

Strategic Growth Plan
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July 2013

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 4 years, Central Lutheran School (CLS) has been blessed to see tremendous growth in our enrollment. We are now at a point where we no longer have any space in our current building to grow. In addition, for decades there has been a desire at CLS to start an early childhood program, build more classrooms, and build a gymnasium. The combination of the increase in students and the increase in programming has presented a need for CLS to develop a strategic plan for the next 5 years. The purpose of the project was to develop a strategic plan that will address the areas of facilities, finances, and faculty. As they year went on, we quickly realized that we also needed to focus on a few more areas. Those areas included fellowship and vision. The period of growth at CLS has been an exciting time, yet we want to focus our association on moving forward and making decisions based on a plan that grows and develops out of the mission and vision.

PROCESS

The process began in the summer of 2012 with three main areas. First of all, a committee had been formed to study the feasibility of opening a preschool at CLS. This committee was in its infancy in the summer of 2012 and was beginning to make the dream of a preschool a reality. Second, after attending the Van Lunen Summer Conference in 2012, it was very clear to me that we needed to develop a vision statement for our school. We already had a mission statement, school objectives, school purpose, and core values. However, we did not have a vision statement that set goals for our school to move us forward. Finally, we wanted to have a focus on telling the story. We wanted to stay focused on continuing to tell the story of the love of Jesus to our students and their families. As we did research on past studies, strategic plans, and accreditation studies, we quickly realized that our story has stayed the same for 60 years. We want to stay focused on telling that story. We wanted to

stay focused on encouraging our parents to tell the story of what a great school Central is for their families.

Throughout the 2012-2013 school year, we had a major event that increased the importance of this project. We were blessed with a major gift from two donors. We received an estate valued at about \$1.8 million to be used for the advancement of Central Lutheran School. It was imperative that we are good stewards with this gift and use it to create a legacy. So, two more areas developed in this project. First, we are working as a committee to match the needs of the school with the intentions of the donors who gave us this generous gift. Second, we are working on creating foundation by-laws that will ensure the growth and legacy of this gift. Third, we want to use the gift to ensure and determine enrollment and financial sustainability of CLS.

VISION

The first step in our strategic planning process was to develop a Vision Statement for CLS. This was an identified need that took place immediately after the summer Van Lunen Conference. There were two questions that I wanted to be able to answer after the summer conference and the session on Mission-Driven Governance. First, what is our vision that can guide all of our decision-making? Second, how does our board define success?

We enlisted the help of our faculty and school board members to help develop the vision for CLS. We started with a brainstorming session with both groups. We asked them to dream big about the future of CLS. We asked them questions like, what do you want to be known for in the community? If money were no object, what would you like to incorporate into our school? What do we do well that you want to keep doing? What do you think we need to improve on? After developing the list, we looked for patterns and trends that were developing among both the faculty and the school board. A small committee then put together some sample statements. Those sample statements were then brought to the faculty and the school board for input, clarification, and edits. The committee went through one more round of developing a statement, and the school board approved a vision statement to help direct the decisions and the direction of our school.

Vision Statement: Central Lutheran School will be the benchmark for Christian education in Northeast Indiana, equipping future leaders for service to the church, community, and the world.

This was chosen as our vision statement for a couple of reasons. First, we used the word benchmark because we want to be the leader among all schools in Northeast Indiana in academics, caring for our families, activities, and developing young leaders. Second, we used the phrase “equipping future leaders” because we feel that our parents choose CLS for the preparation we provide for their children as well as the opportunities they have when they graduate. We want our graduates to be unique and to stand apart from other graduates. Finally, the Vision Statement is linked to our Mission Statement with the section that reads “service to the church, community, and the world.”

Vision 1-Year Goal: Vision Statement will guide and direct all decisions and direction.

Vision 5-Year Goal: Identify areas where Central Lutheran School has set the “benchmark.” (i.e. Academics, facilities, programming, extra curricular activities, alumni accomplishments, funding.)

PRESCHOOL

The first step we took at CLS to implement a preschool was to form a preschool committee. The committee determined the following items justified a need for a preschool at CLS.

- There is a need in New Haven for a Lutheran preschool that will meet the spiritual needs of our children to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- There is a need in our Kindergarten for children to be prepared for the academic challenges faced in today’s classroom.
- Many families travel to Concordia Lutheran School or St. Peter’s Lutheran School to find a preschool for their child.
- Many families send their students to New Haven Methodist Preschool
- We can find a facility to begin the process of facilitating a Lutheran preschool in New Haven.
- A preschool should be self-financed.

- A preschool will help secure the future for Central Lutheran School.
- A preschool will provide additional opportunities to bring families from the New Haven community into membership at our association churches.

