the educational goals at TDChristian. After further thought, planning, and prayer, the newly-created Internship Block is up and running for the 2014-2015 school year.



Kevin Godber



Joel Sjaarda

The Teachers’ Perspective

We asked Internship Block teachers Kevin Godber and Joel Sjaarda for some of their thoughts on this new program.

• What gets you most excited about Big Project Learning?

KG: Seeing students get fully engaged in their own learning because something matters, not because a mark will be attached to an assignment.

• What’s one thing that stood out for you when you visited the Met school in Rhode Island?

KG: The range of students that took the program and the possibilities they were able to find when they started to explore their interests. It is a messy process, but in the end good learning happens.

JS: What stood out most to me was the way students were empowered by the opportunity to have their own office space on school grounds. Students were running their own businesses right on school grounds, creating partnerships with people in the community, and networking with other business owners.

• What will Internship Block allow you to do, as teachers, that you couldn’t do in a regular classroom and schedule?

KG: Students have time to get into a project, and to do projects off campus that would not be possible in a typical one-period class.

JS: It’s definitely the opportunity to dig deeper into projects. Our goal is to challenge students to think harder about the purpose of their schooling and work, and eventually to experience the reality that everything we do can be an act of service for the Lord and our neighbour.

• Is there a certain type of student that Big Project Learning is designed for?

KG: No, it’s designed for anyone who is interested in learning and has a passion. It doesn’t matter what the passion is, you just have to have one.

• What do you look for in a mentor or placement?

JS: We are looking for two things. We want mentors who can benefit from partnerships with our students. We also want mentors who are willing to instruct and guide students to a greater understanding of their area of expertise. We search for the type of placement that provides a caring, patient, and suitably demanding atmosphere for students to experience a new opportunity to learn, reach more clarity regarding their future, gain confidence, and broaden their perspective.

• How does Internship Block fit in with TDChristian’s vision of learning and its focus statement?

KG: We are about enfolding: an individual plan of study helps us unfold each student. We are about engaging: the opportunity to follow your passion helps with that. We are about empowering: we do that by allowing students to get real-world work experience and helping them make their future career paths a little clearer.

(below) Current Internship Block students (left to right): Bethanie Geerlinks, Joel Sjaarda, Brooke Roorda, Brandon Scholten, Mark Dekker, Matt Dejong, Curtis Kooring, Joyelle Blydorp, Aaron Rekker, Ashley Yavtucovich, Alex Tsigoulis, Alli Yake-Gonzalez, Caleb Smith, Kierra Smith, Andrew Giuggio, Holly Vroom, Caterina Congiusti, Calvin Bijl, Matthew Abuharoon, and Kevin Godber



*“For we are co-workers in God’s service;
you are God’s field, God’s building.”*

1 Corinthians 3:9

WELCOME to our new school year

At TDChristian we focus on learning for service in the light of God’s Word. We enfold, engage, and empower students through meaningful learning opportunities. The Apostle Paul writes in I Corinthians 3:9, “we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

As members of TDChristian, we move forward together: school, home, and community all need to work diligently and intentionally to provide and promote good learning for each student. As God’s field, his building, we are called to serve him and others in education: learning through projects, discussions, interactions, group work, hard study, service trips, presentations, testing, and many other avenues.

What a privilege! What a blessing! Let’s do so with vigour and enthusiasm. God has promised his blessing on us; in his strength we go!

- William Groot, Principal

DID YOU Know?

While only 18 Grade 11 students are enrolled in Internship Block, ALL Grade 11 students will spend at least three days this year with an adult mentor in a career area of interest.

IP

Four Students... Four Stories

“The staff came back from these trips convinced that this was a relevant, effective, and exciting model of schooling that would fit in extremely well with the educational goals at TDChristian.”

DID YOU Know?

We’d love to have you as a mentor and/or your workplace as a placement for an Internship Block student or other Grade 11 student. To be considered, please contact Mr. Godber (godber@tdchristian.ca) or Mr. Sjaarda (jsjaarda@tdchristian.ca).

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Bethanie Geerlinks arranged her placement at North Park Veterinary Hospital in Brampton.

Why a veterinary hospital?
I’ve always liked animals since I was a kid; I’m not sure if that’s something I want to get into once I’m done high school, or if I should do something else. So this just might help me decide.

What are you doing on your placement?
I’m starting with cleaning cages and walking dogs, but I’ve already seen a few surgeries and I’ll be helping prepare rooms and animals for surgery later on.



Matthew Abuharoon is passionate about music (he’s an aspiring rap artist outside of school) and is doing his placement at Thunder Dome Sounds in Markham, a recording studio.

What do you hope to learn?
I’m interested in learning the business side of the music industry.

Why do you think this type of learning really suits you?
Because I’m not learning this stuff from a book. I’m learning from someone who’s actually been in the music industry, who really knows his stuff—a professional. So he’s not just a teacher, he’s a mentor.



Ashley Yavtucovich is interested in exploring culinary careers. She’s doing her placement at Glen Eagle Golf Club in Caledon.

What are you doing at your placement?
Helping around the kitchen, cleaning, and preparing food for banquets and stuff.

Why is the structure of Internship Block good for this type of learning?
Because the next day you can go back to the classroom and talk about your experiences on your placement, and listen to other people’s experiences.



Matthew Dejong’s placement is at Midas Muffler in Woodbridge.

Why did you sign up?
I’m a hands-on person. I decided it would be a good experience to get into the real world and work in what I want to do when I get out of school.

