



STRATEGIC PLANNING for DARREN PATTERSON CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Buena Vista, Colorado – Erik Ritschard, Administrator



Project Summary

Darren Patterson Christian Academy (DPCA) is a small school in rural central Colorado with about 170 students in preschool through 12th grade. Having recently completed a successful capital campaign and building project, the board and administration desired to seek the Lord together for the next priorities which school leadership should address.

Accordingly, the administration and board began a prayerful strategic planning process in August 2008 with the goal of using input from board members, faculty and staff, and school parents to establish a three-year strategic plan document that would accurately reflect the priorities that the school community had identified.



Project Results

The DPCA school board acted as the strategic planning committee and guided the planning process.

- August – December 2008: Board prayer and SWOT Analysis results in initial list of ideas.
- January – February 2009: Parent and staff meetings held, surveys from staff and parents, data compiled.
- March – April 2009: Survey data compared to initial board list, correlations noted, more detailed discussion, board begins draft document.
- May – June 2009: Board refines list of priorities, discusses time frames, and writes initial strategic action plan document.
- May – June 2009: Administration, faculty, and board begin to implement the initial elements of the strategic plan.

The connections and exchange between board members, administrator, staff, and parents, guided by invaluable assistance from Kiki Johnson of Carney, Sandoe, and Associates, resulted in

- 1) a plan document that captures a broad consensus regarding those areas of the school's operations that should be addressed over the next three years, and
- 2) the identification of issues that will require additional planning and prayer, plus
- 3) perhaps the best result for the long-term health of the school: a renewed awareness of the need for and benefit of ongoing strategic planning.

Successes and Challenges

What seemed successful:

- We allowed adequate time for the discussion to unfold and for people to be heard.
- We included a broad representation of the school community in the planning process
- We discovered broad agreement on a number of issues and produced a document that reflects that consensus
- We achieved the goal: a coherent, practical action plan for improving the school over the next three years, and a renewed framework and enthusiasm for strategic thinking and planning.

What challenged us/could be improved:

- The board functioned well as a steering committee, but adding some additional members of the school community would have been helpful.
- More frequent engagement with parents earlier in the year might have encouraged more to complete the survey.
- Faculty should have been prodded into greater participation, perhaps making some elements mandatory.
- Some initially unknown resistance to the idea of strategic planning needed to be overcome.
- The chairman of the strategic planning effort resigned in November, causing some delay in progress and giving a greater load to the administrator.
- Some deaths connected to the school community slowed the process.