There was a vision to start a preschool. That vision started decades ago. Now, that vision has become a reality. There were many keys to this vision being able to be carried out. First, the committee had to do extensive research on why we need a preschool, how we will start a preschool, where we will start a preschool, and when we will start a preschool. The committee did a fantastic job looking at demographic studies, multiple locations, curriculums, codes and licensures, and surveying the families in our association. After months of preparation, it was time to report. The most successful part of the project was the time we spent communicating our vision to the congregations, church councils, and school board about intentions and progress. We had a vision, we made a plan, and we communicated with our stakeholders. The efforts that we put into communicating the vision were the major reason for the success of this project. We are excited to announce that the preschool will open its doors in September 2013.

Preschool 1-Year Goal: Total enrollment of 48 students.

Preschool 3-Year Goal: Total enrollment of 80 students.

Preschool 5-Year Goal: Include the preschool as a part of the current facilities on our campus.

FOUNDATION BY-LAWS

The next step in our strategic plan is to set up Foundation By-Laws. We were blessed with a 1.8 million dollar gift during the school year from a family in one of our congregations. The generous gift was given in order to help secure the future of CLS and to provide for the growth and expansion of our ministry. We have spent a great deal of time with the trustees and a representative from the Lutheran Church Extension Fund to begin the process of developing a CLS Foundation with this gift. The possibilities are great when you have such a generous gift, but so is the responsibility. We have tried to determine ways that this gift can benefit ALL CLS students, and just as important, we want this gift to create a legacy. We want this gift to continue giving. We want this gift to be the jump-start

of more gifts that are similar in their impact. It is our intention to develop the Foundation and the Foundation By-Laws to help provide us with structure, direction, and policies with our planned giving programs and this generous gift.

Foundation 1-Year Goal: Finalize Foundation By-Laws

Foundation 1-Year Goal: Hire a Development Director

Foundation 5-Year Goal: Total investments of \$5 million.

Foundation 5-Year Goal: Fund all available matching endowment programs (\$225,000 invested with a \$225,000 match for a total of \$450,000)

DETERMINING AND ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY

Part of our strategic growth plan is to determine enrollment sustainability and financial sustainability. We have done some demographic studies in the last year as we prepared to open a preschool. We would like to take that a step further and do some feasibility studies that examine our potential enrollment trends into the future, the demographics of our community, the needs of our current facility, the needs for future building projects, and the financial sustainability of our current financial model. We are also planning on hiring a full-time development director who will oversee our planned giving programs and be an integral part of working with the new CLS Foundation. Finally, to help ensure long-term financial sustainability, we will continue to utilize matching endowment programs at The Lutheran Foundation and the Fort Wayne Community Foundation. Together, we have dollar for dollar matching opportunities that total approximately \$45,000 per year, which instantly turns into \$90,000.

Sustainability 1-year Goal: Completed study to help direct future programming and building projects.

TELL THE STORY

The last part of our strategic growth plan is to “Tell The Story.” First, we want to continue focusing on spreading the message of the love of Christ to all of our students and their families. That was the original mission of our school, that is the current mission of our school, and that will always

be the mission of our school into the future. We also want to train and educate our parents to be able to tell that story to their children and to their friends, neighbors, and family. We want to train and educate our parents to tell the story about CLS to their friends, family and neighbors to bring more students into our school. The current school families are our number one marketing tools and they need to get out and tell the story. It is our hope to get our enrollment up to 360. It is our hope to get our preschool enrollment up to 72. We hope to continue examining the voucher program in Indiana as a way to bring in more students.

Tell The Story 3-Year Goal: 360 Students Enrolled at Central Lutheran School (Kindergarten through 8th Grade)

Tell The Story 5-Year Goal: Maintain enrollment between 360-396 students in Central Lutheran School (Kindergarten through 8th Grade)

LESSONS

The most important lesson that we have learned is the value in communicating your vision. People want to follow and buy in to a vision. If you have a vision with a sound plan of action, followed up with effective communication, you have a much better chance of reaching that vision in a shared approach.

Another important lesson that we have learned is the positive effect of having a board that is focused on setting a vision and then implementing that vision. We are blessed at CLS that we have a school board that has embraced their role as the visionary for the school, focused on the big picture, and moving us forward. Everything that we encountered as a part of our strategic planning was focused on the future, and there was a great deal of excitement among our school board members that they had the opportunity to move away from day-to-day operational decisions and move into the arena of setting a vision and looking to the future. The preschool, the vision statement, the foundation, the feasibility study, and the marketing aspects all have a focus on the growth, expansion, and sustainability of our school. This is the role of the board. To look forward, secure the future, and challenge us to continually improving our ministry.

CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

The two biggest changes from this project are the implementation of the preschool and the possible beginning of the CLS Foundation. The preschool was a dream of CLS for decades, and after careful planning and study by the preschool committee this year, the dream has become a reality. It will be a big change, but a positive one, to have an early childhood ministry right here on our campus. Also, the implementation of our CLS Foundation will help secure our future financially and will also challenge us to continue the legacy that was left for us and implement a strong Planned Giving program.