So, what do you want to do?
I want to be a mechanic. I love cars, I love the way they work, how it all fits together. It’s just amazing to me.

Here are places at which our Internship Block students are working and learning this semester:



What's New at TD:

MEET DAN BUISMAN

We are pleased to welcome Mr. Dan Buisman to our staff. Dan recently graduated from teacher's college at Western University, having earned his B.A. in Phys Ed and History at Redeemer University.

This semester Dan is teaching Grade 9 Phys Ed and Grade 10 Old Testament in addition to coaching Tier 1 Junior Boys' Volleyball and Golf. An avid sports fan, when Dan isn't playing something, he's watching it.

In truth, Dan isn't really new at TDChristian. He graduated in 2009; his sister, two brothers, and his dad are also all alumni of our school.



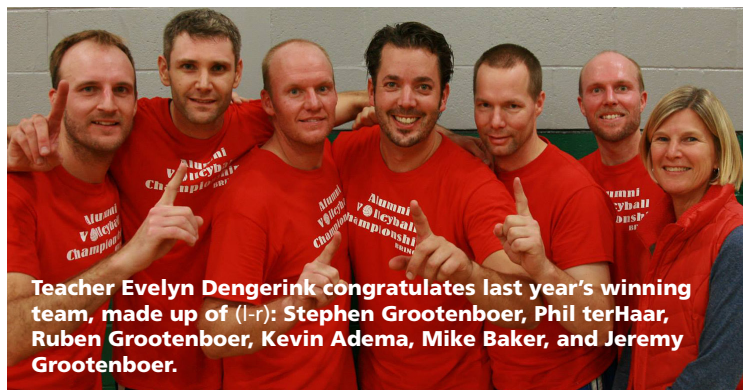
Mr. Dan Buisman

"This is the school I've always wanted to teach at," says Dan. "It just feels like home here."



LEARNING TO SERVE

Every year at TDChristian, Grade 9 students start their high school experience by going on an overnight service trip to downtown Toronto. It's an opportunity for new students to get to know each other, learn about how service organizations help many in the inner city, and participate in loving our neighbours. The trip is a fitting way for beginning students to align themselves with the school's goal of enfolding, engaging, and empowering, as well as its mission statement, "Learning for service in the light of God's Word."



Teacher Evelyn Dengerink congratulates last year's winning team, made up of (l-r): Stephen Grootenboer, Phil terHaar, Ruben Grootenboer, Kevin Adema, Mike Baker, and Jeremy Grootenboer.

PASS ... SET... FUN!

Last year the "The Red Team", a team organized by Phil terHaar and made up of grads from the early to mid-90s, took on all competitors and won the Alumni Volleyball Tournament over a team from the mid-00s organized by the Dykxhoorns. This year's tournament takes place on Saturday, November 8, beginning at 9 a.m. Get your team together for a great day of volleyball, fun, and fellowship. For more details, see our website or email buisman@tdchristian.ca.

COMMONS 3.0

The updating continues on TDChristian's "Commons", our heavily utilized multipurpose space for lunch, events, assemblies, and other activities. Last year a new black-box theatre/classroom was built at the north end of the Commons; this summer a new tech booth was hung from the rafters at the south end. Much of the funding for these renovations was made possible by the generous support of DUCA Financial Services and our Parent Association, which runs the school's Rummage Sales.

Fun for the whole family!

RODGERS AND HAMMERSTEIN'S
Cinderella

Music by RICHARD RODGERS
Book & Lyrics by OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II

December 3-5 at 7 p.m.
Dinner Theatre Dec. 6 at 5:30 p.m.

Request your tickets by emailing playtickets@tdchristian.ca

TDChristian's

Fall Rummage Sale




- Baked treats & Dutch cheese
- Fresh vegetables & flowers
- Delicious lunches & yummy desserts
- Gently used clothes, books, furniture, electronics, toys & more

Saturday, October 18, 9-1

Alumni News

Attention Alumni!

Please keep us posted regarding reunions, marriages, births, career moves, and any other important milestones. Simply email alumni@tdchristian.ca. Don't worry if you're late in reporting – we're still interested!

Alumna **Genevieve Huyer** ('11) fills her bottle with thousands-of-years-old water from a remote glacier in the Rocky Mountains. Genevieve recently completed her second year studying geology at the University of Ottawa, and spent this summer helping graduate students collect rock samples.

Alumnus **Nick Radder** ('10) recently started the paramedic program at Georgian College. He hopes to become a primary care paramedic, later working up to be an advanced care paramedic and finally a critical care paramedic in an air ambulance.



Paramedic student Nick Radder



Genevieve Huyer at work

GRADE 8 DAY Wednesday, Oct. 29

9:30 am - 2:00 pm
All Grade 8 students and their parents are welcome.
Lunch is provided.
RSVP: bentum@tdchristian.ca

bE³@td

• Class of 2019 •



Upcoming Events 2014

Rummage Sale

Saturday, Oct. 18
9:00 am–1:00 pm

Grade 8 Day

Wednesday, Oct. 29

Alumni Volleyball Tournament

Saturday, Nov. 8
9:00 am start

Open House Night

Tuesday, Nov. 18
7:00 pm–8:30 pm

Fall Membership Meeting

Thursday, Nov. 27
5:30 pm–7 pm
This is the same night as Parent-Student-Teacher Interviews. Food will be available at 5 pm for those who sign in. RSVP to cate@tdchristian.ca.

@tdchristian

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