



# World Report

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## Use the **IDEAL Process** to Help Your Students Internalize a **Biblical Perspective**

By Michael Essenburg, MA, Christian Academy in Japan, Tokyo, Japan

**Y**ou're sitting in your classroom thinking, "How can I help them get this? I'm supposed to teach them a biblical perspective. Maybe I should talk with Tom. Michele mentioned a good book and a workshop being held next month. I wonder if we should work as a department to develop some curriculum for this. What would be the best thing to do?"

### *Stop.*

Don't start by talking to a colleague. Don't start by a reading book or attending a workshop. Don't start by writing curriculum. Instead, begin by defining your students' learning needs by looking at your students' work and talking with them.

Remember, the goal is for your students to increase their understanding and use of a biblical perspective, not for you to be the master at teaching from a biblical perspective.

### **What's an IDEAL way to help your students?**

The IDEAL process is a five-step process you can use to help your students understand and use a biblical perspective:

- **I**dentify the problem and ask God for help.
- **D**efine your students' learning needs. Look at your students' work. Talk with your students or give them a survey. As necessary, talk with parents and colleagues. Do this in order to select one student learning need you will address.
- **E**xplore ways to address the student learning need you have selected. (See "Ten ways to help" for suggestions.) Pick one need and make a plan to address it. *Now* get the training and support you need.
- **A**ct. Just do it! And be sure to tell your students what you are doing and why.
- **L**ook at the results. Discuss them with your students and colleagues.

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## What happens when a teacher uses the IDEAL process?

**Identify the problem and ask God for help.** Kim teaches English 10 at Christian Academy in Japan. She wants all of her students to proficiently apply a biblical perspective to course content, particularly in essays and presentations.

**Define your students' learning needs.** She gave her students a survey. (See the table at the end of the article; the complete survey is available at [classes.caj.or.jp/mbessenburg](http://classes.caj.or.jp/mbessenburg).) One student need had a noticeably higher response rate: 61 percent of students indicated that to really understand and use a biblical perspective, they needed to connect the Bible with their lives, not just with what they studied in class.

**Explore ways to address the student learning need you selected.** Kim decided to develop an assessment for her poetry unit that would require her students to connect the Bible and their music. She collaborated with a colleague to develop the following assessment:

Song lyrics are poems. Using the poetry analysis skills we worked on and the biblical principles we talked about, write a 500-word critique of a favorite song from a biblical perspective. In your answer, explain the author's meaning, the literary and poetic techniques the author uses to communicate the meaning, evaluate that meaning from a biblical perspective, and weave in your own response to the lyrics. Be sure to quote the lyrics at least five times and the Bible at least three times.

**Act.** At the start of her poetry unit, Kim explained the unit assessment and had her students brainstorm possible song titles. She also explained why she developed this assessment—to respond to their survey data.

**Look at the results.** At the end of the unit, the students wrote the essay. After submitting the essays, students completed a five-item survey. Sixty-two percent of students responded positively to the following item: "To what extent did this assignment help you understand and use a biblical perspective?" Student comments included the following:

- "It helped me a lot, because I don't normally connect a biblical perspective to something as personal as music, especially secular music."
- "This helped me ... pick apart the lyrics and analyze each part according to a biblical perspective."

- "I learned how all aspects of life can be defined by the Bible and how the Bible can explain anything, since God created all life."
- "It let me think about life a little more, and it wasn't just an assignment we had to do."
- "To help see what people think and need and want the most in this time. And to know where in the Bible I can help them."

Kim assessed the essays and was pleased with the results, particularly excerpts like these:

- "This song expresses the need for mutuality in a relationship, and the need for whole-hearted devotion to a loved one. However, as Grainger is not a Christian, he fails to understand the most important part of love, that is, God."
- "The artist knows that there are problems in his life ... but he does not want to face them and is afraid of change. He is correct that he cannot do it by himself, but he is not looking in the right place."
- "In all these situations, it was so much easier to blame God and accuse Him for what was going on, rather than looking at the conditions from a different perspective."

Says Kim, "Using the IDEAL process was useful. Doing the survey helped me know what my students needed, and using the survey data to modify instruction helped me demonstrate to my students that I respond to their feedback. I'm pretty pleased with the essay results, and I plan to keep emphasizing a biblical perspective with my students."

At Christian schools, students should increase their understanding and use of a biblical perspective. Using the IDEAL process has helped us help our students do this. Would using the IDEAL process help your students? If so, what step will you take this week?

## Ten ways to help your students increase their understanding and use a biblical perspective

Looking for ways to help your students increase their understanding and use a biblical perspective? Here's a list of ten. (These correspond to the items listed on the survey found in the table on the next page.)

1. Demonstrate to your students that you value using a biblical perspective by giving and grading assignments that require students to demonstrate their understanding of and ability to use a biblical perspective.

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2. Teach your students three biblical truths—for example, human beings are created in God’s image, Christians are not to practice favoritism, and language is a gift from God. Post these truths on your bulletin board, and refer to them throughout the year.
3. Before assigning an essay requiring students to use a biblical perspective, have your students read two or more sample essays that demonstrate using a biblical perspective effectively.
4. Regularly discuss how your faith informs your selection of content, assessment, and instruction. For example, explain to your students that they are going to learn about ecology because God commands us to take care of His world.
5. Teach key vocabulary: biblical perspective, integration of faith and learning, image bearer, temple of the Holy Spirit, and worldview.
6. Use engaging instructional strategies like discussion and debate.
7. Ask open-ended questions: Where do I belong? What’s wrong? How can I use my gifts and learning to serve God and others?
8. Give your students time to reflect in class. During each unit, have your students journal about connections between their faith and what they are studying.
9. Give assignments that require your students to connect course content, their lives, and a biblical perspective: “Write a 500-word critique of a favorite song from a biblical perspective. Explain the author’s meaning, identify the literary and poetic techniques the author uses to communicate the meaning, evaluate that meaning from a biblical perspective, and weave in your response to the lyrics.”
10. In each unit, give your students practice using a biblical perspective. Have them do case studies, projects, and presentations.



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Students answered the following question: How do you feel about understanding and using a biblical perspective of what you study? (Respondents were allowed multiple answers.)

### % Survey Items

- 18% This doesn’t come up at my church or at home.
- 21% This doesn’t seem important.
- 24% I need more chances to practice.
- 29% I don’t know what it looks like.
- 29% I don’t understand the vocabulary.
- 37% I need time to think about what I’m learning.
- 42% My teachers say they teach from a biblical perspective, but I don’t understand how that works.
- 47% I need to think through answers for myself.
- 58% Learning what the Bible teaches is boring.
- 61% To really get this, I need to connect the Bible with my life, not just with what I study in class.